Business & Community Partner Engagement

A school resource for identifying partner options to support RWL

NO TWO COMMUNITY PARTNERS ARE THE SAME.

They differ widely when it comes to priorities, capabilities and people. Ultimately, the goal is to discover these nuances and align them with student needs. As you work closely with community partners, we encourage you to have several potential options available to discuss.



Community partners participating in Real World Learning ensure the viability of their business by investing in the workforce of tomorrow, understanding the ways the talent pool is evolving, and attracting future industry superstars early on in their career exploration. Their participation ensures that students can identify ways they fit within their community and expands their options.



AWARENESS & EXPLORATION

Partners support students as they develop awareness through short bursts of content or activities, such as a workplace tour or virtual career introduction that increasingly become tied to interests students are excited to explore.



ENGAGEMENT

Partners provide opportunities for students to apply learning through practical experiences, such as client-connected projects and entrepreneurial experiences so they become active participants in their learning and community.



IMMERSION & TRANSFER

Partners offer opportunities for students to perform work in authentic environments with other working professionals, such as in an internship or apprenticeship, so they can "try on" different roles.

HOW PARTNERS SHOULD PREPARE TO WORK WITH SCHOOLS & STUDENTS

All individuals working with students should:

- Expect to complete a district, program, or course onboarding process.
- Follow district communication and contact policies.
- Communicate issues to the designated district representative.

Defining the roles partners can play



A community partner is the business, industry, civic group, nonprofit organization, faith-based entity, recreational facility, or school who volunteer to connect with students. Role guidelines for volunteers and individuals representing community partners are outlined below.

	ROLE DEFINITION	TOP 3 TIPS FOR SUCCESS
FIELD TRIP/ WORKPLACE TOUR GUIDE	A representative of a community partner organization volunteers to guide a group of students, supervised by a district employee, in a generalized tour.	1. Collaborate with teachers to align the tour with classroom goals. 2. Introduce the organization's mission and history. 3. Tailor your presentation to the students' age group.
GUEST SPEAKER	Professionals volunteer to present to students on a subject tied to course outcomes.	1. Share your career path and impact on the community. 2. Include personal stories, challenges, and growth tips. 3. Keep the session interactive with plenty of Q&A.
SHOWCASE EVALUATOR	A member of the community with lived experience volunteers to provide personalized feedback to students showcasing their learning and growth of their Portrait of a Graduate (POG) traits.	1. Familiarize yourself with the event format and expectations. 2. Review the student work and provide clear feedback. 3. Engage with the students' presentations and ask questions.
GUEST PANEL/ COLLEGE & CAREER FAIR PARTICIPANT	Professionals volunteer to meet with students about career paths and post-secondary options.	1. Offer personalized answers based on students' goals. 2. Share your career journey and provide relevant advice. 3. Distribute informational materials for students to keep.
MENTOR	Professionals volunteer to share their experience, learn about students' projects, and offer general advice.	1. Listen to students describe their projects and challenges. 2. Guide rather than solve problems, encouraging student growth. 3. Provide professional feedback to develop their skills.

Defining the roles partners can play



	ROLE DEFINITION	TOP 3 TIPS FOR SUCCESS
JOB SHADOW HOST	Professionals volunteer to host a single student or small groups over a short period of time (1 day-1 week) to give insights into what a "day in the life" in a career or company entails.	1. Create an agenda that showcases various roles and activities. 2. Encourage students to ask questions and explore connections. 3. Share your career journey and insights with the students.
CLIENT	Professional representing the community partner who provides an open-ended problem. Clients meet with students throughout the client-connected project process to discuss progress and provide feedback.	1. Propose open-ended problems with multiple solutions. 2. Meet regularly with students to discuss progress (min. time commitment of 4 hours). 3. Provide resources and connect students with stakeholders.
SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT (SME)	Experts in a field, skill, or craft support students in their projects. SMEs provide advice, training, or assistance on specific elements of an experience.	1. Offer specific advice and training related to your expertise. 2. Support students by connecting them to additional resources. 3. Provide feedback to encourage skill development.
INTERNSHIP SUPERVISOR	Experts in a field, skill, or craft support students in their projects. SMEs provide advice, training, or assistance on specific elements of an experience.	1. Create a job description and balanced work plan. 2. Provide mentorship and ensure exposure to various departments. 3. Evaluate performance and offer constructive feedback.
APPRENTICE EMPLOYER	Employers contract with apprentices to provide on-the-job training as a pathway to full-time employment within the company.	1. Plan meaningful, real-world work aligned with employee duties. 2. Provide mentorship and cross-department exposure. 3. Regularly assess and guide the apprentice's development.

Additional Tips

- Be prepared to share your own career path and community impact journey with students, including a description of your job, tips in your field, stories of failure and developing a growth mindset, ways you built confidence and expertise, ways you developed and apply specific skills, and advice on pursuing success.
- Try not to solve problems for students; guide students through their thinking and support students by identifying helpful resources and strategies they can choose from.
- Hold students to a professional standard and provide specific feedback that encourages development of student outgrowths and skills in your area(s) of expertise.