

# Project Bridges

a community work experience program for students  
in Upper School



# Project Bridges

- \* The basics: how the program functions on a daily basis
- \* The value of a “work exploration” approach
- \* Our partners
- \* Our philosophy
- \* Categories of jobs and kinds of tasks
- \* Important questions to explore with your working child
- \* Transition as an embedded piece of the work experience

# The Basics

- \* What is the Project Bridges program? Project Bridges is a community internship program for upper school students who have completed one year of in-house work skills.
- \* When do students work? Students typically work one morning or one afternoon per week.
- \* Where do students work? Students work all over the place! We work at stores, museums, kitchens, nursing homes, non-profits, libraries, police stations and more.
- \* Who goes with students? Job coaches provide transportation and supervision, as well as coaching for independence on the job.

# Work Exploration: Keep an Open Mind



- \* There are lots of Project Bridges work sites.
- \* Students work in a different place each school year.
- \* Each work site is different, but here is a list of what all the sites have in common:
  - \* Students can learn new things at any work site (skills and experience)
  - \* Students can meet new people at any work site (references and networking)
  - \* Students can learn about different jobs at any work site (career exploration)
  - \* Students can learn about their strengths and challenges at any work site (self-awareness)

# Our Partners

- \* We have over 25 community partners, including:
  - \* TJ Maxx Bedford (20+ years)
  - \* Home Goods Bedford (20+ years)
  - \* Lahey Lexington Medical Offices (15 years)
  - \* Cambridge Public Library (15 years)
  - \* Xerox Corporation, Lincoln (15 years)
  - \* deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum (10+ years)
  - \* Waltham Police Department (10+ years)
  - \* Sancta Maria Nursing Facility, Cambridge (10+ years)
  - \* Drumlin Farm, Lincoln (3 years)
  - \* Lincoln Public Library (3 years)

# Our Philosophy: Community, Connections, Confidence

- \* Establishing oneself as part of a community outside school or home
- \* Making connections with people and causes
- \* Expanding one's personal network of employer references and relationships
- \* Gaining confidence from trying new things, meeting new people, asking questions and learning about one's strengths and challenges in a professional setting
- \* Ownership over one's experience

# How is this kind of program beneficial to my child?

- \* Build a resume
- \* Show dedication
- \* Advocate for new tasks when appropriate
- \* Interact professionally
- \* Use strategies for emotional regulation/ build up work stamina
- \* Time management
- \* Problem solving
- \* Self-awareness

# It Takes a Village to Create a Successful Work Experience

- \* How is my child matched with a work site? Through a collaborative process that includes the entire team. Feedback from families, teachers, therapists and most importantly the student are taken into account at the end of the preceding school year.
- \* How does the program connect with the rest of my child's educational program? The vocational department works closely with classroom teachers and therapists to ensure everyone's work experience is a success.



# How do we include students in the collaborative process?

- \* Regular reflection and check-ins
- \* Include students in goal creation
- \* Make students accountable for their goals
- \* Provide real world experiences: job fairs, job shadowing, guest speakers, planning of special events
- \* Ask for feedback from students
- \* Respect the vision of the student
- \* Advocate for the student
- \* Help the student advocate for him or herself

# Building Experience: Using A Resume as a Tool of Self-Awareness and a Celebration of Ability

## Education

**Cotting School, Lexington MA**

2001- 2013

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts, Westborough, MA**

August 2011- present

Title: Office Assistant

Responsibilities: I help with clerical work such as organizing mailings.

**Cotting School Entrepreneurs, "Kate and Mike's Pet Products"**

July- August 2012

Title: Small Business Leader

Responsibilities: I created pet products and sold them at a craft fair. I wrote a business plan and managed a budget.

**Magic Garden Children's Center, Lincoln, MA**

October 2012- March 2013

Title: Classroom Volunteer

Responsibilities: I used my communication device to lead a musical game for 10-15 preschool-aged children.

**T. J. Maxx, Bedford, MA**

July 2011-June 2012

Title: Store clerk assistant

Responsibilities: I completed a ten-step work task in order to prepare shoes for the selling floor.

**Buddy Dog Humane Society, Sudbury, MA**

June 2010-February 2011

Title: Shelter Volunteer

Responsibilities: I shopped for supplies needed for animals at Buddy Dog and delivered them weekly. I made scrapbook pages for some of the animals.

**Lahey Lexington, Lexington MA**

January 2010-June 2010

Title: Office Assistant

Responsibilities: I sorted and delivered the employee's mail.

**Brookhaven Nursing Home, Lexington MA**

September 2008-August 2009

Title: Friendly Visitor

Responsibilities: I arranged donated flowers and delivered them to the residents at Brookhaven.

## REFERENCES



# Categories of Jobs

- \* There are lots of jobs so we divided them into categories.
  - \* Retail (stores)
    - \* Social Outreach (schools, nursing homes, non-profits)
    - \* Nature and Horticulture (greenhouses, farms, animal care)
  - \* Food Service (kitchens, food prep, serving, dining room set-up)
    - \* Office and Library (paperwork, sorting, computer work)

# Retail



Some job tasks include:  
tagging shoes  
labeling bedding sets  
unpacking and processing picture frames  
hanging clothes and helping with displays

# Nature and Horticulture



Some tasks include:  
watering flowers,  
assembling boxes,  
filling water pics,  
pricing items,  
collecting shopping carts  
Environmental data collection  
Animal care

# Food Services



Some tasks include:

food assembly line work, counting items for catered meals, sorting silverware, cleaning and distributing menus, placing sugars, creamers and butters on the table, scooping fruit into serving cups, stacking serving trays



# Social Outreach



Examples of our work include hygiene kit preparation and delivery, preparing and running a radio show, Supporting non-profit and advocacy work supporting preschool students during learning activities, delivering flowers to and socializing with seniors

# Office and Library



Some office tasks include  
data entry,  
stuffing envelopes,  
mail sorting and delivery,  
assembling membership packets,  
sorting museum visitor passes,  
stamping medical records,  
making deliveries



# What are some questions to explore as your child participates in community work?

- \* What does it mean to make a “good impression?”
- \* What kind of clothing is appropriate for this work site?
- \* What are the different jobs I am observing at this work site?
- \* How are my social interactions at work different than my interactions at school and home?
- \* Where are the opportunities for increased independence at work?
- \* How is my current experience connected to my future plans?
- \* What am I learning about myself?
- \* What am I learning about the kinds of jobs that are available?
- \* How much help is too much?