

CREATING AND REPLICATING HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES AND SCHOOLS

CASE STUDY

Boston Private Industry Council

Connecting Students to Work

Boston, MA



Carl Vinson Institute of Government
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Connecting Students to Work

Having the mayor as a champion has made all the difference for the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), an education and workforce nonprofit that serves a wide variety of stakeholders in Boston. It organizes several “school-to-career” initiatives for Boston Public Schools students, including a job shadow program and the Mayor’s Summer Job Program. While these two programs provide different types of experiential learning, they both encourage local employer engagement and help connect students to the world of work.

For the last 35 years, PIC has organized a job shadow day in February. Originally marketed as the Groundhog Day Job Shadow, the program has grown to accommodate more than 800 students at 145 employers throughout the month. This half-day at a business is designed to let students meet a professional, see what a day-in-the-life looks like, and gain a first-hand understanding of the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a particular career. Business partners who participate in this program get to meet students and help to influence future career decisions.

According to Josh Bruno, the PIC school-to-career director, it is important for employers to continue to be involved in the job shadow day, but for them also to grow their summer job placements for students. These summer jobs are part of the Mayor’s Summer Job Program. In summer 2018, more than 2,300 Boston Public Schools students are participating in the program in an employer-paid and -supervised position in their field of choice. These students are spread across nearly 200 companies ranging from large hospitals and IT firms to small start-ups and community-based organizations. The summer work in each business looks different, but regardless of where they are placed, students gain real-world knowledge through this experiential learning opportunity.

According to Bruno, the key to success for PIC’s school-to-career initiatives is the infrastructure. He said it is important to have dedicated people in the schools to make connections and get students interested. Having a dedicated PIC staff member for experiential learning opportunities in each Boston Public Schools high school has reduced the burden placed on classroom teachers. This single point of contact establishes relationships with area businesses and encourages them to commit to the program, answers questions, and deals with any issues that arise. The other big take away from Boston is the need for a local champion. Boston Mayor Marty Walsh has made PIC, education, and workforce development top priorities. Whenever a new company moves to Boston, he is the first to welcome it and call on leaders to get involved.

