

NWCET Best Practices

Title: Cle Elum-Roslyn High School – Providing Career & Technical Education Students with Effective Industry Experiences

Challenge

The challenge of the Career & Technical Education (CTE) program at Cle Elum Roslyn High School, a rural school district in Eastern Washington, was to develop relationships with local industry to facilitate the process of providing students with opportunities to explore viable career options.

Solution

Cle Elum-Roslyn School District is located in rural Kittitas County on the eastern slopes of the Cascade mountain range in Washington State. K-12 enrollment is approximately 1000, with 300+ enrolled in 9-12. The Cle Elum-Roslyn High School Career and Technical Education program serves 240 of the 300 students enrolled in the school with a 110 FTE (full-time equivalent). Industry in the area is made up primarily of small business service establishments (restaurants, retail stores, etc); new home construction; a software/database company; logging; and a large development enterprise new to the area.

In the interest of providing students with local career options and pathways, the CTE program at Cle Elum-Roslyn High School has developed a strong and rich process whereby students have a wealth of opportunities to explore careers and interact in meaningful ways with local industry. The effectiveness of this program is a result of active relationship building with local industry by the high school Work-Based Learning Coordinator. Active and engaged industry Advisory Committees have grown out of these relationships. Industry professionals from all sectors are invited to participate in Advisory Committee activities, speak as guest lecturers in related classes, or simply come to observe the program in action. This provides local employers an inside look at and input on what is happening in the school and how future workers are being prepared.

Career Exploration Process

CTE students are considered “completers” if they participate in the following process:

1. Career research and interviews with industry professionals
2. Job shadow
3. Capstone project based course
4. Community Resource Training / Industry Internship

This process roughly follows the student year by year through the high school career. Timing is flexible with one exception: the career research component must be the first in the process and typically occurs during freshman year. The three remaining activities may follow in varying order, or when appropriate, can occur simultaneously. Each component is described in more detail following.

Career Research - required

The student researches careers. Research includes interviews with industry professionals. This activity, done in freshman year, helps students learn about various careers, and enables them to focus the remainder of their CTE efforts.

Job Shadow – required

Previously optional, this activity is now required of all entering freshman. Job shadow assignments are for one – two hours per day for one week. Students may participate in multiple job shadows. This experience prepares the student for upcoming project-based coursework and is an excellent precursor to Community Resource Training/Work Based Learning Internship. Job shadows provide a variety of industry experiences and enable the students to begin to further clarify their career options.

Capstone Project Based Course – Optional (however, students need this to be considered a ‘completer’)

Typically done as a junior, this course pulls together all that has been learned and experienced thus far. Using a project-based approach, students are challenged with tasks and activities designed to simulate the workplace. The capstone course is typically undertaken junior year.

Community Resource Training (CRT) /Work-Based Learning Internship – optional

Although this final component is optional, it is highly recommended when appropriate placement is available. The CRT program follows overarching state guidelines (e.g., job site safety inspections, credit hour requirements), but each district implements the program according to its own unique parameters and local industry needs and resource availability. CRT assignments are unpaid. The reason for this is twofold: a) unpaid internships, by their nature, focus more on learning than doing and b) unpaid internships remove the potential of a student intern displacing a paid worker. Before the internship begins, the Cle Elum-Roslyn High School CRT program requires a signed agreement by the employer that the internship assignment will not replace a paid position.

There are three major components of the CRT program – securing industry placement and mentors; administering the program; and student responsibilities and activities.

The CRT program at Cle Elum-Roslyn High School is administered entirely by the onsite Work-Based Learning (WBL) Coordinator. This individual holds, at the minimum, a state vocational teaching license with an accompanying Work-Based Learning endorsement. State universities offer programs specifically addressing requirements for this endorsement. In addition to specific state requirements, a successful WBL coordinator communicates well with students and the community. Networking ability is essential in order to develop relationships with local industry that can grow into opportunities for students. Additionally, a thorough understanding of legal and procedural requirements is important in adhering to the rigorous documentation requirements for a CRT program.

The WBL Coordinator explores and develops potential internship opportunities through recruitment via Advisory Committees and other community contacts. Important relationships with local industry that develop into CRT opportunities are frequently initiated during Market Analysis research for curriculum review. Oftentimes, due to exposure to the CTE program via Advisory Committee and other education/industry outreach activities, volunteers from the community come forward with placement opportunities. Alternately, the student may find his or her own placement.

The WBL Coordinator inspects each potential job site for appropriateness and safety. Once all physical requirements have been met, the WBL Coordinator trains the onsite supervisor on pedagogical issues and verifies with the supervisor that the internship will be more learning than doing. The potential manager is apprised of documentation requirements regarding student attendance and performance. The amount of time for this pre-internship training varies according to placement, student and experience of potential supervisor. Clearly, first time placements are more time intensive. Once the internship is underway, the WBL coordinator makes site visits twice per grading period to observe the student at work and speak with both employer and student on site. Students turn in weekly signed time sheets to the WBL coordinator, who is then responsible for tracking hours for student credit and conversion into FTEs. The WBL coordinator also addresses any job-site problems that may arise during the internship and endeavors to turn them into learning opportunities for the student. Finally, at the close of the internship, the employer evaluates the experience from his/her perspective with the WBL Coordinator.

Prior to beginning CRT, the student submits a paper clearly stating her or his goals and objectives for the internship experience. Midway through the grading period, or at any other time deemed appropriate by the student, employer or WBL Coordinator, the student revisits the initial goals and objectives and adjusts them if necessary. A concluding paper is turned in at the close of the grading period, summarizing experiences and level of success in attaining goals. The student is also responsible for turning in signed time sheets on a weekly basis.

The CRT generally occurs outside school hours plus a period during the day. A typical work schedule would be early morning and first period or alternately last period and after school. The state requirement to receive full credit for a CRT placement is 360 hours on the job.

Student Outcomes and Benefits

Longitudinal statistics on completers of the Cle Elum-Roslyn CTE program are difficult to obtain due to legal constraints on tracking students using Social Security Numbers. In the future, the Consolidated Student Reporting System will be capable of tracking students marked for follow-up through post secondary institutions and into the job market. Currently, however, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests the Cle Elum-Roslyn High School CTE program is successful in providing students means to explore career options and gain skills that prepare them for their desired career or alternately, viable jobs that will enable them to support themselves through training and/or higher education on

their way to a desired career. Opportunities to mature through challenging internship experiences ready students to be contributing members of the community.

Case studies are the clearest demonstration of program effectiveness.

- A student's first job shadow experience was in the food services area as a dishwasher – an experience not entirely to her liking. The following year, she chose to shadow the manager of the same establishment during the early morning rounds of prepping for the day, scheduling and facility inspection. She was able to see the industry from a different perspective and then parlayed the new experience into a job at the facility to pay for college.
- A student who engaged in Community Resource Training as a web designer developing online marketing for a local realty company went on to college with a double major in Engineering and Communications. She cites skills gained during her internship experience as vital to her success in university coursework. Her high school CRT experience also enabled her to supplement her income with outside web projects while attending school.

Institutional Benefits

By virtue of its very strong CTE program, and rich industry relationships, Cle Elum-Roslyn High School deepens its ties to the community it serves. By being proactive in developing vital and engaged Advisory Committees, the program is able to determine local industry needs and when feasible, tailor and focus individual programs to meet those needs. The CTE program at Cle Elum-Roslyn has already achieved its IT goals in Java Programming, Oracle Databases, and the groundwork has been laid programmatically for other areas – construction, teacher education, child development and service sector. CTE teachers gain opportunities to further their skills by increased interaction with industry. And finally, it is a matter of pride for the institution to be recognized as having an effective and strong CTE program.

Industry Benefits

Partnering with the Cle Elum-Roslyn High School CTE program demonstrates local industry's investment in the community and has given them a voice in how future employees are prepared. Involved industry has an opportunity to develop and tap into a pool of well prepared employees. Industry-Education partnerships are a two way street that benefit all involved.

Next Steps

Additional job shadow opportunities will be developed to meet the new requirement that every freshman complete a job shadow assignment. Program goals for construction, teacher education, child development and service sector need to be achieved and focus will be placed on those programs to that end. The Cle Elum-Roslyn High School Career and Technical Education program is committed to developing rich and meaningful relationships with local industry and providing its students with excellent preparation for their future career endeavors.

Sample Internships

Microsoft – Summer internships in a variety of programs

Suncadia – Service industry (golf pro shop, greens keepers, hotel management, food service)

Cle Elum-Roslyn School District (largest employer in the area) – Teacher education, office administration

Comtronics – Database interns

Local Businesses – Retail grocer clerks, retail shop clerks, real estate firms, general contractors

Key Issue

Provide rural high school CTE students with meaningful interaction with local industry in career focused activities throughout their secondary career.

Side Bar

TrendWest Internships

TrendWest (original owners of property now being developed by Lowe Industries as Suncadia) was approached as a potential resource for market analysis research regarding IT skill requirements for new hires. The faculty member was undertaking this research as part of the Washington Center for Information Technology, a National Science Foundation project dedicated to aligning IT curriculum with NWCET skill standards.

The Market Analysis interview, which introduced TrendWest to the Cle Elum-Roslyn High School CTE program, provided a perfect opportunity to extend an invitation to guest lecture at the high school and subsequently participate on the school Advisory Committee. This relationship building laid the groundwork for several formal and informal internship opportunities with the company over the next several months. The formal placements included three administrative office assignments scheduled at the end of the day, five days a week. Four students were placed as web developers and developed the company web site – quite a visible testimony to not only the students work, but the effectiveness of the program! The web site development placement was unique to the CRT program in that it was project-based and students were required to complete it all at once, rather than a few hours a day. It was not, however, unique to web development in an industry setting and as a result, the students gained very valuable technical and unique to the field workplace experience.

Partners

Microsoft

Trend West

Suncadia

Cle Elum-Roslyn School District

Comtronics

Cle Elum – Roslyn area small businesses