

2026 Students@Work Toolkit

On behalf of the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE) and the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI), thank you for your participation in Students@Work, a program that brings career awareness opportunities to North Carolina’s middle school students. Career awareness is a critical first step in adding relevancy to academics and positioning students to successfully navigate career pathways in high school and beyond. This toolkit contains program ideas, steps to participate, deadlines, and survey links. For questions, contact Megan Johnson, NCBCE Program Manager, at megan.johnson@nc.gov.

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HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN S@W

There are **three** possible ways that your business can host a S@W program:

- **Host a field trip at your workplace.** Field trips provide a chance to experience concepts firsthand, making learning more engaging and memorable. Through interactive activities, show the students what your business is all about. Let them see the career opportunities available to them and get them interested in what you do. This could be for a full school day, half a day, or a couple of hours.
- **Visit a school.** Have a representative from your business present to a group of students about your career and industry. This may work best for those businesses where safety or other considerations make an on-site visit impractical.
- **Host a virtual program.** Connect with a wider scope of students, particularly those in underserved areas or when bringing students into the workplace may not be an option. You can partner with one school or school system or offer one program for them all to attend. There are many options here!

2026 INDUSTRY WEEKS OF FOCUS

While Students@Work is highlighted in March, this is a resource that can be utilized **all year long!** We encourage connection with local educators to bring career awareness opportunities to students throughout the school year, with the flexibility to arrange programs at times that work for your business. Below is a suggested schedule of industry weeks that will be highlighted but ***you are welcome to schedule program activities at any time.***

2026 INDUSTRY WEEKS OF FOCUS

March 2 - 6: Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Construction

March 9 – 13: Agriculture, Education, and Healthcare

March 16 – 20: STEM, Energy, and Manufacturing

March 23 – 27: Hospitality, Government, and Legal

STEPS FOR PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

1. Determine the type of program your business would like to offer.
 - Get involvement from your team and assign roles to ensure program success.
 - Determine the number of students you can accommodate.
2. Create an account in the [Navigator platform](#) or, if you already have an account, create your S@W program by **November 21, 2025**. To create your S@W program in the Navigator, select 'Create a Resource' on the top right of your main account page. Select 'Appointment' then 'Students@Work'. *Teachers/school coordinators will be notified on **December 1, 2025** that S@W programming is available on the Navigator.*
3. When you receive email notice from the Navigator that your program has been selected, initiate contact with the school coordinator. Confirm a date for the program and discuss program goals and objectives.
4. Finalize logistics and complete the [2026 S@W Program Form](#) by **February 13, 2026**. Submit to both the partnering school contact and Megan Johnson at megan.johnson@nc.gov.
5. Carry out your program! If sharing photos on social media, be sure to tag @NCBCE.
**Photos/videos should align with your partnering school system's requirements.*
6. Provide feedback on your Students@Work experience by completing the [Business Post-Program Survey](#) by **April 17, 2026**.

STEPS FOR SCHOOL COORDINATORS

1. Select a S@W program through the Navigator beginning **December 1, 2025**. *If school coordinators recruit their own business partners, ensure the business creates an account in the Navigator.*
2. Communicate with the selected business regarding their Students@Work program to confirm logistics, number of participating students, and set program goals.
3. Complete all paperwork as required by your district (i.e. parent permission forms, transportation requests, media release forms).

4. Prepare students for their experience using the 2026 S@W Program Form received from the business partner (should be received by February 13, 2026). Have students come up with questions to ask during the program.
5. Complete the [Local School Coordinator Pre-Program Survey](#) and administer the [Student Pre-Program Survey](#) to students **before** the program takes place.
6. Once your S@W program is complete, provide NCBCCE with feedback through the [Student Post-Program Surveys](#) and the [Local School Coordinator School Post-Program Survey](#) by **April 17, 2026**.

PROGRAM DEADLINES

November 21, 2025 – Businesses should create/update their profile and upload their S@W program in the [Navigator](#). To upload a S@W program, select: Create a Resource > Appointment > Students@Work.

December 1, 2025 – Schools and teachers may begin selecting S@W programs through Navigator.

February 13, 2026 - Your program details should be finalized. Share how your business is participating and what students can expect. Email the [2026 S@W Program Form](#) to your school contact and to Megan Johnson at megan.johnson@nc.gov.

Two weeks before your program takes place – Check in with school partners to make sure they have reviewed your program information with students, and all plans are in place.

March 3 – 27, 2026 – Students@WorkSM Programming - Tag **@NCBCE** in social media posts!

April 17, 2026 – Post-program surveys for businesses, students, & school coordinators should be completed. See Surveys section on page 4.

IN-PERSON S@W PROGRAMS

In-School Visit Considerations

- Create a video or presentation about your business and the skills/education needed.
- Have students discuss what they are learning in class and how those skills apply to your business.
- Have students role play using some of the soft skills important in your business.
- Incorporate hands-on activities to make the visit engaging and interactive.
- Set aside time for Q&A.

On-Site Program Examples

- **State Employees' Credit Union (SECU)**

The key to SECU's success with Students@Work is their network of branches all across the state and the relationships they have established with teachers. When contacting teachers to discuss their participation in Students@Work, SECU offers to have students come to the branch for a tour and discussion with employees about their job responsibilities, or they go into the classroom to give presentations and conduct financial literacy activities.

- **Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce**

Since 2019, Greenville-Pitt County Schools has worked closely the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce for their Students@Work program. Each year, more than 2,000 students participate in S@W experiences at local businesses throughout the county, thanks to coordinated efforts of the school district and Chamber.

- **MCNC Students@Work Agenda**

Start	End	Activity
8:30	8:45	Arrival, Settling In
8:45	9:00	Welcome and Introductions
9:00	10:30	NOC/Networking overview; hands-on networking activity
10:30	10:45	Break, Light Snack
10:45	11:05	Staying Safe and Secure Online
11:05	12:05	Tours (Possible photos on lobby stairs before dividing)
12:05	12:45	Lunch*
12:45	1:00	Wrap-up / Depart (additional photos if necessary)

VIRTUAL S@W PROGRAMS

Virtual Program Considerations:

- Incorporate interactive and engaging elements (i.e. live polling through Menti, a Kahoot game)
- Determine program length (most keep it to an hour)
- Select the best virtual platform (i.e. Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams)
- If recording or taking photos/screenshots of the session, obtain permission from the school coordinator

Virtual Program Examples:

- [Lanxess](#) in partnership with Gaston County Schools
- [Vidant Health Maynard Children's Hospital 2021 Students@Work Program](#)
- [UNC Lenoir Health Care Lab, Radiology and Outpatient Physical Therapy 2021 Students@Work Program](#)

SURVEYS

Feedback from participants is important and will help guide future Students@Work programming. Please complete the relevant surveys below.

Businesses

- [Business Post-Program Survey](#)– To be completed by **April 17, 2026**.

Local School Coordinators

- [Local School Coordinator Pre-Program Survey](#) – To be completed prior to the program.
- [Local School Coordinator School Post-Program Survey](#) – To be completed by **April 17, 2026**.

Students

- [Student Pre-Program Survey](#) – To be completed by each participating student before your Students@Work program takes place.
- [Student Post-Program Survey](#) – To be completed by each student by **April 17, 2026**.