

# **Mid-America Teen Challenge**

## **General Work Experience Program Defined**

**By Herb Meppelink**

The general work experience program at Mid-America Teen Challenge in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, refers to a work-related occupational activity that serves as an instructional method (tool) in vocational experiences so as to aid the student to achieve identity.

In the total secular vocational program, several types of programs are classified. They are identified as (1) exploratory, (2) vocational and (3) general.

- (1) Exploratory work experience education is primarily a career guidance program.
- (2) Vocational work experience education provides specific occupational preparation for selected careers.
- (3) General work experience is designed to develop desirable attitudes and promote understanding for job success through supervised, part-time work experience activity. This work activity need not be related to their specific occupational goal.

Our Mid-America Teen Challenge (MATC) school is involved in point three, as shown above. The general work experience program is becoming more popular, due to such tremendous need for such training in the world of work. Students who come to us become acquainted with their personal liabilities, need for proper work attitudes and need for development necessary for job responsibility and career development.

Our general work experience program will provide a type of experience beyond those offered anywhere and permits the student to achieve an identity with the world of work before making a career choice based on the basics of work behavior. For identity with the world of work, the student must learn about himself and his capabilities, the society in which he lives and the world of work. If the student with whom you work is to be successful, he must develop an understanding of personal dignity about work, a commitment; to fulfill all work performed from learned Biblical concepts. He must learn how to be productive and then anticipate the blessing of creativity.

Our school serves the teacher with the great opportunity and means for the prospective development of students with life-controlling problems. The school brings together two groups:

- A. The staff
- B. The students

For success, there needs to be (1) soliciting of prayer and believing God for reaching goals in our outstanding work experience program; and (2) full cooperation and assistance among members of the staff.

## **WORK - A part of a man's life**

Work is an integral part of a man's life. The pattern of basic growth in a man's life can be identified. MATC is concerned with the first three basics or stages for vocational development in its general work experience program. These stages are:

- (1) Identifying with the worker, where the concept of working becomes a part of the student's ego ideal. (Ages 5 - 10 - in the home)
- (2) Basic habit of industry. Work comes before play and the development of work habits. (Ages 10- 15)
- (3) Acquiring identity as a worker. Work experience becomes a basis for an occupational choice and an assurance of economic independence.

Our school is concerned with all three stages of growth as related to the student's identifiable problems as related to the world of work. Once a student has learned these basic habits of industry, he can achieve identity. Our school feels that it is impossible to skip one of these three areas and be successful in becoming a productive person. This is a real challenge to the student. He will not achieve in the three areas unless he (the student) has an open mind to Biblical truth and believes God for change. Getting the student to learn and accept this is a real challenge to the teacher.

Our general work experience program is designed for students with life-controlling problems. Since this is now an issue in our society and employers are groping with the lack of production, it becomes conclusive that those with life-controlling problems need basic specialized work experience, coordinated by concerned staff who are acquainted with their needs. Successful students, who are seniors in our school, help fellow students see that it is a prestigious program. They will want to participate.

Our program must have students who have aptitudes essential to success so as to be successful. Even though they have identifiable problems, they advance more rapidly and are an inspiration as they interact with students who advance more slowly.

## **METHOD OF INSTRUCTION**

The work site is the classroom. This is where the group and individual instruction takes place. It is here that the student learns the basics necessary for any career which he may choose for the future. The basic instruction for proper motivation and production must come from the teacher-coordinator.

The work experience instruction must have and develop general practical skills and flexibility. The classroom may change from day to day and month to month. The techniques and methods used will vary with objectives and desired outcome. The instructor-coordinator will seek to motivate for common sense and good judgment, basic good habits for productivity and direct the student in what is necessary for economic independence.

As stated, the techniques and methods will vary. The work experience supervisor arranges for all the afternoon work schedules and posts the schedule on the bulletin board daily. From here, the teacher proceeds with the assigned schedule. The teacher finds opportunity with his class in two areas:

- (1) The teacher is given a class or group of men where he is the sole staff member present. He will be the group teacher-coordinator as well as the individual instructor. In such a class activity, he will also set the pace for productivity.
- (2) Personal instruction. There are times when the schedule provides opportunity in which the group as a whole goes to a given site for work experience and all staff are present. An illustration of this is apple picking. The classroom is the orchard. The teachers and students are present. The supervisor divides the large group into smaller groups. Now, the teacher must follow the instructions of the work experience program supervisor and carry out his goals and instructions through the students. Any personal question of the supervisor's goals should be talked over after the work schedule or put in carefully-worded questions for the occasion. It is very important that the teacher be prompt, respectful, courteous and sympathetic in all dealings and response to fellow staff members and the supervisor.

The teacher-coordinator must be experienced in the world of work in a very down-to-earth way. He must have a love for those with life-controlling problems, organize and personally work together with the students and display a proper attitude of confidence that is reassuring to the students with whom he is working.

### **The teacher's role in development and production of the work experience program.**

The MATC general work experience program provides the teacher with:

- (1) a feeling of accomplishment,
- (2) an ability to keep busy,
- (3) opportunities to work alone on the job with the students,
- (4) freedom to roleplay in use of common sense and good judgment (setting examples for students to use the most efficient method(s) ),
- (5) opportunity to help others,
- (6) a variety of jobs to teach the basics of the general work experience program, and
- (7) class activity in which there is opportunity to relate with others to a common goal.

The teacher's role as an instructor, with the help of the Lord, is a powerful and persuasive role. In our work experience program, the teacher is the most significant factor in the teaching/learning process. The teacher works with the student in the actual work process. With the help of the Lord, the teacher

- (1) fulfills an ability to relate to the students personally concerning work experience basics;
- (2) fulfills the ability to teach low achievers;
- (3) expresses proper attitude toward students in his work experience class. Here the teacher instructs regarding faith and displays confidence (Philippians 4:13).

Through prayer, Biblical concepts are established as necessary for qualifications of a successful work experience program.

## **Necessary characteristics of the school**

Characteristics necessary for an outstanding work experience program are for staff to:

- (1) understand the philosophy in which the work experience program is considered an equal with other disciplines of the school. There are two specific occasions—strawberry harvest and apple harvest. At these times, the students have opportunity for a more full work schedule. Academic classes are moved to a slower pace and, at times, are canceled, giving the students greater opportunity to react to a full-day schedule of work. This is often a very difficult time.
- (2) comprehend the administrative system of the work program, which includes the needs and values of the work experience program. Staff must recognize specialized areas of responsibility. Not all staff can be involved in the same areas.
- (3) understand the support necessary to be able to reach the objective of the work program.
- (4) understand the need for adequate counseling and follow-up of the work experience students. Staff need to report counseling sessions and problems to the counseling department.

It is well to remember that in our school, there is not a time delay for the counseling necessary for the problem student. The teacher is also the counselor and must report by written copy the incident and the counseling done. This report is to be submitted to the head of the counseling department.

Within the Christian faith, the variables (problems) are brought under control. Biblical concepts and prayer bring optimum results in every situation. The teacher-coordinator must be a student of the Word of God and seek ways of placing the student under the authority of the Word of God, aiding the student for successful response.

Guidance and counseling are essential to the work experience program. At our school, there is no problem in coordinating the counseling department with the general work experience program. The teacher-coordinator is the counselor. All staff are involved in guidance and counseling. There needs to be no communication breakdown here. The teacher has direct communication with the department head. Very serious problems, such as injury on the job, should be reported to

the business office and any heavy counseling needs should be brought to the head of the counseling department and/or the MATC director immediately.

## **THE COMMUNITY**

Our community is important in the development of our general work experience program. Our community has accepted our contribution of general labor favorably. They have accepted our philosophy and objectives. Leaders in the community have been willing to serve on our Auxiliary, in an advisory capacity and also donate support.

It is not the purpose of our school to solicit jobs from local businessmen and to establish our graduates in local jobs. We feel it is best that our completed students either (1) return home and make adjustments there; or (2) personally be responsible for seeking other alternatives for their future through prayer and counsel with staff. Staff are responsible to interact with students. Staff are not to come to conclusive decisions with the students concerning future plans. This must be handled by one designated individual.

## **TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS**

Teacher characteristics of the general work experience program include:

- (1) Purposeful outlook: Should have a sincere desire to develop students into competent employees.
- (2) Skill as a teacher: Should have a record for successful teaching and/or be willing to further develop and perfect his skills.
- (3) Role as a teacher: Should constructively relate the general work experience program to the whole of our school's Christian development program and teach through the practical instruction what is most meaningful to the student as based upon Biblical concepts.
- (4) Personal traits: Should be prompt, respectful, courteous, sympathetic, and consistent in all dealings with fellow staff members and the students; should be a good organizer of the schedule so as to provide a cooperative effort and efficient production.
- (5) Knowledge of job requirements: Should be acquainted with basic job attitudes and responsibilities and the basics of what is required for normal everyday job advancement and competency.
- (6) Extra school duties: Should reflect an attitude of helpfulness with other members of the staff and be willing to assume extra duties.
- (7) Physical and mental stamina: Should have sufficient physical and mental stamina to discharge duties effectively (Philippians 4:13).
- (8) Employment experience: Should have employment experience related to everyday common job activity as related to our school's general work experience program.

A variety of employment experience will be provided the staff member in case he does not have the employment experience as related to our work experience program.

- (9) Formal education: Will have already qualified as staff for other departmental work areas.
- (10) Role as a teacher/work experience leader: Should be thoroughly convinced of the importance of the role as a teacher/counselor/work experience leader.

## **THE GENERAL WORK EXPERIENCE STUDENT**

During the general work experience program, our students will not receive wages. MATC makes total provision for their residence and care. They do not receive wages because:

- (1) They are in training similar to that of a vocational school.
- (2) The training is for the benefit of the students.
- (3) The trainees or students do not displace regular employees, but work under close supervision.
- (4) MATC, which provides the training, derives no immediate advance and generally the MATC operation is hindered.
- (5) The trainees or students are not necessarily entitled to a job at the completion of the training period.
- (6) The trainees or students understand that they are not entitled to wages for the time spent in training.

## **WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?**

Completion of the work experience program will benefit the student in making his transition to his world of work by:

- (1) Learning to assume responsibility
- (2) Gaining knowledge and attitudes necessary for successful job performances
- (3) Acquiring good work habits
- (4) Learning how to get along with fellow-workers and employers
- (5) Developing personality and poise
- (6) Realizing proper relationship between job production and wages
- (7) Broadening his knowledge of the occupational world and working conditions in the world of work.

The implementation of the work experience program begins with the student, who, by being at MATC and being acquainted with the nature of the Teen Challenge program, accepts his right to

personally apply Biblical concepts as his alternative to change bad work patterns to become more productive and creative. It becomes the responsibility of the counseling department, through each of its counselors, to properly respond to the student so as to help him achieve a more complete identity.

## **GENERAL PROBLEMS**

Problem areas that the Teen Challenge ministry deals within student work training are generally accepted as problems that exist today in our world of work among the younger employees (ages 18 through 35). Please remember that the work experience program will provide a type of experience beyond those offered anywhere and permits the student to achieve an identity in the world of work. The student must learn about himself, his capabilities and the people with whom he lives, as well as the world of work.

The Teen Challenge general work experience program works with the student in work ethics so basic to our American work culture. There must be a change in the student's negative attitude toward work and employment. If not, there will be no change in his skill and performance. It must be emphasized that the primary emphasis in their work experience is the individual training of the student for his benefit.

Our students' needs regarding response to proper work behavior are varied and are listed in part below: (All scriptures from Proverbs are taken from The Living Bible.)

- (1) The student in his past has not been able to hold a job and has destroyed his identity as a worker through lack of common sense (Proverbs 10:21). Our students must be determined to grow and determined to change. By the wisdom gained combined with his determination, he will develop common sense and good judgment (Proverbs 4:7). This developing process happens best at the job site in everyday practical work experience.
- (2) For the student to learn, he must want to be taught. Generally our students have refused counsel and instruction in the past only to become more stupid and a real problem in society (Proverbs 12:1).
- (3) Students fail to see their ill response to work as a personal problem. The trend is to blame others for their misfortune (Proverbs 10:17). And as long as the student continues this negative pattern of thought and behavior, he is to be assured he will never gain the wisdom he is looking for (Proverbs 14:6). The work scene becomes the classroom where this ill behavior can be corrected.
- (4) It has been stated, "A good man thinks before he speaks. The evil man pours out his evil words without a thought." (Proverbs 15:28) The work program constructively presents a schedule for counsel showing the need for discipline and control of personal behavior to other employees.
- (5) There is need to face reality. That is, face the facts. Counseling must be done on the job - with students so as to face the reality of problems in their work response.

They wish to yell more than work - that is, they wish to talk more than work (Proverbs 18:2).

- (6) In the world of work the wise worker foresees difficulties and prepares for them. Staff must seek to constructively present work as a challenge but the student continues to go blindly on down a dead-end alley only to suffer ill consequences. (Proverbs 22: 3)
- (7) We have a slogan - "Keep away from the angry, short-tempered man lest you learn to be like him and endanger your future." (Proverbs 22:24) Here is another area when the counselor aids for discipline and self-control while on the job.
- (8) Counselors must aid in building trustworthy men. Our students must become reliable and trustworthy. As such, they will have fewer problems with employers in the future, Proverbs 25:19 states, "Putting confidence in an unreliable man is like chewing on a sore tooth or trying to run on a broken foot." Employee/employer relationships of our students have been bad in the past. Counselors must help to change this inevitable relationship.
- (9) Comprehension of work detail and work responsibility is low. They will misapply an illustration used by counselors in such a way that the point of the illustration is lost. (Proverbs 26:9) The building of or enlarging a student's comprehension is quite difficult. However it must be done if the student is to succeed in the world of work.
- (10) Proverbs 26:10 states that employers will get better work from an untrained apprentice than a skilled rebel. There must be a change in the attitude of bitterness and resentment of the student in his relationship to all concerned. Proverbs 27:22 states, "It is not possible to separate a rebellious person from his foolishness though it crush him." Through the counselor's faith in God and His Word, the new life in Jesus Christ will bring about a change in this area (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- (11) Two more factors are important in the world of work: (a) Knowledge of the chain of command; and (b) the importance of corrections. Our students have failed to comprehend the importance of justice (Proverbs 28:5). A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. If he confesses and forsakes them he gets another chance (Proverbs 28:13). In the end, the student will appreciate the counselors' openness and frankness more than the flattery of the past. (Proverbs 28:33) The counselor must understand that there is no use arguing with a rebellious person. He will only rage and scoff and then tempers will flare. (Proverbs 29:9) When angered, the rebel will often shout in anger. (Proverbs 29:11) The counselor must consistently work for and in faith believe God for a change in the rebellious person's attitude and negative thought pattern.
- (12) Laziness is another problem. "The lazy man longs for many things but his hands refuse to work. He is greedy to get while the Godly love to give." (Proverbs 21:25-26) The counselor is faced with excuse (Proverbs 22:13) in response to students' productivity.



If a student refuses to accept criticism of poor work patterns, this is an indication of laziness. (Proverbs 13:18) Excessive amounts of talk during work is another indication of laziness. (Proverbs 14:23) Values and priorities are vital. The counselor must aid the student to update his values and priorities. For many students this will mean a complete cultural about-face. (Proverbs 6:6-11) "A lazy fellow is a pain to his employers like smoke in their eyes and vinegar that sets the teeth on edge." (Proverbs 10: 26)

Teen Challenge counselors accept the confrontation with these problems for motivating our students so as to promote a more normal response in the student's future development of his skills in the world of work. It is understood that our students come to MATC voluntarily and are not exploited for any Teen Challenge benefits or for any other reason. What the student does in labor and the response of this work is for the student's benefit and for other students who will come to MATC in the future.

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