

Will they find work? If they do, will they be able to keep it? These are the questions I ask myself regarding my special education students. They are high school students soon to face the competitive work force. What can I do to help them? Create work experience for them here in the high school. I could do that with your help. If I had craft paper, fabric, and tempera paint products from Friends Office, I could offer a work study opportunity to my special education students.”

As an intervention specialist at Preble Shawnee High School, I work with a variety of students with learning disabilities and other health impairments. One of my goals is to provide my students with work study opportunities that will assist in the transition from high school to post-graduation employment. This is not an easy task. Preble Shawnee High School is a rural school situated between 3 small communities that don't offer many employment opportunities. For the few jobs that are available, students need transportation or a driver's license. I have many students that don't yet have their license or transportation. Employment opportunities then become limited to school jobs. These jobs are also very limited. Generally, these jobs are reserved for our lower functioning student population. To provide job opportunities this year, jobs had to be created. I looked for needs within the building and ways that we may be able to use those needs to create job opportunities for the students. Additionally, I looked at available resources. It was at this time that I considered what has been an ongoing problem in our building. The high school was designed years ago with four large triangular showcases built into the hallways. These showcases are huge and isosceles in shape with 3 sliding glass doors. The two back walls of each showcase are approximately 94 inches tall and 90 inches wide. Because of the sheer size of the showcases, they take an enormous amount of time and material to decorate. Most teachers do not feel they have the time or supplies. For this reason, the showcases remain empty most of the time.

As parents and community members enter the building, they see these empty showcases. Worse still, the students see them. I feel that this sets up a depressing or at the very least an unexciting environment. I didn't want student to feel that they are not worthy of decorated showcases. It is for this reason, that I chose to create a work study class that would be tasked with the mission of creating showcases. The students provided the physical labor in creating and installing the showcases, while practicing work skills. An obstacle in creating the class was lack of equipment and supplies. We are currently using two borrowed Cricut cutting machines, one overhead projector, and a document camera. The students use the Cricuts to cut out patterns and lettering. They use the overhead projector and document camera to enlarge images that they can trace onto larger paper. After tracing, the students paint and cut out the images. We encountered a serious issue of not having enough colored paper to enlarge the designs. We attempted to tape smaller pieces of paper together to create the items we needed. This reduced the quality of our final project. We quickly used a large supply of colored card stock.

This was the first year of this project. My goal was to provide students with work type setting and feedback. I try to connect the work done in class with an actual job setting. I have seen many work related issues that need to be addressed in the class. I try to use each of these issues as teachable moments. For instance, at the beginning of the year, one student tried to complete the time sheet for another student. He felt he was being helpful. This allowed us to discuss the negative consequences of doing this in a real job setting. Some of the students left their work areas messy at the end of class. This afforded us the opportunity to discuss the importance of neatness at work for safety reasons. Several of

the students work very slowly, this afforded us the opportunity to discuss the need for both accuracy and speed in completing the job. Several of the students got the assigned task finished, but didn't display concern over the quality of the work. This enabled us to discuss the concept of quality control. One of the hyperactive students in the class was playing around, this provided us the opportunities to discuss the dangers of such actions in a work place setting. Most importantly, by working with students on quality they have been able to display completed projects of which they can and should be proud. This particular group of students are use to struggling in school. They don't hear complements and praise for their work often. Throughout first semester this year, the students were praised many times by administration, staff, and other students. The attached images are samples of work the students completed this year. In the first, the students cut out an image to represent each member of the band. We are known as the Preble Shawnee Marching Arrows, so the arrow pattern was added. The band members stood outside the showcase searching for their names. My students saw this and knew their work was appreciated. The students were able to complete 15 showcases during the first semester of the 2017-18 school year. I have included several other images to show you what they accomplished.

I would like to continue the course next year. To do so, I need more supplies. I have included a list of Friends products that would be very helpful to my class. I have also included two references. I thank you for the opportunity to apply for this grant. If chosen as a winner, I promise that I will use all the Friends supplies to better my class and to help students create showcases that will give them a sense of pride and accomplishment while building work skills.



