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Engaging Youth in Work Experiences: An Innovative Strategies Practice Brief

This Innovative Strategies Practice Brief provides practical examples and resources used by promising and exemplary youth programs to engage youth in work experiences. The youth programs featured in this brief have been recognized by NCWD/Youth as [Innovative Strategies](#). NCWD/Youth's Innovative Strategies features workforce development programs and practices that serve youth with disabilities, either as a target population or as part of other youth populations.

The Value of Work Experiences

Work experiences are both paid and unpaid opportunities to work and practice career readiness skills. When work experiences are a part of a supervised program sponsored by an education or training organization that links knowledge gained at the worksite with a planned program of study, they are referred to as *work-based learning opportunities*.

Work experiences are a critical component of preparing youth for transition to adulthood. Potential benefits for youth who participate in work experiences include: 1) gaining career readiness skills including the “soft skills” that employers look for in entry level workers; 2) increasing one’s knowledge of specific occupational skills and workplace settings; 3) establishing a work history and connections with employers that can aid in future job searches; and 3) developing an understanding of different occupations in order to make informed career choices. In addition, research studies suggest that work-based learning may increase school attendance, decrease dropout rates, reduce school suspensions, and increase school engagement (Medrich, Calderon, & Hoachlander, 2002). One study found students who participated in work-based learning were more likely to attend college or go to work compared to their peers (Jobs for the Future, 2007).

While work experiences are beneficial to all youth, they are particularly valuable for youth with disabilities. One of the most important findings from the research shows that work experiences for youth with disabilities during high school (paid or unpaid) help them acquire jobs at higher wages after they graduate (Colley & Jamison, 1998). Also, students who participate in occupational education and special education in integrated settings are more likely to be competitively employed than students who have not participated in such activities (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Colley & Jamison, 1998; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Rogan, 1997).

Common Types of Work Experiences

Work experiences can take various forms including internships, summer jobs, youth-run businesses/entrepreneurship, service projects and volunteer work, and part-time jobs. While some work experiences lead to permanent, competitive employment, even short-term work experiences can be valuable as a way for young people to develop skills, contacts, and awareness about career options.

Work experiences are a component of a wide range of youth programs including those that operate in schools and those in community settings such as youth workforce programs and disability service agencies. A review of all the Innovative Strategies program profiles indicates many programs engage youth in one or more types of work experiences. The most common types of work experiences provided by the Innovative Strategies programs are described below.

Internships: Youth participants in the [Able Trust High School High Tech Program](#) (multiple locations throughout Florida), [Linking Learning to Life](#) (Chittenden County, New Hampshire), [Open Meadow Alternative School](#) (Portland, OR), and [Project Search](#) (a program of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center that has expanded to other locations nationwide) gain work experience through internships. At each of these programs, youth work for a set period of time (ranging from a few weeks to a year) for a local employer. Some internships are paid by the employer or through program funding while others are unpaid. Able Trust, Linking Learning to Life, and Open Meadow develop employer partnerships with a variety of local businesses and organizations that commit to serving as worksites for youth interns. Where possible, a youth is matched with an employer that closely aligns with his or her career interests and goals. Project Search sites, on the other hand, typically partner with one large employer, such as a local hospital, and work with that employer to identify multiple job assignments in different departments. During their year-long unpaid internship, youth rotate from one job assignment to another every few months, giving them a chance to try out different jobs and develop a range of skills.

Summer Jobs: [First Jobs Academy](#) (a program of the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Maine and expanding to Massachusetts), [Kansas Workforce Partnership](#), [Linking](#)

[Employment, Abilities and Potential \(LEAP\)](#) (Cleveland, OH), and [Linking Learning to Life](#) (Chittenden County, New Hampshire) all offer summer job opportunities to the youth they serve. LEAP youth spend 10 weeks working in various departments at the Veterans Administration Medical Center facilities in Cleveland and other work sites. First Jobs Academy (FJA) places youth who have completed pre-employment training in unsubsidized summer jobs for 11 weeks. Youth earn between \$8.00 and \$11.00 per hour working for one of FJA's employer partners. Through a long standing partnership with Hannaford Bros. Co., FJA's anchor business partner, many youth work in various positions within local grocery stores.

Kansas Workforce Partnership operates the Summer Youth Employment Program for youth ages 16 to 21. Youth who complete job readiness training are placed in six to eight week subsidized summer jobs earning minimum wage for 20 to 30 hours per week. Kansas Workforce Partnership also partners with two community colleges to offer a summer technology program for older unemployed youth. Youth in the program receive training in a simulated work environment on how to build and repair computers.

Linking Learning to Life has two summer employment programs, the [Ready Set Work](#) program and the [Summer Work Crew](#). Youth in Ready Set Work participate for five weeks in an intensive summer program that combines classroom based employment skills training (held two days per week) and on-the-job work experience (three days a week). Youth are placed in various job sites with local businesses and organizations. Youth in Summer Work Crew work together three days per week for six weeks at Centennial Field, a sports complex at the University of Vermont. The youth are assigned jobs ranging from basic maintenance to painting to stadium upkeep.

Youth-Run Businesses/Entrepreneurship: In partnership with the local school district and other community agencies, [Hope Haven, Inc.](#) (Hawarden, Iowa) developed a high school career development class with a student-run business component. Students enrolled in the [Career and Self Exploration \(CASE\) class at West Sioux High School](#) work at the in-school coffee shop, [Falcon Joe's](#), in the morning before classes start. Youth earn partial class credit by completing the work experience and they also earn tips. Entrepreneurship is a central component of the [Tech Now Inc. Oklahoma High School High Tech Program](#). Youth produce and sell various products they create using the multimedia technology and entrepreneurship skills they develop through the program.

Service Projects and Volunteer Work: The [Able Trust High School High Tech \(HS/HT\) Program](#) (multiple locations throughout Florida) engages youth in volunteer work experiences through the Project Impact Initiative, a partnership with the Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida). As a part of [Project Impact](#), youth are paired with AmeriCorps service members from Volunteer Florida to develop and carry out service projects in their local communities.

Youth from the Independent Living Resource Center of Northeast Florida partnered with the AmeriCorps Duval Reads on a literacy initiative. Through a partnership with Florida State Parks AmeriCorps, youth from the Florida Crown Workforce Development Board HS/HT site worked on environmental preservation projects including building bat habitats and turtle runs at the state park.

Part-time Jobs: [Marriott Foundation's Bridges from School to Work](#) (Bridges) Program assists youth with obtaining unsubsidized jobs in their local community. The Bridges program partners with local schools to identify high school seniors or recent high school graduates with disabilities who need assistance finding employment. Part-time jobs are often the goal as youth are still attending high school or attending postsecondary classes, however some youth obtain full-time employment if appropriate to their situation. Bridges staff help youth find jobs by assigning an employer representative to work with each individual on identifying and applying for jobs that match their personal goals, interests, and skills.

Strategies & Tools for Providing Work Experiences

NCWD/Youth asked the programs described above to share their strategies and tools they use to engage youth in work experiences. Across all the programs, six trends emerged regarding strategies for engaging youth in work experiences:

- Programs prepare youth for work experiences through training and guidance in soft skills.
- Some programs also train youth in technical skills, or hard skills, needed for specific career pathways or work settings.
- Program staff devote significant time to developing and maintaining relationships with employers.
- Programs clearly communicate what is expected of employers, youth, and families before the start of a work experience.
- Programs carefully match youth to work experience opportunities based on individual interests and skills.
- Programs provide on-going support to youth and employers throughout the work experience.

1) Programs prepare youth for work experiences through training and guidance in soft skills.

Before youth participate in a work experience, youth programs engage them in training or class activities that develop their soft skills. Soft skills are every day, common sense skills that are important in all aspects of life. These are skills that employers expect workers to have from day one including communication skills, interpersonal skills, decision making skills, and lifelong learning skills. (For more details on soft skills, read the NCWD/Youth InfoBrief, [Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success](#).)

Many programs use the [Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills \(SCANS\)](#) as a guide for deciding which skills to focus upon. For example, [Able Trust Florida HS/HT Program](#) at Palm Bay High School (PBHS) aims to help youth develop problem solving, communication, and team work skills and teaches them how to select and use technology because these are key soft skills identified by SCANS.

Programs use different approaches to training youth in soft skills. Some year-round and in-school programs engage youth in activities that develop soft skills as a part of their weekly program meetings and classes. For example, youth participating in [LEAP](#) work on soft skills throughout the school year. Similarly, youth in the [CASE class at West Sioux High School](#) learn various soft skills including how to communicate well with others, a skill they need for working in the student-run coffee shop.

Other programs conduct soft skills training as a pre-employment activity shortly before youth participate in the work experience. As a part of [Open Meadow's Career Connections program](#), youth must complete several weeks of training at the offices of an employer partner. During the training, youth learn about professional work culture, career planning, competitive interviewing strategies, self marketing techniques, and networking skills. Employers assist with the training by leading workshops and providing workplace tours ([See an article by one employer partner, Portland Bureau of Development Services, about their involvement in Career Connection's training](#)).

Youth in [Linking Learning to Life's Training Interns and Partnering for Success \(TIPS\)](#) must complete 20 hours of pre-employment skills training before they start an internship. The training includes interactive activities, site visits to businesses, and employer presentations ([See the TIPS training course objectives, assessment rubric, and youth self assessment checklist](#)). Youth enrolled in the [Marriott Foundation's Bridges program](#) go through pre-placement training which teaches skills needed to meet employer expectations including appropriate behavior and suitable attire.

[Project Search](#) integrates soft skills training into the work day for youth in its internship program. Youth attend training class as a group at their work site for the first hour of the day and again at the end of the day. The Project Search program model makes on-site training possible through one large employer partnership. With all the youth working at one work site, the program coordinator can meet with them all together as a group daily.

[First Jobs Academy](#) (FJA) requires youth to complete four weeks (six hours per week) of pre-employment life skills and job retention skills training program to be eligible for a summer job placement. The training is conducted by business and community leaders at the University of Southern Maine (USM). Youth receive a \$25 stipend for each of the four weeks of training. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, FJA has published its pre-employment training curriculum ([see the First Jobs Academy Work Readiness Training for Child Welfare Involved Youth: Trainer Guide](#)). The curriculum is designed to help youth job seekers master knowledge, skills, and abilities in four main competency areas:

- *Communication*: How to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively; public speaking skills; writing work-related materials clearly and effectively.
- *Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving*: Sound reasoning and analytical thinking; how to use knowledge, facts, and data to solve workplace problems.
- *Professionalism*: Personal accountability and effective work habits, such as punctuality, working productively with others toward a goal, and time and workload management.
- *Teamwork & Collaboration*: How to build productive and professional working relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and customers; how to work with diverse teams; how to negotiate and manage conflict in the workplace.

2) Some programs also train youth in technical skills, or hard skills, needed for specific career pathways or work settings.

In addition to soft skills training, a few of the programs prepare youth for work experiences by training them in technical skills (also referred to as “hard skills”). This is common among programs that connect youth to work experiences in a specific occupational sector or career pathway. For example, youth participating in the [Able Trust Florida HS/HT Program](#) at PBHS learn technical skills specific to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The program focuses on helping youth build STEM skills because its mission is to expose youth to career opportunities in this particular field.

During the school year, the HS/HT youth participate in engineering technology classes as a part of their high school curriculum and in the robotics team after school. Through both the class and the team activities, youth learn several technical skills under the tutelage of mentors who are science and engineering professionals at local businesses. Each mentor teaches a specific skill, such as electronics, computer aided design, and animation. Youth apply the skills they are learning by working as a team to build a robot. Teams of youth work on learning each skill for about three weeks before they rotate to another skill area. At the end of the school year, the program helps the youth find

internships with local employers in STEM professions so they can practice their technical skills as well as their soft skills in a real workplace. To learn more about the HS/HT Program at PBHS, [see the program's website](#).

The [Tech Now Inc. Oklahoma High School High Tech Program](#) aims to help youth develop a combination of multimedia technology and business skills. Because the program provides work experiences through student entrepreneurship, the program trains youth on the various multimedia technology skills they need to create their own products. They also learn business skills needed to market and sell their creations. On the business side, youth gain an understanding of manufacturing costs, profits, and losses. On the technology side, they develop skills in desktop publishing, desktop manufacturing, computer animation, and digital media production ([See Tech Now's brochure for more details about this youth entrepreneurship program model](#)).

3) Program staff devote significant time to developing and maintaining relationships with employers.

Many work experiences involve partnerships with local employers who agree to serve as work sites and provide on-the-job supervision. Programs that engage youth in internships, summer jobs, and part-time jobs typically have staff who are responsible for developing and managing employer relationships. Sometimes called job developers, these staff handle all aspects of employer relations from making an initial inquiry about partnering to establishing worksite agreements with employers to responding to any employer concerns during the work experience.

When asked to describe the steps they take to develop employer relationships, [LEAP](#) staff said it takes a combination of continuously making new contacts and building on existing relationships. LEAP's Employment Specialist finds out about possible employers through online research, attending community meetings, and asking friends and colleagues. Sometimes, LEAP staff make cold calls or send letters of introduction ([See LEAP's Letter to Employers](#)) explaining the program and inquiring about an employer's interest in becoming a partner. When possible, staff leverage personal connections to make in-roads with employers. For example, one staff member approached a friend who had a small business about serving as a summer work site.

The Director of the [Able Trust Florida HS/HT Program](#) at PBHS says he also uses a variety of methods to identify and build relationship with employer partners. One way he finds employer partners is by talking with parents and volunteers who assist with other aspects of the program. Involving parents on the program's advisory committee helps build a network of contacts. He also tries to get to know human resources staff at local businesses. Attending Chamber of Commerce meetings provides opportunities to learn who the local players are and to network with employers. The Director also builds on his

relationships with the program's volunteer mentors. Some mentors help open doors within their companies to developing work experiences for youth.

LEAP staff emphasize that it takes time to build employer relationships. The Program Director says, "It doesn't happen overnight." Programs often start out by asking employers to partner on activities other than work experiences. As employers get to know the program staff and youth, they become more open to serving as a work site. The [Marriott Foundation's Bridges program](#) develops relationships with some local employers by asking them to participate in job shadowing days and workplace visits. Programs can also involve employers initially as guest speakers for soft skills training classes.

While programs engaging youth in youth-run businesses and entrepreneurship experiences may not need employer partners to serve as work sites, employers can still play a valuable role. The [CASE class at West Sioux High School](#) involves local employers as guest instructors (a local baker taught students about money management) and advisors (a flower shop owner has assisted with mock interviews).

When making the case to employers about partnering to provide work experiences, it is important to develop a win-win arrangement in which both the employer and the program benefit. The trick is learning what partnership benefits appeal to different employers. LEAP has found that many employers are motivated to partner because they want to diversify their workforce. By providing a short-term work experience to a youth with a disability in LEAP's program, the employer has an opportunity to see whether the young person has potential to fill their workforce needs without having to hire him or her. LEAP pays the youth wages during the work experience so it is a no risk opportunity for the employer that could help them fill a future vacancy.

Programs often use past success stories to make the case to employers and illustrate how the program works. Some examples include:

- Marriott Foundation Bridges from School to Work's Success Stories – [Terrell's Story \(video\)](#) and [DiShoun's Story \(video\)](#)
- Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation's [Project Search Success Story Video](#)
- Linking Learning to Life's [TIPS Success Stories](#) and [Employer Testimonial \(video\)](#)

Programs also use other outreach materials to attract employers and other partners. For example, [Linking Learning to Life's TIPS Informational Flyer](#) provides a quick overview of what the program entails for both youth and employers. The [TIPS Program Public Service Announcement](#) features youth, employers, and school partners talking about their experiences with the internship program.

4) Programs clearly communicate what is expected of employers, youth, and families before the start of a work experience.

Once employers have agreed to provide a work experience, programs establish worksite partnership agreements to ensure employers clearly understand what is expected of them and how the work experience will be structured. The [Able Trust Florida HS/HT Program](#) at PBHS uses an [Internship Agreement](#) that asks employers to specify the duties and specific work hours they are assigning to the youth. The agreement also indicates who will be the onsite supervisor and the location where the youth will be assigned to work. By signing the agreement, the employers commits to providing the youth with a specific number of total hours of work and assigning tasks that enable the youth to develop career readiness and occupation specific competencies through the experience. Employers also agree to consult with the program coordinator about any job performance concerns before making any decisions about terminating the internship.

LEAP communicates what it expects of employers through its [Internship Learning Contract](#). The contract specifies the employer's role during the internship which includes:

- Providing assignments and duties to the youth that enable youth to learn through the internship experience;
- Mentoring the youth throughout the internship;
- Assessing the youth's performance and providing feedback to the program coordinator; and
- Notifying the coordinator of any job performance issues or problems and any changes in the youth's supervisor.

Programs also ensure that youth and families understand what is expected of them during the work experience before it starts. The Able Trust HS/HT Program at PBHS requires youth and families to sign the [PBHS Internship Agreement](#). The agreement outlines the guidelines that youth must follow throughout the internship including maintaining a minimum grade point average, dressing and grooming themselves appropriately for the workplace, following all applicable health and safety laws, and conducting themselves professionally on the job (specific expectations are described in the agreement). The agreement also explains that youth are responsible for their own transportation and how they are expected to handle absences and workplace complaints.

Youth in [LEAP's](#) HS/HT program and their parent or guardian sign the same [Internship Learning Contract](#) that the worksite supervisor signs. The contract provides youth and

their families with details about the internship location and supervisor contact, the work schedule, the assigned duties and any expected products or projects to be completed, and what the student will be paid and how and when paychecks will be processed. Youth in LEAP programs have a variety of disabilities so the contract also includes details about any resources or accommodations the youth needs to succeed at work.

To ensure that families of youth who are minors are fully informed and provide consent for their youth's participation in a work experience, LEAP uses a [Wage Agreement letter](#) that youth, the parent or guardian, and the employer sign. The agreement outlines all the program details, including the wage and payment information.

[Linking Learning to Life's](#) TIPS internship program uses an [Internship Training Plan](#) to communicate the training objectives that both youth and employers agree to focus on throughout the internship. Youth and their supervisors fill in details of how the youth will practice and develop specific soft skills on the job. The targeted soft skills are organized into three categories – communication skills, executive skills, and problem solving skills – and youth and employers can add other skills to the plan as appropriate to the youth's work assignment and personal goals. The youth and employer revisit the plan throughout the internship to rate youth's performance and record progress.

The [Marriott Foundation's Bridges program](#) holds a one-day training and orientation for youth and their families, called Youth/Parent Orientations (YPO). The YPO session addresses the importance of work in life, how the program helps youth make a successful transition to work, what employers expect of workers, and how to appropriately interact with employers.

5) Programs carefully match youth to work experience opportunities based on interests and skills.

Programs aim to match youth with work experience opportunities that align with their career interests and skills. Making the right match increases the success of the work experience by ensuring that youth feel motivated from the start to participate fully. Programs use various means to gather information about youth's interests and skills including one-on-one interviews with youth and families, [career interest inventories \(see the practice brief on this topic\)](#), and observations of youth during other program activities.

[Open Meadow's](#) Career Connection program uses a career advisor component to help youth identify their interests and skills and find corresponding internship sites. Each youth participant has a career advisor who works with him or her on defining goals, creating an action plan, and making connections with local employers in relevant occupation fields. While the program has established employer partnerships in four specific career fields – business, healthcare, banking/finance, and public

service/government – career advisors will work with youth to develop other worksite options if their career goals do not align with these fields.

The [Marriott Foundation's Bridges program](#) uses a similar approach whereby staff assists youth to create a Career Development Plan. The plan identifies the youth's career interests and goals, both long-term and short-term, as well as potential obstacles and strategies for overcoming them.

Staff of both [LEAP](#) and [Able Trust Florida HS/HT Program](#) at PBHS get to know youth's skills and interests throughout the school year during other program activities. By talking with youth about career interests and observing them in the group activities and projects, the staff gain insights about what types of work experiences would be a good fit for each youth.

Youth in LEAP also identify their interests by completing career interest inventories. Together, youth and staff use the results and other information to create a student plan that includes the youth's interests and goals. A few months before youth will be placed in summer work experiences, staff identify existing or new employer partners who could provide a work experience matching the youth's interests and goals. LEAP has one large employer partnership with the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center where youth can work in one of a number of offices and departments depending on their interests and skills. When a youth has a career interest that does not align with the opportunities at the VA Medical Center, LEAP staff reach out to other local employers in search of the right fit. LEAP's Program Director explains, "The large employer partner model works well for some youth but not for all youth."

When one youth demonstrated strong skills and interest in working with computers, the LEAP Employment Specialist searched online for information about local organizations and businesses to approach about partnering. She discovered that a local nonprofit that operates a public computer center was looking for volunteers to staff the center. She called and set up a meeting with the nonprofit to discuss the possibility of arranging a work experience for the youth. She explained that LEAP could pay the youth for working in the nonprofit's computer center if the nonprofit agreed to provide any needed training and supervision. The nonprofit agreed and as a result the youth gained valuable experience working as a computer lab assistant. His duties included teaching others how to use the computers for emailing and conducting job searches.

[First Jobs Academy](#) (FJA) uses an assessment process to inform its selection and placement of youth in work experiences. A FJA assessment team includes the FJA advisor, staff of social service organizations that referred the youth, and families or guardians. Through the assessment process, FJA determines whether the youth would be successful in sustaining employment in a structured work experience program. The

assessment process is also used to identify resources and support the youth already has and any additional resources he or she will need to be successful in the program.

Youth in FJA share information about themselves, including academic and career goals, by writing an essay (a requirement of the selection process) and participating in an interview with the employer. Interviews are not used to screen out a prospective participant but instead to help the youth and employer get to know one another.

[Kansas Workforce Partnership](#) conducts a job fair as a part of the Summer Youth Employment Program. The job fair takes place during the program's week-long new hire orientation process. Youth interview with numerous employers during the job fair so that both parties can determine whether a particular summer job placement is a good match.

6) Programs provide on-going support to youth and employers throughout the work experience.

To ensure a work experience is successful for everyone involved, programs maintain communication with both the youth and employers from the first to the last day. While some programs have daily or weekly contact with youth to monitor their progress, other programs conduct first-week, midpoint, and last-week work site visits at a minimum. [LEAP](#) and the [Able Trust Florida HS/HT Program](#) at PBHS both conduct a minimum of three visits. Program staff emphasize to both youth and employers that they should contact the program right away if any concerns or questions arise in between visits. The program staff regularly solicit feedback from the worksite supervisors so they can track the youth's progress and provide job coaching on areas needing improvement.

[Project Search](#) has a unique model that provides daily on-site job coaching and support. The program coordinator meets daily with youth before and after their work hours at the work site. As a part of the partnership agreement, the employer provides a dedicated meeting space for all the youth interns to meet daily. This approach allows the youth to work on soft skills in their morning group class and then immediately practice the skills on the job the same day. The after-work meetings provide an opportunity for the program coordinator to coach youth on any challenges they may have experienced at work that day. Youth also receive support from worksite mentors who collaborate with the program staff on coaching youth on the job.

While [First Jobs Academy](#) (FJA) started out by using program staff as job coaches, they changed their approach to on-the-job support by training the employer's staff on how to be effective workplace mentors to young people. Employer partners' staff participate in [FJA's Enhanced Management Training Program](#), a 16-hour curriculum taught by experienced youth service professionals (The curriculum has been published with the support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation). The training educates managers and supervisors on issues related to adolescent development, experiences of youth in the

child welfare system (the primary youth population served), working with different learning styles, and substance abuse intervention.

Once work site supervisors are trained, the FJA program advisor provides ongoing support and brokers connections to any needed resources through relationships with each youth's social service provider and family or caregiver.

For the Summer Youth Employment Program, [Kansas Workforce Partnership](#) hired and trained individuals with experience working with youth to serve as mentors to all participants. Mentors received one week of preparatory training that included how to recruit and work with youth, expected standards of youth conduct and behavior management, and ways to conduct training and work with employers. The mentors worked alongside other program staff to help youth develop work readiness skills, explore the world of work, and consider long-term career and education planning.

An important aspect of supporting youth during work experiences is providing feedback on their performance and growth. Programs typically ask work site supervisors to complete youth evaluations. LEAP uses a [Worksite Progress Report](#) to collect supervisor feedback on a specific set of soft skills as well as general comments. The Able Trust HS/HT program at PBHS uses a [Student Evaluation Form](#).

Other Tools and Resources

NCWD/Youth's publication, [*High School/High Tech Program Guide: A Comprehensive Transition Program Promoting Careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math for Youth with Disabilities*](#), includes guidance for programs and schools on developing different types of work experiences. [See Chapter 3: Career Preparation and Work-based Learning Experiences](#) for strategies and resources related to establishing internships, service work activities, and entrepreneurship projects. See [Chapter 7: Launching a HS/HT Program](#) for guidance on developing community partnerships and conducting community resource mapping.

Developing successful employer partnerships requires a strong understanding of employers' needs and goals. NCWD/Youth's [Guideposts for Employer Success](#) describes what youth programs need to know about employers' needs with regard to hiring any job applicant, as well as additional needs employers may have in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. Other publications focused on understanding employers and developing effective partnerships include:

- [Strategies for Youth Workforce Programs to Become Employer-Friendly Intermediaries](#)
- [Making the Connections: Growing and Supporting New Organizations-- Intermediaries](#)

Programs interested in engaging youth in entrepreneurship can find guidance in NCWD/Youth's [*Road to Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities.*](#)

[*Internships: The On-Ramp to Employment, A Guide for Students with Disabilities to Getting and Making the Most of an Internship*](#), is a publication by the National Consortium on Leadership & Disability for Youth (NCLD-Youth), designed for youth interested in finding and succeeding in an internship.

The [National Service-Learning Clearinghouse](#) provides [toolkits](#) and other resources for engaging youth in service projects and volunteer work using a service learning approach. The [National Service Inclusion Project](#) provides guidance to service organizations on how to fully include individuals with disabilities as active service members and volunteers.

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