

PROJECT PREPARE:

# Planting Seeds for Future Workforce

Project Prepare, an outreach program through the Career and Technical Centers of Licking County (C-TEC), helps build the talent pipeline by introducing high school juniors and seniors to the opportunities available in manufacturing and skilled trades.

Launched in 2014, the program combines in-school presentations and company tours to help students decide if a manufacturing career is right for them, said Windy Murphy, Coordinator of Business & Industry Partnerships at the Career and Technical Centers of Licking County (C-TEC). Since starting with two sites, Project Prepare has expanded to nine schools and reaches more than 500 students each year. The program also targets adults who are unemployed and underemployed.

Murphy visits participating schools in the first semester of every year to make presentations on the benefits of manufacturing careers, such as the large number of job opportunities and excellent pay and benefits. In some schools, she speaks in front of an auditorium full of students while other schools ask her to spend the day and speak to smaller groups. “Whatever they want, we make it happen,” she said.

Students are invited to sign up for a tour of a local company so they can experience the modern manufacturing environment – a key step for dispelling the outdated stereotypes about manufacturing. About 200 students sign up for facility tours each year. One school sees so much value in the program it requires all juniors to participate in the tour. More than 20 Licking County manufacturers have signed on as Project Prepare supporters.

In addition to adding schools, Project Prepare has expanded services, such as quarterly financial aid nights that educate students and families about available resources. In December, Project Prepare invites seniors to C-TEC’s Senior Spotlight on Adult Education. The students tour the Adult Education Center and learn about training in skilled trades and manufacturing as well as other fields such as healthcare and public safety.

While some students decide to enter C-TEC directly from high school, the outreach also pays off later. For instance, a student who had tried the conventional college route without success enrolled in C-TEC, graduated from the multicraft maintenance program and now holds a position in manufacturing with excellent wages and benefits.

“You never know what seed you have planted and where someone might end up,” she said. “Helping people know there are different pathways available, I think that’s always a good thing.”



**CONTACT:**  
Windy Murphy  
Coordinator of Business &  
Industry Partnerships  
740.364.2279  
wmurphy@c-tec.edu