

Careers in the Classroom: Message for Industry

One of the key roles for the 'Careers in the Classroom' project, is to show young people what their local industry has to offer. Particularly in opportunities such as: engineering, science, maths, and other school subjects that tie in to different careers.

As manufacturing and engineering have a dominant role within the Midlands industry – it would be beneficial to the school and business relationship, to show a variety of skills and influential examples of what is involved in the workplace. As manufacturing offers a wide range of opportunities - it would be valued to have this positive influence to help young people see what school subjects and skills are used to link to particular roles and skills, to see how to communicate effectively whilst at work. As more employers become involved with schools, the bigger impact it will have on students. This impact will be generated by showing real life employers, talking about real life opportunities and showing a passion about their career and local area.

The project is an employer-led scheme which builds upon engagement between employers and education to produce presentations. These presentations demonstrate how academic principles are used in careers. The idea is that these presentations will be used in schools, and shown by teachers at the end of normal lessons. These will act as careers advice, giving young people details about the careers available to them and information about the businesses in their local area. The interview format also means that students get to see real people talking about their jobs, which will give them an appreciation of the realities of working life and of finding a career. The final aspect to these presentations is that they are designed to inspire young people. Inspire them to pursue a career in general, to find the career which is right for them – a career that suits their talents and one which they will enjoy, and finally inspire them to be successful in their chosen career and strive to be the best they can be. What we do differently is to ask people what the best thing about their job is, what inspires them and where they hope their career to progress to. Some of the answers we have received are the variety of work, the social aspects of working with other people and the freedom of work. The idea is that hearing these things will raise aspirations of young people, motivate them and demonstrate to them the virtues of being in a career (beyond the pay packet at the end of every month).

One of the other things that makes us different is that we are Black Country based – this is important because it means that students are given information about the companies in their local area and the careers available to them specifically, so for example many of our videos are produced by manufacturing and engineering companies. If we were based in the south-west this may be the case for agriculture or tourism. But the fact is that many local businesses are crying out for young people to come and work for them, and we need to encourage this to ensure the future of local industry. But also it means that a student inspired by a Careers in the Classroom video can pick up the telephone and arrange a period of work experience with the company featured, which may only be a short walk or drive from where they are based. Thirdly by asking real people from all educational backgrounds about how they got into their career, what previous jobs they have had and what they wanted to be when they were in school, many of the videos demonstrate the reality of people get into a career. The fact is that many of us take detours before we get to where we want to be, and many people do not end up in the careers they were expecting.

The key thing that makes our presentations different is that each of them drills down to a specific academic principle. Rather than talking generally about how maths is used in accounting – we break it down into how addition is used or how algebra is used. These principles are taken from the curriculums which are being taught in classrooms right now – which makes them undeniably relevant to students. We try to answer the eternal question from young people – “why are we learning this” by demonstrating how what they are learning can be used in a career in later life. And by fitting careers advice into normal lessons we can emphasise the importance of careers decisions. Rather than careers advice being squeezed in, usually at the end of students time at school, it is given a more prominent position – so that schools don’t only prepare students for their exams but also for what comes after they leave school. This creates a symbiotic relationship where careers advice demonstrates the importance of what is being taught in lessons, and a prominent position in classrooms demonstrates the importance of careers advice. Please see our website for current interviews: www.careersintheclassroom.co.uk