



CRISTO REY ORLANDO HIGH SCHOOL CORPORATE WORK STUDY PROGRAM

Supervisor Best Practices

Creating Meaningful, Professional Work Experiences for Student Associates

The CWSP Supervisor Mindset

A meaningful work experience is more than keeping a student busy. Supervisors help students learn how to work, contribute to a team, communicate professionally, and understand the connection between their work and the organization's mission.

1. Build a Strong Supervisor–Student Relationship

Students perform best when they know what is expected, feel supported, and understand that their supervisor is invested in their growth.

- Welcome the student and introduce them to coworkers, the workplace, and the team's purpose.
- Learn the student's name, interests, strengths, and areas they want to improve.
- Set clear expectations for attendance, punctuality, communication, dress, technology use, and workplace behavior.
- Create a respectful environment where students feel comfortable asking questions.
- Check in regularly rather than waiting until a problem occurs.

2. Assign Meaningful Work

Whenever possible, assign work that serves a real purpose for the company and gives the student an opportunity to learn.

- Connect assignments to a real team need or business process.
- Explain why the task matters and who benefits from the student's work.
- Give students opportunities to contribute to projects rather than only completing repetitive tasks.
- Match assignments to the student's current skills while gradually increasing responsibility.
- Whenever appropriate, allow students to take ownership of a task or defined portion of a project.

Ask yourself:

"If this student completes this task well, who will it help, and what will the student learn?"

3. Set Clear Expectations

- Explain the task, expected outcome, deadline, and quality standard before the student begins.
- Break larger assignments into clear steps when needed.
- Confirm that the student understands the instructions; encourage them to repeat back key expectations.
- Provide examples or models when a task is new or unfamiliar.
- Clarify when the student should work independently and when they should ask for help.

4. Teach Before You Expect Independence

- Demonstrate new tasks before asking students to complete them independently.
- Explain the reasoning behind procedures, not only the steps.
- Give students time to practice.
- Increase independence as students demonstrate readiness.
- Remember that questions are part of learning, especially for students who are new to the workplace.

5. Provide Regular Feedback

- Give feedback close to the time the work occurs.
- Balance positive feedback with specific suggestions for improvement.
- Describe the behavior or result rather than labeling the student.
- Ask the student what they think went well and what they would do differently.
- Recognize growth, effort, professionalism, and increased independence—not only perfect results.

Effective feedback:

Be specific, respectful, and actionable. Instead of "Do better," explain what needs to change and what success should look like.

6. Help Students Develop Workplace Skills

CWSP is an opportunity for students to practice skills they will use throughout high school, college, and their careers.

- Communication: greeting others, asking questions, listening, and communicating professionally.
- Teamwork: contributing to group work, supporting coworkers, and receiving feedback.
- Organization: managing materials, following procedures, prioritizing tasks, and meeting deadlines.
- Problem-solving: identifying issues, thinking through options, and asking for help appropriately.
- Professionalism: punctuality, preparation, appropriate appearance, attitude, and accountability.
- Technology: using workplace systems and digital tools appropriately and responsibly.

7. Encourage Career Exploration

- Explain what different roles on the team do and how they connect.
- Share your own career experiences when appropriate.
- Expose students to different departments, careers, or workplace functions when possible.
- Help students understand how their current tasks connect to real careers and industries.
- Encourage students to ask thoughtful questions about the workplace.

8. Model Professional Behavior

- Model respectful communication and professionalism.
- Demonstrate how to handle mistakes, feedback, deadlines, and challenges.
- Use inclusive and respectful language.
- Protect student confidentiality and treat student information appropriately.
- Remember that students are observing workplace culture as much as they are completing tasks.

9. Support Students When They Make Mistakes

- Address mistakes promptly and privately.
- Explain what happened, why it matters, and how to correct it.
- Give the student an opportunity to apply the feedback.
- Avoid embarrassing or correcting students publicly when a private conversation is appropriate.
- Contact CWSP Staff when a concern requires additional support or follow-up.

10. Communicate With CWSP Staff

- Reach out early when you have a concern rather than waiting for it to become a larger issue.
- Share significant concerns about attendance, performance, professionalism, conduct, or workplace fit with CWSP Staff.
- Communicate changes to job duties, schedule, worksite expectations, or dress requirements.
- Partner with CWSP Staff when a student needs additional coaching, support, or a performance improvement plan.
- Celebrate student accomplishments and share positive feedback with CWSP Staff.

11. Avoid “Busy Work”

Students should not spend the workday simply waiting for something to do. When a primary assignment is complete, have a plan for what comes next.

- Create a list of appropriate backup tasks.
- Invite students to learn a new process or observe a different role.
- Give students opportunities to organize, document, research, prepare, or support a real project.
- Use downtime as an opportunity for professional learning rather than unstructured time.

12. Create a Growth Mindset

- Expect students to grow over time; freshmen and sophomores are still developing workplace confidence and skills.
- Set achievable expectations and gradually increase challenge.
- Encourage students to reflect on what they learned.

- Help students identify one skill to strengthen at a time.
- Celebrate progress and increased responsibility.

Supervisor Quick Check

Before or during each student workday, consider:

- ☐ Does the student have meaningful work to do?
- ☐ Does the work serve a real purpose for our team?
- ☐ Does the student understand what success looks like?
- ☐ Is the assignment appropriate for the student's experience level?
- ☐ Will the student learn or practice a workplace skill?
- ☐ Have I provided enough instruction and support?
- ☐ Have I created an opportunity for feedback?
- ☐ Does the student know what to work on next?

Meaningful Work Formula

**REAL WORK + CLEAR EXPECTATIONS + SUPPORT + FEEDBACK =
MEANINGFUL GROWTH**