

Hold a High School Senior Recruiting Event

A Low-Risk Strategy for Employers to Build Early Talent Pipelines

How can employers get a head start hiring high school seniors, especially those who expect to enter the workforce full time right after graduation, but don't have a job lined up? One way to do that is for chambers of commerce and other economic development organizations to collaborate with high schools to host a Senior Recruiting Event like the one Pella's WorkSmart Connector facilitated in March 2025. Students were invited to complete a survey (with parent permission) to help businesses select candidates for scheduled interviews during a designated day at Pella High School. The primary focus was on students going directly into the workforce, but employers also were interested in talking with college-bound students about summer employment. Students were encouraged to dress professionally and bring a resume.

This low-risk approach resulted in several hires and strengthened students' interview skills, a valuable experience even if they did not get a job offer. The Pella Community School District plans to continue holding its senior recruiting event, which could be a model for communities across Iowa. With about 40% of Iowa high school graduates not going directly to college, that is a big talent pool.



What it IS:

- An early opportunity to screen potential job candidates who could bring fresh energy and ideas to your business.
- A convenient way for employers to interview at least one and possibly several students in one day and location.
- A real interview process between employers and students. The Pella Community School District's only involvement was letting employers and students know about the opportunity, asking interested students to fill out a survey, and providing a time and place for student-employer interviews. Further discussions about employment opportunities - full-time, part-time and seasonal - and decisions were between students and employers.



What it IS NOT:

- It is not a guarantee that employers will offer students an interview or a job.
- It will not provide options with every employer, industry or career pathway in which students may be interested.
- It is not for students who are already successfully engaged in work-based learning apprenticeships or similar experiences that lead to good jobs.



- **February 12**
Online survey distribution to students (survey created with input from employers and administered by Pella High School)
- **February 19**
Online survey response deadline for students
- **February 26**
Student survey results compiled by the school and submitted to participating employers
- **March 7**
Employers responded with names of students selected for interviews
- **March 11 or before**
Student-employer appointments scheduled by the school
- **March 12**
Senior Recruiting Event interviews held
- **Post-March 12**
Online survey seeking feedback from participating employers

Next Steps to Start a Senior Recruiting Event in Your Community:

- 1 Ask your chamber of commerce or economic development organization to coordinate the event, starting with a preliminary poll of companies that would like to conduct interviews to make sure interest is sufficient. Then invite the local high school(s) to participate and ask them to assist with the survey and scheduling.
- 2 Partners develop a timeline, a letter to communicate the opportunity to students and parents, a student interest survey and an employer feedback survey. Examples of the letter, student survey and employer survey from Pella are attached.
- 3 Reach out with questions to the points of contact listed below.

Thank you to Pella's WorkSMART Connector Program for sharing this model.

Questions: Employers are welcome to contact Teri Vos, Director, Work-Based Learning, WorkSMART Connector, teri.vos@pellaschools.org or Linda Fandel, Work-Based Learning Liaison, Iowa Workforce Development, linda.fandel@iwd.iowa.gov. Schools are welcome to contact Teri Vos with Pella's WorkSMART Connector, or Jodie Smith, Education Consultant, Work-Based-Learning and Industry-Recognized Credentials, Iowa Department of Education, jodie.smith@iowa.gov

February 10, 2025

Dear High School Seniors and Parents,

As graduation quickly approaches, so does the time for student decisions about career plans after high school. For some, that may include fulltime or seasonal/part-time employment. **We are excited to share an opportunity at the high school, for students** (who are not in apprentice/intern employment) **to meet with local employers who are interested in hiring.** This WorkSMART Connector Senior Recruiting Event is a unique finale to all the work students have completed in iLead classes, Future Ready Conferences, Career Conversations with area employers, and more.

Seniors will receive an online survey on February 12, asking what type of employment they may be interested in, if any, beginning summer of 2025. This is an optional student survey, with results to be summarized and shared with employers who have work opportunities that may match students' interests. Where a potential match is identified by employers, an appointment will be made at Pella High School on March 12, for the student and employer to meet and discuss work opportunities.

What it IS:

- A job screening and possible interview that could result in a job offer from a local employer.
- A convenient way for students to get one or even several interviews in one day and location.
- An opportunity for students who are seeking local part-time or summer employment while attending college, as well as students seeking a fulltime, permanent job directly after graduation.
- It is a real interview process between student and employer. Pella Schools' only involvement is sharing the survey and a time and place for student-employer discussions. Any further discussions or employment opportunities and decisions are between students and employers; students will go through all employer on-boarding as required of any job applicant.
- It is completely up to students (with guidance from parents) whether or not they participate.

What it IS NOT:

- It is not a requirement nor assignment.
- It is not a guarantee that students will be provided an appointment on March 12. And if students are selected by employers for a meeting, there is no guarantee of a job offer.
- It will not provide options with every employer, industry nor career area in which students may be interested.
- It is not for students who are already happily employed; it is not for students who are already successfully pursuing work-based learning apprenticeship and certification programs, nor does it include the mentoring, and resume-writing/interview-prep support of an apprenticeship.

Timeline:

- February 12 – online survey distribution
- February 19 – online survey response deadline
- March 11 or before – student-employer appointments scheduled
- March 12 – Senior Recruiting Event appointments occur

Students will be encouraged to dress professionally and bring a resume to any March 12 appointments. We look forward to providing this opportunity to Pella High School seniors and our local employers!

2025 Senior Recruiting Event – Participating Employer Feedback

Please share your general impression of the opportunity/event.

1. This was an exceptional event. These students were professional and extremely eager to begin employment with Pella!
2. I think this is just the beginning of something that can grow and continue to be beneficial to students who are entering the workforce right out of HS as well as the local companies. Continuing to ramp up and effectively market the event and the opportunities it provides will be a key component to growth/success.
3. The event was well-organized and overall, we met with some great students. Even for the students who don't get offers, I think it is a great opportunity for them to get some interviewing experience.
4. I think it's a great opportunity and glad it could happen this year. I'd love to see it expanded to other Marion county schools. I was pleased with the number of responses you got from the survey too. Interviewing timing was sufficient as well.
5. I believe that the opportunity you provided for local businesses was a great way to make some connections.

Were you able to make any employment offers, or are you hoping to? If so, how many?

1. We made 3 out of 4 offers.
2. We haven't made offers yet, but we plan to move forward with at least 3 and possibly 4; we are currently trying to identify our needs for the summer. We plan to reach out next week and provide feedback. There was another student who we interviewed who we would like to move forward with but his baseball schedule for the summer and the distance from Pella to Knoxville just doesn't make it feasible, so we told him this wasn't going to work.
3. We interviewed just two students and the first one is going to college in the fall so I think refining the questions could be helpful. He was interested in FT work but only for the summer so clarifying what we as businesses mean by PT/seasonal and FT could be helpful to the students. The other student will turn 18 this summer and we plan to reach out to her for a welding assessment which will hopefully turn into a FT offer.
4. I was not able to make an offer due to the student heading to college in the fall. When I saw her name on the list, she was listed under full time employment, but upon asking some questions during her interview, I found out she was headed off to college this fall.

Would you recommend we do this on an annual basis? If so, do you have suggestions or improvement ideas for a future event?

1. Would definitely recommend this on an annual basis as it would help build our talent pipeline. I would like the schedule sooner, more than half a day in advance. It would be great if it was about a week in advance to get interviews

lined up (how many we need, etc). Do you think we could do a large signing day for those students, similar to the apprenticeship? I don't want to take away from the Apprentice signing day, but maybe something on a smaller scale?

2. It is helpful if the students know what they would like to do, there were a couple who had no clue. Also, one student told us that he didn't really understand what the survey was about. If we could not do it at the same time as the apprenticeship interviews, that would be helpful.
3. Yes and see above. Initially I thought before spring break was too soon and April would be better but I think the timing is ok.
4. I think it would be great to continue something like this going forward.

Would you be interested in a similar event conducted with other area schools?

1. Yes, to other schools. Maybe within a 30 mile radius?
2. Yes
3. Yes! 😊
4. I would love it if other schools participate in this as well. I do think it would be worth it to collaborate.

Senior Recruitment Event Survey

The more thoroughly questions are answered the more likely an interview will be scheduled.

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

2. Name: *

3. Birthdate *

Example: January 7, 2019

4. I am interested in local: *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Part-time or seasonal (summer) employment beginning in 2025
Skip to question 5

☐ Full-time employment in 2025 *Skip to question 7*

☐ I am not interested in a new, local employment opportunity in 2025
Skip to question 8

Part Time Availability

Please fill this section out if you indicated interest in **PART-TIME** work only.

5. Please tell us the days of the week you are available to work this summer.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Monday
☐ Tuesday
☐ Wednesday
☐ Thursday
☐ Friday
☐ Saturday
☐ Sunday

6. Please tell us how many hours **per week** you are willing to work this summer

Skip to question 8

Full Time Availability

Please fill out this section if you indicated interest in **FULL-TIME** work.

7. Please tell us what shift(s) you are available to work (*check all that apply*)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ 1st shift (early morning to mid-afternoon)
☐ 2nd shift (mid-afternoon to late night)
☐ 3rd shift (late night to early morning)

Skip to question 8

Job Interests & Values

Please fill out this section to indicate to potential employers your work/job preferences. Even if you are not interested in a job for 2025, please fill out this section to let area employers know of future potential interest.

8. I am interested in a job related to:
(check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ production manufacturing (welding, paint, assembly, etc.)
- ☐ other manufacturing (logistics, machine technician, etc.)
- ☐ facilities / yards and grounds
- ☐ hospitality (restaurant, grocery, etc.)
- ☐ construction trades
- ☐ patient care
- ☐ childcare
- ☐ customer service
- ☐ Other: _____

9. I prefer:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ indoor work
- ☐ outdoor work
- ☐ no preference

10. I prefer:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ desk work
- ☐ hands-on, more active work
- ☐ no preference

11. I prefer:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ rapid-paced and dynamic work environment
- ☐ steady-paced and predictable work environment
- ☐ no preference

12. I prefer working:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ alone
- ☐ in a team
- ☐ no preference

13. I have prior work experience:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. If yes, my prior work experience is in :

Check all that apply.

- ☐ manufacturing
- ☐ construction trades
- ☐ food service (restaurant, grocery)
- ☐ personal care (child care, CNA)
- ☐ customer service (receptionist, filing, cleaning)
- ☐ Other: _____

15. Please list any extra-curricular and/or volunteer activities:

16. I am most interested in working in:

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Pella
- ☐ Knoxville
- ☐ Oskaloosa
- ☐ No preference
- ☐ Other: _____

17. It is acceptable to have an unexcused absence and/or be late for work:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ four or more times a month
- ☐ two or three times a month
- ☐ one time per month
- ☐ Never

18. My favorite high school class is:

19. My least favorite high school class is:

20. The one skill I'd like to learn at work is:

21. The most important quality or character trait of an employee is:

22. Please describe a situation when you worked effectively as part of a team:

23. Give an example of a time you did not agree with a teacher's direction and how you handled it:

24. Give an example of a time you did not agree with a peer on a project or activity and how you handled it:

25. Give an example of a time you received feedback for improvement and what you did in response:

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