

For Immediate Release

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Davie County Workforce Development Partnership – Industry Externships Help Teachers Prepare Students for Career Success

You can't teach what you don't know. Six Davie County educators recently became the students as they toured area companies to gain a deeper understanding of the skills needed by employers that will help their students find meaningful careers and local industry to grow.

During the six-day externship, the educators from Davie County High School and Davidson County Community College (DCCC) toured Ashley Furniture, CommScope, CPP Global, Wake Forest Baptist Health - Davie Medical Center, Flow Honda of Winston-Salem, Ingersoll Rand, Pro Refrigeration, Inc., and VF Jeanswear to learn about all facets of their business. They even received hands-on experience at Ashley Furniture where they constructed the frame of a couch and at CPP Global where they each had the opportunity to operate a different machine to make, label, or pack jars made for companies like Clinique and Estee Lauder.

The group also visited Big Brothers Big Sisters of Davie County to learn more about the services the organization offers students and families and the role it can play in helping students reach their full potential.

Visits ranged from a couple of hours to a whole day, based upon the amount of information the host location had to share.

Together we are Davie – Five-Year Economic Growth Project

The purpose of the community partnership between Davie County High School, Davidson County Community College (DCCC), Davie County Economic Development Commission (DCEDC) and Davie County industry is to make local students aware of workforce opportunities and technological needs by providing relevant immersion experiences for Davie County High School teachers and DCCC faculty. Through these summer externships with local businesses in the areas of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), teachers and faculty are connected to their related industries to renew their

understanding of current industry practices and technology as well as the soft skills necessary for success in the organization.

“The summer externship is a tremendous collaborative effort between Davie County Schools, our Economic Development Council, The Chamber of Commerce, the Mebane Foundation, and our local businesses,” said Anthony Davis, director of CTE and Federal Programs for Davie County High School, who organized and led this year’s program. “This externship offers the opportunity for educators to learn from and create positive relationships with our business community. As a school district, it is our responsibility to make students aware of all educational and employment opportunities, and this collaborative externship is an integral piece in that communication.”

“Teachers, community leaders, and business leaders who collaborate can be helpful to our young people and our community,” said Donna Dunn, STEM English teacher at Davie County High School. “Perspective and relationships are so important. I want my students to have broad perspectives, so I need to walk that walk too.”

This workforce development partnership, which started in 2014, is funded by the Mebane Charitable Foundation’s \$50,000 contribution to the EDC’s five-year economic growth plan, *Together We Are Davie*.

DCEDC President, Terry Bralley, is grateful to the individuals and companies that contributed to the capital campaign and shared the vision for growing Davie County.

“*Together We are Davie* provided the means to bring this valuable program to the community,” Bralley said. “It’s amazing what happens when you unleash people’s creativity. This truly is a remarkable community.”

Passion Drives Davie Educators to Explore Local Career Opportunities

The externship program was open to all CTE and STEM teachers and counselors. The participants were selected through an application process at each institution and received a daily stipend and mileage for their time. The knowledge they gained will be shared with their students and fellow teachers.

In addition to Davis and Dunn, this year’s participants included John Hardee, DCCC math; Elizabeth Gordon, lead guidance counselor; Sandie Hinkle, CTE (family and consumer science); Mary Sells, CTE (family and consumer science); and Leigha Wilson, STEM math from Davie High.

Each was motivated to participate by a passion for helping their students succeed, not only in school, but in life.

“I applied for the opportunity so that I could learn more about the type of jobs available for our graduates,” said Gordon. “I learned that all the businesses we visited had job openings. Many of them hire students right out of high school. They are looking for workers with a positive attitude, strong work ethic, and that are teachable. Many employers expressed concern that applicants could not pass the drug test or were not dependable once hired. All the businesses were willing to train and even pay for schooling if the employee was committed to the company.”

“I will use the information to share with students the skills necessary for various plants and the characteristics that employers are looking for in their applicants,” she added.

Dunn said the experience reinforced the importance of teaching soft skills in addition to technical skills. She was also pleased to see that many of the companies raise up employees who show leadership promise.

“If you want to hustle, you will have a future in many/most of these companies. If you have leadership and people skills, you will advance. I met one line supervisor who was a dynamic individual who began as a custodian and after a few short years became a line supervisor. His goal is that his people on the line make more money on any given day than he does because of the line’s functioning with fluidity. I hope to invite him to speak at the high school.”

“The message was that if you have technical skills and/or technical education (rather than a four-year degree), you are employable--especially if you have people skills!!!!”

Companies Getting the Word Out about Local Career Opportunities,

The opportunity to share that message and to let high school and community college students know that there are jobs available was the primary reason Flow Honda chose to participate in the externship, according to Dean Hines, sales manager. Representatives from the other corporate participants agreed.

“Ingersoll Rand participated in the Externship Program because we understand the importance of a relationship between Davie County Schools and Ingersoll Rand,” said Ashley Kern, human resources generalist. “It’s so important for teachers and administrators to understand local businesses so they can better prepare their students, who are the future of our company!”

“Wake Forest Baptist Health Davie Medical Center strongly believes that we need to support our community,” said Matt Britt, marketing manager, Davie and Lexington Medical Centers. “The benefit for us is short-term in the sense that we get to connect with community leaders in education and affirm our commitment, but it is also long-term as we have the chance to help support the development of our local workforce. Hopefully, this program helps these school employees lead a young student to consider the Healthcare industry and the many roles we are always working to fill with smart, hard-working, and caring individuals. We expect to participate in this program again.

Jacky Spivey, plant manager at VF Jeanswear, added, “This is the second or third year we have participated in the externship, and we will participate again next year if asked. I think it is beneficial to us and other local industry if the teachers understand our needs and concerns when looking for potential new hires. Hopefully, by participating, they will be better able to describe and explain what the requirements are to be successful employees.”

In addition to highlighting career opportunities available locally, the tours also served to dispel preconceived notions about today’s advanced manufacturing.

Teachers Learning About Local Career Options

“Seeing hands on what happens in the plants, I was super impressed with each of the job sites we visited,” said Gordon. “I did not know the extent of production at any of the plants. I learned what was made at CPP Global. Despite driving past this plant for several years to go to the old high school, I never knew that they made jars for various companies like Clinique make-up. It was a wonderful experience. I wish all our teachers and students could tour the plants.”

“I learned that modern manufacturing is much more aware of safety than my paradigms suggested,” said Dunn. “I have lived and worked in the county many years, but I still learned a lot. I would love to do this externship again next year! It was a wonderful opportunity. We asked so many questions that we threw every site host off schedule. That’s what we do! (And what we want our kids to do--ask, ask, ask!)”

Her favorite part, talking to the people on the floor. “I ran into some of my former students who were working hard, doing well, and who have families they are supporting! I LOVED that!”

Although not a potential employer, Big Brothers Big Sisters had equally valuable information to share as part of the collaboration.

“Big Brothers Big Sisters enjoyed taking part in the Externship Program,” said Jenna Hendricks, director of programs. “It’s a great way to meet some of the wonderful Davie County High School staff and share information about the organization. BBBS was able to share information regarding programs and resources that are offered to students at the elementary, middle and high school level. BBBS benefited from hearing the needs that the teachers and students are facing on a consistent basis. Big Brothers Big Sisters knows that we can’t combat adversity facing youth alone. It takes community collaboration to make sure every child achieves success. We are excited for the next opportunity to participate”

Davis is grateful to the organizations that allowed the externs entry into their facilities and hopes that additional businesses will want to participate next summer.

“I’m truly trying to create a partnership,” he said. “I want to include as many businesses as possible. We want our local businesses to know that we aren’t just coming to them for a handout, we really want to give back to them. We want to know what they need in an employee at all different levels, from just graduating high school to a two-year degree or four-year degree. Just because a kid goes to Carolina and graduates with a degree doesn’t mean they can’t come back and have a successful career in Davie County.

“Communication is key. For the businesses to get their word out, they need us, and for us to get the word out, we need them. Businesses are telling us they can’t fill slots. We want them to know that we are a direct pipeline to community workforce development. Through communication and collaboration, we can be utilized as an important avenue for these workforce vacancies,” he added. “We need to make sure the students know all of their options. We don’t want to steer any child toward a direction they do not want to go, but we need to make sure that they and their parents know all of the opportunities that are in Davie County.”

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