



On April 20, 2009, the Allegheny Conference and Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB) hosted the kick-off breakfast of the third annual Imagine! Career Week. The event included an important discussion about the goals and challenges of career education. The following is a summary of the main points that resulted from dialogue at the breakfast.

Successful career education programs should:

- Generate enthusiasm for students and school staff
- Make students aware of careers and what education and training are needed.
- Expose more students to opportunities for career education experiences in the workplace, like job shadowing, workplace tours and internships.
- Have long term student participation in the program
- Build sustainable partnerships with employers
- Create better post-secondary outcomes
- Help students develop reasonable expectations about salary, work culture, their own responsibility and the time required by a job
- Reduce dropouts and increase graduation rates

To increase employer participation, schools should:

- Be flexible in order to incorporate employer needs
- Explain the benefits to employers – show them the return on investment
- Get employers to talk to their peers
- Create a streamlined and coordinated process
- Reach out to organizations that already have programs in place
- Get the message to the right person in the organization
- Focus on local small businesses
- Need to make it easy and concrete for businesses – offer a menu of choices
- Address liability concerns
- Give employers advance time (at least a month)
- Involve multiple people from the school and the business in the discussion
- Designate staff to coordinate activities with employers

General thoughts on successful career education activities:

- Invite employers into the schools for a variety of events and activities, i.e., graduation panels, mock interviews, career fairs, assemblies, etc.
- Work out transportation, confidentiality and academic preparations, and it will make a big difference
- Employers should provide on-site activities to enrich students' experiences
- Full day job-shadowing is great experience
- Educators in the workplace has been very rewarding for teachers