

Memorial High School Student Work Program

Learning Skills Through Service

If I had specialized and easily identifiable Rubbermaid Recycle bins from FriendsOffice, I could improve the recycling efforts at our high school and have a greater impact on the St. Marys community to become better stewards of our environment.

I am a high school special education teacher who works with students that have identified learning needs and transition goals. I supervise the Memorial High School Student Work Program that has over 20 students with special needs and transition to work goals that participate in job related activities throughout the school day. The high school staff and I collaborate to create projects to help the student workers to prepare to transition to the world of work after graduation. "For all students, with and without disabilities, work-based learning has long been shown to improve students' self-esteem, to teach and reinforce basic academic and technical skills, to promote an understanding of workplace culture and expectations, and to develop a network for future job searches." (Hoerner & Wehrley, 1995; Haimson & Bellotti, 2001; Wehman, 2006) In recent studies of secondary education interventions, Test, et al. (2009) identified 16 evidenced-based predictors of post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. Of these, work experience, was an important factor of post-school employment. Information obtained from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) (Newman, Wagner, Cameto & Knoocy, 2009; Wagner, et al., 2005), youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who typically have low employment rates had significantly better post-school employment success when they experienced paid work during high school (Carter, Austin & Trainor, in press).

Currently, my students are implementing a recycle program in most of the classrooms and teacher workrooms throughout Memorial High School. Our present method of collecting paper to recycle is by re-using empty paper boxes that sit close to the classroom trashcans. This promotes the re-use/recycle part of our plan, but students frequently overlook the plain box and throw their paper in the trashcan. By using the FriendsOffice Rubbermaid containers, we hope students and teachers will improve their awareness and recycling efforts by dropping their unwanted paper into the containers. Additionally, with the support of our school board, we collaborate with Auglaize County Solid Waste to recycle milk cartons during the high school and middle school lunches. We are currently piloting the milk carton recycling and hope to take our efforts to the elementary schools, to make a much greater impact. The way we teach our children to take care of the environment will have a lasting impact on the land that surrounds Grand Lake St. Marys.

The soft skills that I incorporate into my daily instruction, identified by the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, are achieved through hands-on and engaging activities for students ages 14-21. These skills include communication, enthusiasm/attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving & critical thinking, and professionalism. The soft skills that my students develop while enrolled in the Student Work Program will help them both in-school and out-of-school for the rest of their lives. My students work with each other, learn to provide good customer service to the teachers, and problem solve when something happens out of the ordinary. I train the students to develop their professionalism, continuously praising their efforts to help our school and the service they do for the St. Marys Community.

The MHS staff and students are doing a good job, but I know that we can do better. I would like to use the "Roughrider Blue" Rubbermaid recycle cans from FriendsOffice Supplies to recycle even more. I believe that by placing specific and easily identifiable recycle bins in every classroom; the MHS Student Work Program will recycle more and make our community better. Not only will my student workers feel a sense of accomplishment but also the general student population will have a better awareness of their responsibility to improve the environment. I believe that the MHS students and staff will exemplify their Roughrider Pride and recycle even more. The student workers will feel a sense of improved self-esteem that they are making a difference in our school and community.

The FriendsOffice W.R.I.T.E. grant will help the St. Marys community to continue to foster the idea that it "Takes a Village to Raise a Child" through the collaboration of the MHS Student Work Program, the St. Marys City School staff, and Auglaize County Solid Waste Management. Thank you for your consideration.



References

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Retrieved 2/15/2016. <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>