

CREATING AND REPLICATING HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

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CASE STUDY

Pickens High School Groundhog Job Shadow Day

Creating Job Shadow Experiences to Allow
Students to Explore Career Pathways

Pickens County, GA



Carl Vinson Institute of Government
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Whether or not the groundhog sees its shadow, the annual Groundhog Job Shadowing Day is shedding light on a number of career options for Pickens High School students in northern Georgia. The Atlanta-area high school launched a Groundhog Job Shadow Day in 2017 to offer more job shadowing and career exposure experiences outside of its work-based learning program. Sixty-four students participated that first year, and 74 students took part in 2018.

Job shadowing can be a powerful career development experience that helps students understand what is involved in a career pathway and determine if it is something that they want to pursue. The Pickens job shadow day was modeled after other groundhog job shadow days held across the country such as the long-running Boston Private Industry Council program held on Groundhog Day each year. “We created the job shadow day as a way to give student the opportunity to explore the career they are interested in,” said Carissa Parker, the work-based learning (WBL) coordinator at Pickens High School.

All career, technical, and agricultural education (CTAE) students are eligible to participate in the job shadow experience. CTAE teachers encourage participation and play an important role in the success of the day. They explain what a job shadow is, what to look for at the job site, and how to act. Students must complete a paper detailing their shadowing experience to receive attendance credit for the day.

The Pickens High School Groundhog Shadow Day largely relies on the students to identify their own placements, which cuts down on administrative time spent organizing the day. Relationships with the local chamber of commerce and current WBL sites are also leveraged to support the day. CTAE teachers and the WBL coordinator help connect students with potential opportunities, but students are responsible for contacting the employers and making job shadowing arrangements. The job shadow experience must relate to the CTAE pathway and their chosen career path.

