

Educating high school students on succeeding in the working world

The Situation

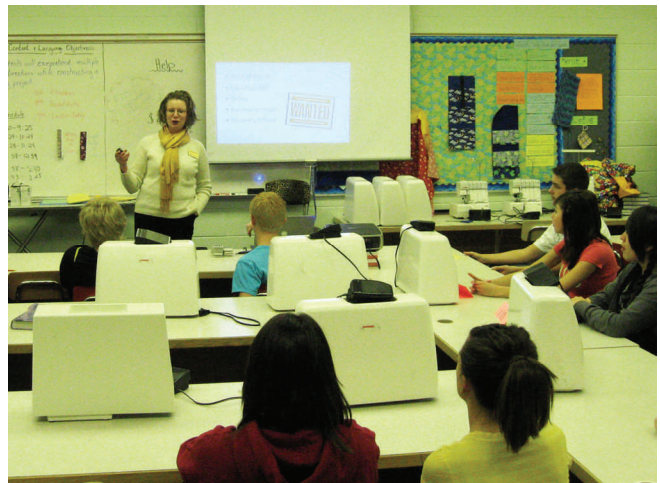
As the economy is rapidly deteriorating, many individuals are finding themselves without a job or means to earn money to provide for basic needs. It is our goal to aid current high school students with tools needed to be able to find, apply for, obtain and keep a job, to avoid poverty. Students participating are from various socioeconomic backgrounds. By engaging in this class, students can improve their quality of life, may have more to offer in the workforce, and have the potential to improve their overall interpersonal skills.

Our Response

A previously developed course was adjusted to fit the time restraints and current needs in order to teach such life skills. Local public school teachers are obligated to teach this curriculum, so a condensed program is ideal to fit more into a school year. The program presented by an educator provides the students with a “different voice” and additional insights from a professional standpoint.

In presenting the class “Succeeding in the Working World,” the instructor focuses on the following four goals:

- Discuss and communicate the various places or methods one can use to find a job.
- Instruct students how to complete a job application, and encourage practice during class.
- Convey proper and acceptable practices during an interview, and enabling students to define personal strengths and weakness.
- Discuss successful work ethics and successful performance while on the job.



Students prepare to fill out mock applications after discussing different ways and places to find jobs.

These four topics last from five to ten minutes each, to ensure students are continuously engaged and thinking through the “getting a job” process.

Program Outcomes

Of the 223 students, 60% indicated they were in the 9th grade, 9% were in the 10th grade, 15% were in the 11th grade, and 16% identified themselves as in the 12th grade. Currently employed students made up only 26%, while the other 74% indicated they were not currently employed.

During the program, students were asked to complete a survey to aid in future planning.

As a result of the class:

- 83% indicated that after completing the class, their understanding of how to get a job and keep it had improved considerably.

- When asked if students knew how to apply for a job, 46% marked they never knew, and that group increased to 97% knowledgeable about filling out job applications.
- 62% of students indicated they didn't know the basics for creating a resume, and of the 62%, 87% improved their understanding.
- 47% of students indicated they didn't know how to prepare for an interview. After the class, 96% of the 47% improved their knowledge.

During the class, students were asked to share (if applicable) how they found their current job. There was continuous discussion (information given, questions asked and answered) about various job applications, processes, and relevance of an application to specific jobs. Each participant had the opportunity to complete a personal data sheet and application, participate in mock interview questions, discuss work ethic specific to 3-6 case studies, and explore five strengths and five weaknesses as preparation for future interviews.

Teacher comments include: "This was so informative and involved the students," "The hands-on activities were very helpful."

Students were asked to think about what they learned and to name two things that they will use in the future. Answers consisted of the following topics; improve handwriting, first impressions matter, ask appropriate questions in the interview, dress appropriately for the position, posture during an interview, how to turn weaknesses into strengths, what to do and not do when filling out applications or creating resumes, leave cell phones at home, and surprisingly, a large number of students wrote that they will go to interviews alone, and not bring friends.

The Future

Based on the interest of current and local high school teachers, this class is a benefit to their classes. Verbal dialogues as well as written comments from teachers show that the class is appreciated. Verbal dialogue between educator and students, and written comments from students shows that the class is valuable and action will be taken by the majority of students to work in at least one area in preparation of using this important life skill.

This class will be offered in the future. An easier to understand survey will also be implemented.

Other Contributing Faculty

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