

12 Ways to Connect with *More* Employers


Teachers supporting students with transition goals aren't always sure where to start when it comes to working with employers. There are a number of ways to build partnerships with local employers. Below is a list of possible strategies for you and your school to consider.

School and Student-Focused Ideas to Try:

- ⦿ **Collaborate with People and Programs at your School** – It is likely that Vocational-Technical teachers, Business Education/DECA and the school-to-work coordinator at your school already have connections to a number of employers. Help get students with disabilities connected with career development activities already taking place through your school. If there is a community service requirement for graduation, ensure that students with disabilities have the same requirement and access to the same opportunities to be out in the community volunteering along-side their peers who do not have disabilities.
- ⦿ **Coordinate Service Learning Opportunities** – If your school doesn't already have a service learning requirement for graduation, consider adding one. Service learning helps students build work and social skills, as well as connections to community members through contribution and meaningful community involvement. The skills learned and connections made become essential ingredients for connecting with future employers – either through the opportunities directly related to the service learning organization or by tapping into the personal networks of people that are met through the service learning opportunity.
- ⦿ **Host a Job Fair** – Organize a job fair at your school with local employers. There may be other local partners that can help you organize one. Inquire with the other vocational and business programs within your school, the local colleges, as well as with your local Job Center. Job Fairs are a great way for employers to meet students, conduct interviews, and collect resumes. And, job fairs help your school and students learn from local employers.
- ⦿ **Use Personal Networks** – Did you know that most jobs are never advertised? Most people find employment opportunities through their friends, family, and other personal connections. You can expand your employer networks by including the networks of other teachers, students, and their parents by asking them about the businesses with which they have connections and enlisting their help to make initial connections with them.
- ⦿ **Request Informational Interviews, Business Tours, and Job Shadows** – Connect with employers based on students' desires to learn about their workplace and pursue work in their industry. Don't ask for a job when you make the first contact with an employer! Rather, ask the employer to provide a tour of the business, an informational interview, or a job shadow for the student(s) to learn more about the employer. Most employers are open to such opportunities. Make sure students arrive prepared to ask questions and share information about their interests and skills. During the visit, listen for unmet needs the employer might have. After, follow up with a thank you note and consider how you could make contact with that employer again.



Community-Wide Outreach Ideas:

- ⊙ **Host a Community Conversation** – Community Conversations are an extremely effective way to bring community members, including employers, together to talk about community issues. The Let's Get to Work (LGTW) project experienced great success connecting with employers using Community Conversations. More information for planning a Community Conversation is available in the Collaboration section of the LGTW Quick Guide. www.letsgettowork.org
 - ⊙ **Have an “Amazing Race to Employment”** – LGTW schools developed a fun and effective activity to connect with employers while building student confidence and communication skills. Dubbed the “Amazing Race to Employment,” students are broken into small groups to stop into several local businesses for a short “meet and greet.” They arrive at a business and, with the help of a teacher, ask for the manager/owner, introduce themselves, say the purpose for their visit, and ask a couple key questions (for example, What qualities do you look for in a new employee?, or How does one apply for a job here?). School staff inquires with the owner/manager about the possibility of following up. At the end of the activity, school staff have accumulated dozens of potential employment contacts! More information about the [Amazing Race to Employment](#) can be found in the LGTW Quick Guide.
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- ⊙ **Work with your PIE group** – Find out if your community has a Partners in Education (PIE) group. Partners in Education is a volunteer group comprised of area business, education, and community leaders who are committed ensuring youth are on the path to successful careers and future employment. Talk to the staff involved in these programs about also using these contacts for students with disabilities.
 - ⊙ **Create a Public Service Announcement (PSA)** – PSA's can be an effective way to raise awareness in your local community about the power of employer partnerships to increase employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. The LGTW pilot schools created PSAs, all of which are featured on their webpages in the LGTW website under the 'Pilot Schools' navigation tab.
 - ⊙ **Collaborate with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Business Services Consultant in your area** – Each Workforce Development Area in the state has a DVR Business Services Consultant whose primary responsibility is to connect with employers about employing job seekers with disabilities. Contact your local DVR Business Services Consultant to explore ways in which you can collaborate. Contact information is found at: https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/bsc_contact_list.pdf.
 - ⊙ **Network with Local Business Groups** – Carve out time every month to meet with the local Chamber of Commerce, service organizations, and/or business networking groups to create ongoing relationships with employers in your community. Involve students as much as possible in your networking efforts. Request to present to these groups with students. Prepare students to talk about their interests and the contributions they can make to the workplace
 - ⊙ **Collaborate with the Job Center's Youth Programs Adult Employment Service Providers** – Contact them to discuss how you can share employer contacts and avoid duplicating efforts with local employers.