**Looking for New Talent?**

**AWFS Offers Guidelines for Partnering with Schools**

The lack of skilled workers coming into the wood products industry is a significant problem that is not going away any time soon. And no one from the outside is coming forward to solve it. The terrible and beautiful truth is it is our problem to solve. Terrible because it requires a change of mindset from hoping “it” will somehow be solved to accepting responsibility for solving “it;” solving it demands commitment; and most likely it will involve dollars, minimally in the way of staff time. Yet it is beautiful because there *are* creative, energetic and eager-to-learn students out there who will make themselves known to you once you begin investing time in outreach programs. It won’t be quick or painless; but it is mandatory to the success and future of your business and the industry.

To help ease the pain, AWFS has developed guidelines for a variety of outreach endeavors, to help you get started. They range from how to establish an internship program to inviting educators into your company for a crash course that can be translated into classroom curriculum (this is called an “externship”); there is a guide for speaking in the classroom and one for hosting school tours in your company. The documents are all posted on the AWFS web site at [www.AWFS.org/education/](http://www.AWFS.org/education/)industry for easy access. In addition to the guidelines, you will find collateral material such as application and evaluation forms, all designed to make it as easy as possible for companies to get started with any of these programs. The documents are in Word format so they can be customized --company name and logo can be inserted and the content modified as applicable to individual companies. These are “living” documents that will continue to be revised and updated. If you have experience with any of these types of programs and after reading the guidelines you would like to contribute comments or suggestions for the documents, send your ideas to nancy@awfs.org.

In the education world, the folks in the STEM camp – that stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – are increasingly acknowledging the value of hands-on learning as a reinforcement of the esteemed STEM values. The lack of skilled workers on a national level is (finally) causing states and legislators to pay attention and nearly 80 policy changes related to Career Technical Education (CTE) were made by states in 2013. Click [here](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/marketplacek12/2014/04/career_and_technical_education_gains_ground_in_many_states.html) for an interesting read on CTE initiatives around the country.

*Get started and good luck!*

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