



ICEA 2024 Excellence Award Nomination: Teacher Fieldtrips



Aspire Johnson County's 2020-2025 economic development strategic plan, developed from the direct input of business and community leaders, calls for stronger workforce development efforts to develop, attract, and grow a skilled talent pool.

Aspire took a huge step into workforce development in 2022 when we created a full-time workforce development staff position, focused on developing the school to work pipeline.

Early Lesson: We learned K12 teachers play a significant role in influencing students' career paths. Therefore, we included high school teachers in our outreach and engagement efforts.

Problem: Most residents drive past businesses for years without understanding what it does. Teachers are no exception. But teachers' lack of awareness is compounded by the repercussions for our students – teachers are therefore unable to discuss local career opportunities.

Solution - New Program: Part of our work with teachers included new "Teacher Fieldtrips" where we host area K12 teachers and guidance counselors on tours of Johnson County employers during the summer. Each



trip focuses on a different industry, and we visit three employers in that industry.

Aspire's Teacher Fieldtrips revealed the innerworkings and career paths within familiar, but often overlooked and misunderstood businesses. We ensured the employers highlighted a variety of career paths, requiring and not requiring post-secondary education. We also provided a letter for participating teachers to gain continuing education credits for their licensing.

Outcomes: We hosted 30 local teachers and counselors. Some made connections for future classroom speakers and internships. Surprisingly, we also created an environment where teachers from the same building who did not know one another became acquainted and built new inter-department partnerships.

Teachers that have worked with Aspire have increased their connections to the business community, increased student engagement, and would be challenged if Aspire's assistance was not available. A survey of teachers indicated:

- They are 80% more aware of local career opportunities for their students than before working with Aspire.
- They average a 50% increase in student engagement because Aspire has provided more business and career exposure.
- 100% feel better connected to the business community as a result of engaging with Aspire.

Aspire Johnson County continues to host this program and will next explore the potential to host Teacher Fieldtrips for individual high schools on each school's professional development workday or fall break.

Attached: Fieldtrip Flyer to Teachers