



# HOW TO INTERACT WITH STUDENT ASSOCIATES



## Working with Student Associates:

Learn how to effectively communicate and provide feedback to students, as well as projects students can work on if they have downtime.

**Communication:** Communication at the workplace can be a challenge for some students. Many will open up right away and will set a high precedent for the remaining students. However, it is important to remember that not all students are as outgoing and often can be shy, reserved, and nervous, especially in the first weeks of work. It can also be intimidating for a student to work among a large group of adults and people from different backgrounds. Being proactive about creating an open work environment will encourage students to feel comfortable and draw them out of their “comfort zone.” Another important area of communication is feedback sharing. Adolescents need immediate and specific feedback. Starting this sharing from the beginning of the school year will help to prevent miscommunication and hurt feelings. Supervisors should discuss with their student(s) the idea of constructive feedback and how they intend to share positive reinforcement, advice, and instruction. We encourage you to ask your students how they prefer to receive feedback - verbally, written, in the moment, in a separate conversation, etc. Some students, particularly freshmen, are shy and reserved when they begin working. Students are more motivated to perform well when they are encouraged to speak up, ask questions, and engage with coworkers.

- **Teach Back Method:** When giving verbal instructions to a student, ask them to repeat back to you the directions to ensure that they fully understand what is being asked of them. Using verbiage such as “Please, tell me the steps you will take to complete this assignment.” will help to assure the project is completed correctly.
- **Check-ins:** After introducing a task to a student, especially one that requires repeated actions, ask a student to check-in with you after having completed a small portion of the task. Using verbiage such as “After you have completed 15 of these files, please come to my desk and check in with me so that I can ensure that you have the process correct. Then you can work on the rest of the files.” This will ensure that the student understood the directions and will safeguard against repeated mistakes. **Providing Feedback:** Employing these simple suggestions can elevate student performance and foster a positive, productive work environment:

- Discuss mistakes: Students inherently fear making mistakes because they do not want to get “in trouble.” However, it is important to provide constructive criticism. If the student did not meet expectations on a certain day, do not give a false impression. Rather work with your student to develop an understanding that making mistakes does not equate to failure. Encourage them to learn, adapt and take on new more challenging tasks.
- Use specific examples: Give specific examples of what constitutes poor performance and deliver it so that the critique is about the action, not about the person. Adolescents often have difficulties processing generalities because of the stage of their brain development where they cannot differentiate between something “they did” and “who they are.” Use concrete and detailed examples and avoid grouping together multiple issues.
- Be immediate: Do not wait a week to deliver feedback as the “teachable moment” will have passed. If time permits, allow for the student to return to the failed task and correct their work. This helps the student retain the feedback for future tasks.
- Lead with the positive: Students react far more favorably to positive feedback than negative feedback. Ensure that you include ample positive input around negative feedback. Use positive language to communicate negative feedback; for example, say “You could have achieved a much better outcome if you had...” not “You failed in this assignment because...”
- Motivate: Engaging in conversation and positive verbal reinforcement on a constant basis is a helpful way of encouraging a student. Students who believe they succeed because of hard work will continue to use their best efforts to work through difficult problems and assignments.
- Praise effort instead of natural ability: Focus on the behaviors in the workplace, versus the natural characteristics of the student. Students who base their self-value on hearing that they are “smart” or “talented” promotes the status quo. In order to encourage a student to accept challenges, emphasize the effort she/he puts forth.
- Help to retain feedback: Give reminders and the opportunity for repetitive tasks; encourage him/her to take notes when giving feedback; utilize evaluation results and supervisor/student check point document.
- Student timecards: On a student’s timecard, consider providing feedback for each workday, whether it is positive or constructive, this allows for your Relationship Manager to see how each student performed for the day.