



Getting to “Yes”

Top 10 questions businesses ask about high school student registered apprentice programs

#1 | Can a student under the age of 18 work in a factory/ on a “floor” in these occupations?

Yes, 16-year-old students can work in this setting.

According to Child Labor Provisions for Nonagricultural Occupations under the Fair Labor Standards Act, Child Labor Bulletin 101, a high school student apprentice under the age of 18 and at least 16 years of age can work in a factory setting and conduct welding, machining, and other manufacturing operations. There are two exceptions that the apprentices are not allowed to do in the factory until they turn 18 years of age – operate a motorized vehicle and operate a power-driven hoisting apparatus. Companies may have to adjust their internal documents and processes to accommodate this change in their human resources system.

#2 | Would a business expect to see their insurance coverage costs remain the same?

Yes, insurance coverage costs remain the same.

Of course, each business should consult their insurance provider for guidance prior to participating in an apprentice program. Most businesses have found that there is no change to the insurance coverage and no rate increase to host apprentices in their operation.

#3 | Do businesses get to select which students are assigned to their company?

Yes, businesses can participate in the selection process.

The schools will partner with businesses in the apprentice’s junior year. During this time, the students will conduct factory visits and job shadows to see which companies they are interested in. Participating businesses will then conduct a series of follow-up interviews to ensure the selected apprentice is a good match for their respective business. By the time the summer placement occurs (typically in June after school is out) the student and the business should know each other very well.

#4 | Will the students be ready to add value?

Yes, most students will be ready to during their first summer.

Most students will have completed their advanced classes (dual credit course at the high school and local community college) by the end of their junior year. This does vary by program, so each business should review the student qualifications prior to the work-based learning assignment.

#5 | Have the students been showing up on time?

Yes, these students want to work and have shown up on time.

The students in the first year of the program have shown strong attendance and professional skills. They realize that this program is an excellent opportunity for them and their family and want to ensure they capitalize on it. Most students have adopted a new attendance mantra – “If you are not 10 minutes early, you are late!”

#6 | What if things don’t work out?

Yes, if the student is not meeting the requirements agreed upon in the standards, they can be dropped from the program.
There are multiple evaluations and student check-in points during each phase of the work-based learning experience. If a student does not meet the minimum passing requirement for the technical and behavioral competencies identified, the student can be let go from the program.

#7 | Is it true that the business does not have an obligation to hire the apprentice for full-time employment after completion of the program?

Yes, the business does not have an obligation to commit to full-time employment.

The apprentice is a competency-based program and the business partner has an obligation to provide the student the opportunity to meet all specified program standards through a minimum of 2,000 hours of work-based learning experience. The business does not have an obligation to hire the student upon completion of the apprentice program.

#8 | Is there a common process to handle payrates?

Yes, the business partners will agree upon a standard rate of pay that will be used as guidance.

Each program administrator from the local school will gather input from local businesses to define the expected pay rates for the apprentices during each phase of the work-based learning experience. The pay rates are set up to allow maximum flexibility at each business and should be used as a guideline. Of course, each business should consult their respective human resources contact to confirm pay rates.

#9 | Can this work in a union environment?

Yes, hosting a high school apprentice is possible in a union environment.

Introducing a program like this requires multiple up-front conversations and integration with your local union leadership and workforce. Program processes and guidelines can be set up to ensure that the program is sustainable over the long-term and does not violate the key tenants of any labor agreement.

#10 | Is this type of program different from skills trade shop apprentice programs?

Yes, this is a different program targeting specific positions and allows high school students to participate in work-based learning experiences while in school.

There are several internal and external work-based programs in businesses today that are helping future employees gain the skills to start a career. The high school student apprentice programs are focused on specific entry level roles that require certifications (i.e. welding, machining, auto techs). They allow students to start this while they are in high school. These programs are not intended to replace the skills trades programs.