



## Summer Workplace Experience

### Host Handbook for High School Externs

For many construction companies, summer workplace experiences (often referred to as externships) for high school students have become an integral part of workforce development alongside more traditional college internships. These 8-12 week summer programs are a proven way to build excitement and raise awareness about careers in architecture, engineering and construction. Many of the young people who have participated in the ACE Mentor Program and had summer jobs in the industry have moved on to higher education and into the profession.

Often one of the challenges to hosting a Summer Workplace Experience is establishing a successful program that benefits both the students and the host firm. That's why we've developed the following **Summer Workplace Experience Host Handbook**, a compilation of best practices drawn from the experiences of students and host firms over the years. The Handbook provides ideas that range from onboarding actions to activities and assignments. The Handbook is a resource to help your firm make the most of your next summer workplace experience.

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### [Onboarding at the Office and Jobsite](#)

It is useful to invite the student for an orientation to make sure they have the necessary information to get them started. Send detailed and exact directions to the work location including a contact name and phone number that the student can call if they need guidance. Give a meeting time and directions on how to enter the site. Clearly define any item that the student needs to bring with them.

#### Orientation at Office

- Review expectations for summer.
  - Discuss working hours and schedule.
  - Dress code including required PPE.
  - Detailed, exact directions to jobsite if different with contact and phone number of jobsite contact.

#### Meet the team

- Introductions to primary mentor, secondary mentors, and other team personnel.
- Jobsite and/or office tour
- Safety training and PPE

#### Set Goals

- Work with students to set their goals for their experience.
- Review Student-Mentor Agreement

## What Should We Do with Our High School Student?

Collaborating with their primary mentor, students should set learning goals for the summer. With these goals in mind, students will complete daily assignments structured around meeting the student's needs while exposing them to the wide variety of professions in the industry.

### **Suggested assignments for High School Students (Optional)**

- **Daily Journal**
  - Student to create a daily list of activities they took part in that day.
  - Include photos of activities when applicable (may need access to digital camera).
  - Have student take notes on new scopes of work, how things are installed, how they work and what function they provide.
  - Questions for the student to consider:
    - Did the day's activities support your goals for the program?
    - Do you understand how your day-to-day work fits into the big picture of successful project completion?
    - Is there anything you would like to learn more about?
  
- **Daily Mentor Meeting**
  - 10-15 minutes; hold to schedule, especially during the first few weeks.
  - Review accomplishments and expectations.
  - Review daily journal.
  - Preview upcoming work and how student will contribute.
  - Discuss student's strengths and weaknesses, provide coaching.
  
- **Informational Interviews**
  - Students are invited to interview one person working in the office or on a project every week.
  - Project team will select interviewees in advance and prep them. It should include the widest range of roles possible.
  - Student will schedule and conduct interviews, write summary to include in journal.
  
- **Final Project/Presentation**
  - Summaries of informational interviews.
  - Summary of daily journal entries.
  - Summary of skills learned.
  - Which jobsite activities did you like most?
  - Reflections on what was learned.
  
- **Pre- and Post-Program Assessment Survey Surveys**
  - ACE National sends surveys to all students who accept an externship to gauge knowledge of and interest at the start of the program and again at the end.

## Suggested Activities for Students

The ideal assignments have an impact on the project and allow student to experience various aspects of the project. Avoid simple administrative work. No driving and no work with tools!

- **Innovation and technology**
  - Students can shadow CAD technicians, BIM engineers, drone pilots, etc. Students are very tech savvy and enjoy learning about the technological side of construction.
- **Pop Quiz!**
  - Students walk the site or project with mentor who points out objects and asks “What is that? What does it do? Why is it there?”
- **Third party inspection reports**
  - Students keep records of reports. Mentors teach how to read them and the significance of items not meeting requirements.
- **Meeting Minutes**
  - Attend jobsite/office meetings. Show student examples of meeting minutes and ask them to take minutes for an upcoming meeting.
- **Safety Walk**
  - Have student walk the project with the Safety Professional to look for potential safety hazards.
- **Quality walk, inspections**
  - Have student walk the project with team. Learn to look for and record quality issues.
- **Select a trade/material vendor**
  - Supply student specifics to look for. Have student complete checklist.
- **Time Lapse**
  - Have student take photos of work in progress, and compile over the eight weeks.
- **Subcontractor/Vendor Engagement**
  - Have student meet key subcontractor personnel to develop a relationship and ask specific questions to obtain technical knowledge.
- **Updating Record Documents**
  - Show student how to read plans and how they are organized. Update the plans with RFI’s and revisions to keep a current set.

## Suggested Activities for Students Continued

- **Requests For Information**
  - Show student how to write RFI's and have them help to issue them.
- **Preconstruction estimating**
  - Work through a preconstruction estimate with student.
- **Updating site/floor plans**
  - Create a scavenger hunt for items on a jobsite or on a blueprint.
- **Administrative Work**
  - Log daily reports, create Excel files, log time.
- **Attend Training**
  - Facilitate ability to have student attend any company training provided during their externship.
- **“Mock Scenarios”**
  - Develop mock scenarios that your student can use their critical thinking skills on how to plan work and understand the construction industry. Example, have them learn the process of what is needed to pour a concrete deck and then put a simple schedule together for it and action plan list of how to make it happen.
- **Learning the Players**
  - Teach them who the players are, subcontractors, clients, consultants, etc. and then have them read the scope of work and what everyone is responsible for. Have them put together a diagram to show they understand the relationship between each company.

### **Additional Resources: Recorded Lessons, Recorded Fieldtrips and Activities**

Virtual Curricular	<a href="https://acementortools.org/virtual/curriculum/">https://acementortools.org/virtual/curriculum/</a>
Virtual Fieldtrips	<a href="https://acementortools.org/ace-ventures/">https://acementortools.org/ace-ventures/</a>
ACE @ Home	<a href="https://acementortools.org/athome/">https://acementortools.org/athome/</a>