

## Career Exploration in Action

In order to make informed career and educational decisions, all young people need opportunities to participate in a range of career exploration activities. Career exploration activities are experiences at school and in the community that help young people to (a) identify how their interests, values, and skills relate to careers of interest; (b) describe the skills and activities associated with those careers; and, (c) identify the post-secondary training, two-year, four-year, or graduate degree programs needed to successfully pursue those careers. Career exploration activities can take many forms including informational interviews with employers, career-related guest speakers, workplace visits and tours, job shadowing, career fairs and career days, career camps, hands-on career projects, and career-focused mentoring.

Research indicates that youth who have participated in career exploration and other transition services in a quality learning environment have higher career search self-efficacy (Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, in press). Solberg and colleagues define quality learning environments as those that engage youth in developmental activities known to promote successful youth transitions (these developmental activities are outlined in the [Guideposts for Success](#)). Their study further indicates that those youth with greater career search self-efficacy are more highly engaged in goal setting, which further predicts both their motivation to

*This Innovative Strategies Practice Brief provides practical examples and resources used by promising and exemplary youth programs to engage youth in career exploration. The youth programs and school systems 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.*

attend school and academic self-efficacy.

Career exploration activities are offered by community-based youth programs as well as by schools. A review of all the Innovative Strategies program profiles indicates many programs and schools engage youth in at least two or more types of career exploration. Strategies and tools used by several Innovative Strategies programs to engage youth in the different forms of career exploration are described below.

### Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is an activity in which youth gain an up-close look at the world of work by accompanying a professional or professionals in the workplace as they do their work. Job shadowing provides an opportunity to see firsthand what tasks a professional does, to learn what skills and knowledge it takes to do the tasks, and to get a feel for what the work environment and routine is like. Job shadowing may be a one-on-one activity, in which one youth is paired with one professional, or it can be a group activity in which a small group of youth accompanies the professional. While a job shadowing experience may

be as short as a few hours, a half-day to full-day opportunity is ideal and some job shadowing experiences last for more than one day. A longer job shadowing experience ensures that youth have enough time to get familiar with the work environment, meet various people who work there, and learn about the work that they do. It also provides a chance for the youth to observe the professional who is being shadowed and his/her co-workers completing a range of tasks. The following examples and strategies for job shadowing activities were provided by [Bay Cove Academy's Career Development Program](#), the [Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida \(CILNCF\) High School/High Tech Program](#), the [Iowa Transition Alliance Program \(TAP\)](#), and [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Career and Technical Education Division](#).

*1) Use Youth's Career Interests to Identify and Recruit Employer Partners for Job Shadowing*

[Bay Cove Academy's Career Development Program](#) provides both school-wide and individualized job shadowing opportunities. Each year, as



Bay Cove plans its school-wide National Groundhog Job Shadowing Day event, staff poll the students about their career interests and then reach out to employers that match those interests. Some of the businesses and employers that have hosted students for job shadowing in recent years are the zoo, the aquarium, the radio station, and the New England TV sports network. When Bay Cove Academy arranges an individual job shadowing experience for a student, the staff starts by reviewing that student's specific career interests and goals. For example, one student was specifically interested in working at Foot Locker so the staff contacted the store and asked if the youth could spend some time shadowing the employees to learn what the job entails. When it comes time to recruit employer partners, Bay Cove uses outreach materials such as [save the date flyers](#) and [recruitment letters](#) as well as direct phone calls to previous partners and new contacts.

Matching the opportunity to the youth's specific interest is also the approach that the [Iowa Transition Alliance Program \(TAP\)](#) takes. TAP, a joint program of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and the Iowa Department of Education, helps high school students or graduates, ages 16 to 25, who are eligible for VR services prepare for and transition to employment, independent living, and postsecondary education. Job shadowing is one of the various strategies that TAP staff use to help youth explore careers. Prior to organizing a job shadowing experience, the TAP Coordinator gets to know each student and his/her career interests by participating in the students' individualized education program (IEP) team meetings. TAP Coordinators also

use career assessments to help students identify their interests and skills. Using information from the IEP meetings and career assessments, TAP coordinators help students identify some local employers where they could learn more about a specific career interest. For example, the Waterloo Community Schools TAP coordinator helped one student who was interested in working with cars to obtain a job shadowing experience at a car dealership. During his job shadow, the student had a chance to learn about various jobs at the dealership including changing engine oil, auto detailing, and working with the auto parts department.

With support from the [Able Trust](#), the [Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida \(CILNCF\) High School/High Tech Program](#) engages youth in a combination of job shadowing and mentoring as part of the National Disability Mentoring Day each year in October. [National Disability Mentoring Day \(DMD\)](#) is a national event organized by the American Association of People with Disabilities that provides opportunities for youth and other job seekers with disabilities to explore careers and connect to employers. CILNCF and other youth programs throughout Florida use the [Disability Mentoring Day Interest Form](#) provided by Able Trust to find out what careers youth are most interested in before the DMD event. The Interest Form asks youth to select their first, second, and third choice among 10 career clusters. To ensure youth understand what type of jobs are a part of each career cluster, the form provides questions about the youth's interest in the types of jobs, tasks, and skills that are typical to that career field. For example, the Business and Marketing career cluster includes

the following questions: "Are you organized, accurate and self-motivated? Are you a leader? Do you enjoy organizing people and planning events? Do you like computers and business machines? Do you like creating reports? Do you like marketing things? Do you enjoy working with numbers?" CILNCF uses the information youth provide on this form as well as other knowledge of the youth they serve to match youth with a workplace mentor and job shadowing experience that best fits the youth's interests.

## *2) Provide Employers with Guidance on Hosting Job Shadowing*

Guidance and support for employers is a key component of the [Students@Work](#) job shadowing initiative, a collaborative effort between the [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction](#), First Gentleman Robert Eaves, and the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE). Students@Work was launched as a statewide initiative for middle school students in 2011. In its first year, Students@Work provided job shadowing opportunities for 17,000 middle school students by partnering with small and large employers including the State Employees' Credit Union (SECU), North Carolina Highway Patrol, Cisco, IBM, and EMC<sup>2</sup>.

The Students@Work initiative has developed a [toolkit for employers](#) to help them prepare to host a job shadowing day at their workplace. The toolkit includes an action plan for job shadowing that outlines steps for employers to take. The steps include: 1) Get senior management on board and make a commitment to participate; 2) Contact the local job shadowing coordinator (contact information for



local coordinators is provided on the Students@Work website); 3) Set the agenda for the event (a sample schedule is provided in the toolkit); 4) Develop a message for students that employees will communicate during their interaction with students (suggested topics include workplace expectations, employability skills, importance of education to employment success, how academic skills are applied on the job); and 5) Provide feedback to the initiative after the event. The toolkit provides more detailed instructions and suggestions for each action step including what responsibilities the employer can expect the school to handle and tips from past employer participants. A [video produced by one of the employer partners, EMC<sup>2</sup>](#), is also available to give other employers a picture of what a job shadowing day may entail. While employers design their own agenda, the suggested schedule consists of a large group welcome and overview of the employer's business, two to four hours of one-on-one job shadowing in which each student is matched with an employee, a lunch presentation and discussion with a business leader, and a tour of the workplace.

[CILNCF](#) and other youth programs participating in Disability Mentoring Day in Florida also provide guidance to employers on hosting job shadowing. The [Disability Mentoring Day Mentor Instructions](#) outline various steps to being a good job shadowing host. Employers are asked to start by introducing themselves and explaining the work that their company does followed by a discussion with the youth about their own interests and what they would like to do and learn during the job shadow. Employers are asked to provide a workplace tour, introduce the

youth to co-workers, and explain the job duties of employees. Employers are also asked to explain and demonstrate their own work tasks and provide opportunities, when appropriate, for the youth to complete work tasks under supervision. Youth should be encouraged and given time to ask any questions they have about the workplace and the work that employees do. CILNCF also uses the [Top Ten Tips for Mentors](#) with dos and don'ts for employers and the [One-on-One Mentoring Tips](#), which includes questions and topics to discuss with youth throughout the day and suggests some office skills to demonstrate and explain to youth during the job shadow.

### *3) Provide Youth with Structured Assignments to Maximize Learning*

During job shadowing, students can benefit from assignments that encourage them to gather information from what they see, hear, and do during the activity and think critically about how the experience connects to their career interests and goals. To provide structure to the job shadowing experience, [Bay Cove Academy](#) has students complete a [career scavenger hunt activity](#). This assignment is used primarily for group shadowing experiences and requires students to work as a team to answer the scavenger hunt questions. This provides an opportunity for students to develop team work skills, one of the many soft skills that employers look for in new employees. Students receive a prize for achieving the goal of answering all the questions. When a student participates in an individual job shadowing activity, Bay Cove Academy asks him/her to complete a [student evaluation form](#) with questions about what she/he learned and how he/she will apply the new information to career planning.

Another structured assignment that Bay Cove Academy uses for job shadowing is an [interviewing worksheet](#).

The [Iowa Transition Alliance Program \(TAP\)](#) asks youth to complete a [job shadowing evaluation form](#) with various reflection questions. The form includes a place for youth to record what they learned about the job they shadowed including basic duties, work hours, and the type of education and training needed for the job. They are also asked what they liked and didn't like about the job and whether they would consider pursuing it as a career. Finally, they are asked what other ideas for careers may have arisen as a result of the job shadowing experience. The form also requests that youth provide suggestions for improving the experience. After the job shadowing experience, the TAP coordinator discusses these questions and others with students and helps the youth decide what next steps to take to further explore their interests or pursue their career and education goals.

### *4) Ask Employers for Feedback, Testimonials, and Continued Partnership*

Programs collect and use employer feedback to continuously improve the job shadowing experience for both employers and youth. For example, [Bay Cove Academy](#) also asks both employers ([see form](#)) and teachers ([see form](#)) to complete Job Shadow Day evaluations. The evaluation includes questions about how prepared the employer felt, how they benefited, suggestions for improving the experience, what support they would like, and whether they would be willing to participate again. The [Students@Work](#) initiative also requests employer feedback by encouraging





employers to email their comments on the experience to First Gentleman Robert Eaves.

Some employers may be willing to provide testimonials about the experience that can be used for outreach to new employer partners. The Students@Work initiative uses employer testimonials on their [Employer Recruitment Flyer](#) and in [promotional videos](#).

The conclusion of a job shadowing experience is a great time to ask the employer about their interest in partnering in other ways. Bay Cove Academy has found that job shadowing experiences often lead to internship opportunities at the employer's workplace. Once employers meet students and get familiar with the program, they are willing to offer internships or volunteer in other ways such as serving as a guest speaker or providing a workplace tour for a group of youth. [CILNCF](#) has also found that some job shadowing experiences lead to summer internship opportunities and other types of support from the employer.

### Workplace Visits and Tours

Workplace visits and tours are activities in which an employer provides youth with an inside look at what the business does, how it operates, and the types of jobs its employees do. Workplace tours and visits are typically group activities although they could also be arranged for an individual youth. The following examples and strategies for workplace visits and tours were provided by the [CILNCF](#) High School/High Tech Program, the [Madison County High School/High Tech Program](#), the [Transitional Age Youth \(TAY\) Program](#), and the

### [University of Washington DO-IT Scholars Program](#).

#### *1) Identify Various Jobs that People Do in One Workplace*

Tours and visits are a great way to show youth a range of occupations and career options that may exist within one business or workplace. For example, youth in the [Transitional Age Youth \(TAY\) Program](#) learned about 27 different jobs when they visited the local airport. The [Madison County High School/High Tech Program](#) regularly takes youth on trips to visit different businesses where they can see and learn about multiple jobs. During their visit to the Wild Adventures Theme Park in Georgia, the youth received a behind the scenes tour which included learning about jobs in gardening, animal care, operating the rides, and enforcing the park's rules. On another trip, youth visited the Kennedy Space Center in Orlando, FL. In addition to having lunch with an astronaut, the youth had a chance to learn about the wide range of jobs people do at the Space Center from the jobs involved in designing and building space shuttles to jobs people do when a space shuttle is launched.

#### *2) Ask the Employer to Provide Some Hands-On Learning Opportunities*

Workplace tours and visits are most engaging when the employer is willing to provide hands-on opportunities for youth to experience some aspects of one or more jobs. The [DO-IT Scholars Program](#) at the University of Washington intentionally looks for employer partners in the high tech field that can provide hands-on activities for youth as a part of workplace tours. When youth in the program visited the

Seattle Biomedical Research Institute, they participated in simulated research experiments in the company's learning laboratory. Youth even got to dress the part, wearing researcher lab coats as a part of the activity. Microsoft Corporation is another employer partner that provides workplace tours for DO-IT Scholars. As a part of their visit, youth get to try out different accessible and assistive technology products in [Microsoft's Inclusive Innovation Showroom](#). Because DO-IT Scholars is a program for youth with disabilities, it provides opportunities for youth to learn how they can obtain and use assistive technology, if needed, at work and at home through all of its career exploration activities.

When the [CILNCF](#) High School/High Tech Program took youth to visit a water treatment facility, the employer partner gave youth the opportunity to test the water themselves. During their visit to Kennedy Space Center, youth in the [Madison County High School/High Tech Program](#) enjoyed lots of hands-on learning opportunities such as the space shuttle simulator and walk on the moon activity.

### Guest Speakers & Employer Presentations

While some employers may be hesitant to host a youth or group of youth at their workplace, they may be more willing to come to the youth program or school to talk about careers. Guest speakers and employer presentations are activities in which one or more employers or professionals come to where youth are to share information about their career and have a discussion with youth. The following examples and strategies for guest speakers and employer presentations were provided



by the [CILNCF High School/High Tech Program](#), [Linking Learning to Life](#), and the [University of Washington DO-IT Scholars Program](#).

*1) Reach Out to Diverse Local Employers and Professionals Including Those Matching Youth's Interests*

The goal of career exploration is to expose youth to multiple career options, including those they are currently most interested in. It is important to target employers and professionals in the careers that most interest youth while also exposing them to some new, perhaps less familiar careers. The [CILNCF High School/High Tech Program](#) accomplishes this by identifying and maintaining contacts with a vast pool of employers and professionals. Some of these partners include police officers, doctors, nurses, veterinarians, video game designers, and staff of the local University. About once every other month, CILNCF invites one of these partners to be a guest speaker during their afterschool workshops. By having regular guest speakers, the program ensures that youth learn about many different career options and meet various professionals in their local community.

The [DO-IT Scholars Program](#) often invites guest speakers to participate on a career discussion panel, providing youth with a chance to meet various professionals with different careers. One recent career panel included professionals who work at Microsoft and Amazon.com as well as an adaptive technology specialist. The DO-IT Scholars Program uses the career panel format for its annual career mentoring day. One year, Microsoft brought 15 employees who each do different jobs to speak to the group of

scholars about their careers. The event also includes time for the professionals to meet one-on-one or with a pair of students to review their resumes and discuss their career interests.

*2) Request Interactive Presentations and Provide Guidance to Employers on How to Make It Engaging*

To keep youth engaged throughout presentations by employers and professionals, programs provide guidance to employers on how to make it interactive. The [CILNCF High School/High Tech Program](#) asks employers to include hands-on activities related to their careers when possible. When CILNCF invited employees from a video game design company to speak, they brought some video games they were currently developing with them. Youth had an opportunity to test the games for bugs and learn how to fix any errors they found.

Interactive employer presentations are central to [Linking Learning to Life's Learn to Earn Program](#). The program staff recruit and train employer teams to come into the classroom at participating schools. The presentations are designed to engage the class of students in completing a task or solving a problem that the professionals deal with on the job. For example, one employer had students work in groups to design a building site plan using information about city zoning requirements, a permit application, and a cost estimate worksheet. Each presentation emphasizes how employees use math, science, and communication skills on the job. A video of one employer presentation is available online [featuring Pizzagalli Construction](#). [Linking Learning to Life](#) also provides a [sample presentation](#)

[given by IBM](#) on its website. The program's video, sample presentation, and [informational flyer](#) help to recruit employer partners and provide guidance on what an interactive presentation entails.

## Career Fairs and Career Days

Career fairs and career days are another way to have employers and professionals come to where youth are, either at school or in the community, to share information about their careers. Career fairs and career days typically involve multiple employers who meet with youth in groups and one-on-one during a career themed information fair or day-long event. These events may also include representatives from postsecondary education and training programs. The following examples and strategies for career fairs and career days were provided by [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Career and Technical Education Division](#) and [Bay Cove Academy's Career Development Program](#).

*1) Include Younger Youth and Tailor Activities to Youth's Age and Stage*

[Bay Cove Academy](#) holds one school-wide career fair for all students in grades 7 through 12. In keeping with its philosophy to expose students early and often to career options, they intentionally include students as early as 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the career fair so they have a chance to start thinking about what they need to do during high school to prepare for careers they are considering.

[North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Career and Technical Education Division](#) employs Career Development Coordinators who provide and coordinate career development services to students in



local schools and school systems. In Wake County, NC, the Career Development Coordinators and School-to-Career Coordinator organize two county-wide career day events each year – Great Explorations for 9<sup>th</sup> graders and Xtreme Beginnings for 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. While both events provide opportunities to explore various careers, the Xtreme Beginnings event for the older grades includes more emphasis on preparing for and finding employment and planning for postsecondary education. The Great Explorations event for 9<sup>th</sup> graders includes a Career and College Promise component which emphasizes the importance of getting college and career ready during the high school years.

## *2) Use Interactive Activities and Choices to Engage Youth*

Wake County's Great Explorations event includes opportunities for students to participate in career cluster demonstrations. The event is organized like a conference for students, including a career expo with representatives from all 16 career clusters. One activity during the event is modeled after the TV game show, "What's My Line?" Professionals in nontraditional careers describe what they do at work and students guess what their occupation is. Some of the professionals who have participated in the past include a sky diver, a female firefighter, a chef, and a falconer. The professionals each talk about how they got to where they are professionally. The CTE student organizations also present on their respective career fields.

During Wake County's Xtreme Beginnings event, students participate in practice job interviews with human resources professionals and attend

college and career expos. The Career Development Coordinators and the Wake County School-to-Career Coordinator invite local employers, businesses, and postsecondary institutions to participate in one of several ways. The [Xtreme Beginnings recruitment letter](#) described what roles they can play including conducting mock interviews, participating in informal career-oriented discussions, informing students about various postsecondary education options, and providing advice on professional appearance and conduct.

[Bay Cove Academy](#) gives its students a choice of employers they want to visit with during the career fair. They invite multiple employers to participate, including those who work in fields in which youth have expressed a specific interest. The students' experience during the career fair is structured by using a [questionnaire](#) that they must complete as they talk with different employers. Students receive an incentive, such as credit to make purchases at the school store, for completing the questionnaire.

Bay Cove encourages the employers to provide hands-on activities and work-related materials during the career fair. For example, many students are interested in working with animals so they have had professionals who are vet techs, veterinarians, and animal trainers bring the tools of their trade to the career fair. One professional brought x-rays of animals to demonstrate a part of the job. Bay Cove ensures that employer partners know what to expect, bring, and do as a part of the event by sending them guidance in advance (see their [Career Fair Information for Employers](#)).

## **Career-focused Mentoring**

Career-focused mentoring involves matching youth with adult mentors who assist them with career exploration in various ways. One advantage of career-focused mentoring is its capacity to provide a youth with more individualized support for exploring careers specific to his or her interests. The mentoring relationship can consist of in-person meetings and activities, online communication, or combination of both. What distinguishes career-focused mentoring from general mentoring is that the mentoring interactions are intentionally focused on helping youth identify and explore their career interests rather than just providing general support and encouragement. The following examples and strategies for Career Fairs and Career Days were provided by the [Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program \(RAMP\)](#)<sup>TM</sup> sites operated by [Florida Crown Workforce Board](#) and [Independent Living Resource Center \(ILRC\) of Northeast Florida](#) and the [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's E-Connect Project](#).

### *1) Use a Mentoring Plan and Individualized Goals to Focus Mentoring on Youth's Personal Interests*

Developing and tracking youth progress on an individualized mentoring plan is a central activity of the [Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program \(RAMP\)](#)<sup>TM</sup>. RAMP is a high tech career-focused mentoring program for youth with and without disabilities who are involved with or at-risk of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system. Each youth in RAMP meets regularly one-on-one with his or her mentor to develop and implement





the [individualized mentoring plan \(IMP\)](#). Mentors are caring adults recruited from the community, schools, employers, and partner organizations. Youth work with mentors to create their own IMPs by identifying their strengths, needs, and goals in [five areas of youth development](#): working; learning; thriving; connecting; and leading. The IMP goals and action plan include specific career interests the youth have and a plan for how the youth and mentor will work together on career exploration.

RAMP youth also participate in weekly group mentoring meetings with peers, during which they set a weekly goal ([see RAMP Weekly Goals Worksheet](#)) and discuss progress on their goal from the previous week. The weekly goals are typically short-term goals that relate to the youth's longer term goals for career exploration and other areas of development from the IMP. For example, one youth who has a long-term goal of obtaining an internship or job at a radio station may set a weekly goal to research information about a local radio station, what types of jobs people do at the station, and what skills, training, and professional qualities the radio station looks for when it hires interns and employees.

As youth's interests and goals are identified through the IMP and weekly goal setting activity, the RAMP program staff plan various career exploration activities that the youth participate in with their peers and mentors. The career exploration activities include visiting local businesses and places of employment, discussing different career options with employer guest speakers, job shadowing, and completing career-focused projects and service learning activities. For example, RAMP youth at

the [Florida Crown Workforce Board](#) and [Independent Living Resource Center \(ILRC\) of Northeast Florida](#) sites visited NASA's Kennedy Space Center to learn about different careers and to witness a space shuttle launch. Youth learned about a variety of jobs, including astronauts, administrators, engineers, technicians, and service staff, during the visit. At ILRC, a group of RAMP youth who shared an interest in careers working with animals worked together on a community service project at a local animal shelter. RAMP sites use mentoring and career exploration strategies found in two NCWD/Youth publications, [Paving the Way to Work: A Guide to Career-Focused Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities](#) and [High School/High Tech Program Guide: A Comprehensive Transition Program Promoting Careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math for Youth with Disabilities](#).

## *2) Provide Mentors and Mentees with Career-Focused Discussion Questions*

To help mentors and mentees focus their conversations on career exploration topics, it is helpful to provide discussion questions and assignments. Youth and mentors in the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)'s [E-Connect](#) project use discussion questions to guide their online mentoring relationship. E-Connect is a classroom based e-mentoring program through which schools match students with mentors who are employees from local businesses. The program is facilitated by a teacher who provides youth with weekly assignments to email their mentors about career-related questions. For example, the discussion questions provided to youth and

mentors prompt them to discuss what are some important skills that a person needs for any job, what are the skills the mentor needs to do his/her own job, and how did the mentor acquire these skills. The [E-Connect curricula](#) provide the weekly questions for youth, guidance to mentors on what to share in their responses, and other career exploration activities from the teacher to facilitate with youth in the classroom each week.

In addition to email conversations, E-Connect students meet their e-mentors at group events arranged and supported by the school and business. The [E-Connect Mentoring Program Manual](#), developed by the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota for Minnesota DEED, provides guidance on all mentor-mentee interactions including the in-person meetings. E-Connect sites host a first meeting between students and mentors at the school at the start of the program. After a few weeks of e-mentoring, students visit the mentor at their workplace to become more familiar with what their mentors do professionally and where they work. In this way, the second meeting functions like a workplace visit or tour, providing youth with an up close look at the world of work. As the program ends, a third meeting is held with mentors and students to celebrate what they learned and accomplished through the program and to thank the mentors.

## **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](#) provides guidance, tools, and multiple examples



of career exploration activities that youth programs and schools can use when planning their own activities.

The publication, [\*How to Build Partnerships for Career Exploration: Using Job Shadows to Explore the World of Work\*](#), by the Monadnock Center for Successful Transitions provides step by step guidance and tools for organizing job shadowing experiences for high school students through partnerships with postsecondary education institutions.

Those interested in offering career-focused mentoring can find strategies, tools, and templates in NCWD/Youth's publication, [\*Paving the Way to Work: A Guide to Career-Focused Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities\*](#) and the Institute on Community Integration at

the University of Minnesota's [\*E-Connect Mentoring Program Manual\*](#).

Training in workplace soft skills and career exploration activities often go hand-in-hand. The curriculum, [\*Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success\*](#), developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has easy-to-use hands-on activities that programs and schools can use to help youth develop soft skills in six areas: communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, and professionalism.

## References

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The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development issues. NCWD/Youth is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. The Collaborative is charged with assisting state and local workforce development systems to integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies. This Practice Brief was written by Mindy Larson. To obtain this publication in an alternate format please contact the Collaborative at 877-871-0744 toll free or email [contact@ncwd-youth.info](mailto:contact@ncwd-youth.info). This Practice Brief is part of a series of publications and newsletters prepared by the NCWD/Youth. All publications will be posted on the NCWD/Youth website at [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info). Please visit our site to sign up to be notified of future publications. This document was developed by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, funded by a grant/contract/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (Number #OD-16519-07-75-4-11). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply the endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor. Individuals may produce any part of this document. Please credit the source and support of federal funds.



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