

Joliet Township Job Shadowing Program

Pathways Spotlight Briefs

Asia Fuller Hamilton, with Collaborating Educator Carol Collins

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Joliet Township High School District 204

Students: 6,322

Schools: 2

Located in Will County, Illinois, Joliet Township High School District 204 is one of the oldest school districts in that area. Its student body is racially/ethnically diverse, comprised of 43.4% Hispanic, 27.8% Caucasian, 24.8% Black, 2.8% Multi-racial, 1.0% Asian, and 0.3% American Indian. Approximately 3.8% of students are English Language Learners, and 63.3% are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch. For additional information regarding Joliet Township High School District (e.g., students and educator demographics, student achievement, revenues and expenditures), please visit the [district's website](#) or the [Illinois Report Card site](#).

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JTHS
District 204



Job Shadowing Program

In this brief, we describe the implementation of the Job Shadowing Program in Joliet Township High School District 204.

Promoting College and Career Readiness

Joliet Township's two high schools are organized into career academies to better promote the college and career readiness of their students. Students in their first year of high school enter into the Freshman Academy where, along with required foundational course work, they are engaged in career exploration activities. Once students become sophomores, they enter one of five career academies organized by the following clusters:

- Arts and Communications
- Business Management and Information Systems
- Health and Science
- Human Services
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

Job Shadowing Program

The Job Shadowing program at Joliet began out of *High Schools that Work* reform efforts. Through joint work, committees from both high schools developed the job shadowing reform initiative for the district. Director Carol Collins, who supervises the program at both schools, works with campus-level Teacher Advisory and English II teachers to ensure that each sophomore involved in the program completes the applications, receives contact information about the prospective businesses, and completes a multimedia project as part of their English II course requirements. Joliet's unique program allows all sophomore students to participate in job shadowing, providing them with first-hand exposure to their identified career field of interest.

Sophomores are provided an extended amount of time to complete the job shadowing opportunity, which must be done outside of the school day. There are three options for students in ensuring the completion of the job shadowing experience. The student-driven option allows the student to identify the business partner with whom they are interested in working, make contact with the partner, and complete the shadowing experience. The second option entails more guidance: the student knows the area of interest but needs assistance in making the contact with the business partner. Director Collins provides the student with a list of possible partners in their career interest area with which they may be interested in working. For students who may not have transportation or may need more support, option three is teacher-led and is scheduled during two days of the Spring semester. Generally, about 150 students each day are taken to more than 20 sites and are paired with a business partner for four hours. Through this model, all students are provided with an opportunity to fulfill the job shadowing requirement.



Shadowing experiences. When students participate in their job shadowing experience, they can take advantage of different opportunities, including one-on-one sessions in which students ask questions and business partners describe what transpires during a typical work day. There are also group shadows, typically offered to students who select option three, that provide more hands-on opportunities for learning. Groups of 5-10 students attend the shadowing experience with the identified business partner and assist throughout the day. During the Information Technology site visit, for example, students can work on computers, taking them apart and changing parts. These computers eventually will be given to students who need them in the community.

Moving forward. The district is continually reviewing their program, to identify ways to expand upon and improve their work-based learning opportunities for students. They are currently exploring internship opportunities for all Joliet juniors and seniors. They are also seeking ways to ensure that 40 hours of community service are completed in each student's selected career field. While there is not a formal evaluation process to measure how many students obtain jobs in their selected career fields, the district administers a survey to students regarding the job shadowing program, and district leaders hope to develop ways to obtain more quantifiable data regarding students' career selections.

"The most crucial element to any work-based learning program is the support of district and building administration's as well as the Board of Education. The success of the Job Shadowing Program rests with the district administrations commitment (1) a coordinated district-wide program that ensures all students participate in an authentic work-based learning experience related to their career choice before graduating from JTHS, and (2) the integration of the program within the English II curriculum."

~Carol Collins, Project Director

Strengths of the Program

Ms. Collins identifies one of the greatest successes of the job shadowing program is that it is supported by the Board of Education, the superintendent, the community, and the Joliet Chamber of Commerce. By working together with various community partners, the district has established job shadowing placements with over 350 businesses over a 10-year period.

Another identified strength is the ability of the students to connect with someone in their career interest field within the community. Some students may reflect on the experience and decide to switch career academies at the end of the year, when it is permitted. Other students have been fortunate to be offered internships after their job shadowing experience. By being exposed to the work-based learning program, many students are able to make decisions concerning future careers before they transition to postsecondary institutions, potentially saving money in the long run.

Advice From the Field

Ms. Collins identifies key points of advice for educators who seek to implement or refine job shadowing programs:

- Conduct research and start small. Examine the possible models that exist and decide what works best for your district. Develop a program overview and decide on key persons responsible for implementation. Implement the program on a small scale in order to build a lasting partnership base and necessary changes before expanding to include all students.
- Always think about refining. One of the aspects of growing the program is continually looking for ways to improve. Ms. Collins has indicated that throughout her years of experience with the job shadowing program, many refinements have been implemented that had made the program better for students.
- Building community partnerships is critical. Each year Joliet Township High School District hosts a Salute to Partnerships banquet when they celebrate the experiences and successes of the job shadowing program and recognize the participation and support of their business partners. There also is a continual effort to recruit new partners, so that students have an array of job shadowing options.

More information about the Joliet Job Shadowing program can be found on their website at: <http://www.jths.org/academics/job-shadowing/>

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