

Groundhog Student Job-Shadowing Day
Best Practice – 2005
East Texas Tech Prep

In 1995, the East Texas Tech Prep Consortium decided on a student job-shadowing day to engage numbers of students in job-shadowing on the same day – February 2, Groundhog Day. It was small by today's numbers, but the one-district job-shadowing activity on Groundhog Day was a huge success. That following year, in the summer of 1996, the Tech Prep directors of Texas were having a summer workshop to share ideas of successful activities. I shared all of my planning, marketing, and handout materials. Many of the other directors were hooked – they decided right then that their consortium would conduct a Groundhog Day student job-shadowing in 1997. And many did! San Antonio, Lubbock, Dallas, Vernon, and others joined East Texas for Groundhog Day Student job-shadowing in 1997. At that time, we in East Texas were still planning and conducting the annual activity just between the Consortium and whichever school district we had targeted for the year. But, then the East Texas Tech Prep Director was elected as chairman of the Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce Education Committee, and she saw this as a perfect time to add business partners to this project and engage multiple schools districts across East Texas.

We solicited employers from the Chamber's membership list who would like to host one or more students for a day of job-shadowing. We identified contact persons at each school district who wanted to participate. We met and planned strategies, such as what criteria would be used to select students to participate, how we would identify and match their career interests with employers, how we would pass information from one group to the other so that the day was smooth, how to evaluate, how to thank participants, and all of the other details. To this day, our first handouts from 1995 have been passed around the state, and even the nation, and have been tweaked to meet the specific needs of the participating region.

It has been exciting to hear other regions tell about their successes and ways that they have made this project even better for themselves. We have all learned from each other's successes (and, yes, some mistakes.) It has not been exciting over the years to continually see national coverage of this event and the listing of the national partners and continually see that Tech Prep's name is left out of this national partnership. We are a major partner of this activity.

So, how does it work for us here in East Texas? We allow each school district to determine their own criteria for which students will get to participate. Some use a volunteer sign-up, and some use a series of entire classrooms of students and associate the project with future classroom assignments. The students may specify up to three career interest areas for which they would like to job-shadow. Then, we ask them to check if they would still like to job-shadow in any other career area if we are unable to get one of their career choices for them. Some say yes; some say no – if they can't have one of the areas they specify, they do not want to participate.

Each student completes a profile about himself. Each employer completes a profile that also contains specific information about the job-shadowing day: what to wear, hours, where to park, phone numbers, etc. A handbook for students along with the employer profile where they will job-shadow is given to each student. We conduct a small meeting at each school to give out packets and go over instructions and answer questions.

We have a training day luncheon for employers where we give them their employer handbook and the student profile(s) of the student(s) who will be at their place of business. That

profile contains the student's name, phone number, school they attend, their hobbies, their college intentions, etc. We have an insurance person and an attorney who is astute in school law at this training day to answer questions from employers.

We touch base with all schools and employers the week before the job-shadowing day, because the initial work begins months before the actual event. On the day of the event, we have a big Chamber-sponsored luncheon with a keynote speaker, and all employers and students are invited to attend.

The students and employers are reminded to remove the evaluation forms from their packets and return them to us after the event. We send thank-you's to all employers and contact people at the school districts. The Chamber pays for a big ad to be run in the newspaper recognizing all employers who participate.

East Texas celebrated our 10th year of Groundhog Day Student Job-Shadowing this year!!

For more information visit www.ETTP.org/