



Work-based Learning With Piedmont

High Schoolers in Healthcare: Piedmont and the Newnan Central Educational Center

Piedmont Healthcare's work-based learning (WBL) partnership with the Central Educational Center (CEC) in Newnan helps serve students and hospitals alike by assigning aspiring high schoolers to hands-on roles in local hospitals. As just one of Piedmont's WBL programs that place students in facilities across the state, the Piedmont-CEC partnership has brought around 75 students into their formal WBL program with hundreds more having participated in other opportunities to get involved in the healthcare industry. Piedmont takes the time to interview students, determine what their interests are, and assign them to an office based on this conversation. When a student finishes their experience, Piedmont wants to leave behind a feeling of excitement about careers in the industry and positive expectations about what that work can look like. Additionally, Piedmont's investments ensure that they can strengthen their workforce pipeline by creating a greater number of skilled and interested employees moving forward.

Getting Started

The first step to setting up a WBL program of your own is to identify connections within the local school system where you plan on drawing students from. Many districts have one or more dedicated WBL coordinator who can help organize, plan, and market your program to students. These coordinators or others within CTAE likely already partner with businesses on WBL programming, which means they may have valuable input and expertise to offer your company as you begin the planning process. You will also work with schools on how you will select and onboard student employees, such as Piedmont's strategy of interviewing and assigning students to work units based on their interests. Matching students' work duties with their professional interests or pathway enrollment will help serve their own development and can help maximize return-on-investment for the company.

Advance Preparation

After figuring out the selection strategy and forming a partnership with local schools, Piedmont was able to figure out specifics of what the program looked like and how students would factor into their internal operations. Piedmont Student Placement Administrators also work with existing employees to exhibit patience and understanding with their new student workers, which helps create a work environment more conducive for learning and is more likely to leave the student with a positive impression of their operations. In a high-pressure field like healthcare, Piedmont stresses that employees should ease students in and ensure that they feel supported in their newly-assigned roles. The idea is that if a student feels welcomed as a nursing assistant, they are likely to feel that they would be welcomed back as a nurse down the road. Working with each high school, every Piedmont facility is independently tasked with establishing guidelines and directives to ensure student employees understand their role and are in a place to succeed in their experience.

Program Execution

The execution of Piedmont's WBL program depends on their connections with schools like the Central Educational Center. As they work with a variety of districts, Piedmont must build bonds between contacts at their facilities and the different schools they draw students. These may also look different depending on the needs of each relationship. In any case, proper communication between schools, businesses, educators, and students will help ease the onboarding process and make students more comfortable throughout their work experience.

In the end, students are often eager to engage with these opportunities and to explore careers in different industries. Marci Hanson, a Piedmont Student Placement Administrator, notes that students in their program are naturally excited about their chance to work at one of their healthcare facilities; it is the job of the business to create opportunities to turn this energy into real skills and future career interest as a result of their WBL experience.

Keys to success:

- Create connections between your business and schools, including CTAE programming
- Work with administrators/ instructors to develop a student selection strategy
- Ensure your current employees are positive and willing to teach student employees
- Communicate development/ evaluation plans to help students build the right skills