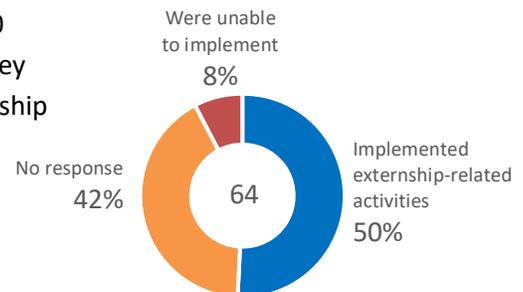

Impact Study - Fall 2020 Virtual Externship

*Prepared by Lizbeth Perez and Robin Breault, Ph.D.
May 2021*

The Fall 2020 Virtual Externship was a fully remote program that spanned two weeks in October 2020 and connected sixty-four educators with twenty-two different businesses. The Fall 2020 Virtual Externship was an expansion of the virtual externship model piloted in July 2020 with educators stemming from over ten districts across Arizona. The externship was facilitated by the Center for the Future of Arizona, ElevateEDAZ/The Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation, and ABEC (Arizona Business and Education Coalition).

The program connected educators directly to industry professionals through virtual Employer Sessions. These sessions provided relevant and updated insights into industry practices, providing educators with access to career exploration resources and opportunities (with a regional focus) that they could share with their students.

In February of 2021, educators who participated in the Fall 2020 externship ($n=64$) were invited to participate in a follow up survey to gain insights on how the knowledge gained during the externship experience was shared with students. The survey received a 58% response rate ($n = 38$). Thirty-three respondents (approximately 50% of all externship participants) indicated that they were able to implement externship learnings through classroom activities or other methods. Five participants indicated that they had not applied externship learnings due to time constraints or other barriers that prevented them from sharing externship learnings with their students.



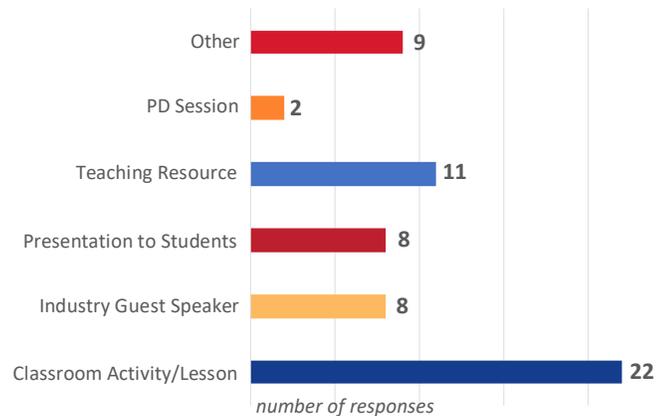
The thirty-three educators who were able to implement externship-related activities between November 2020 and March 2021, reached approximately 2300 students. Follow-up interviews with externship participants provided insights that combined with survey responses provides an understanding of how educators perceived their Virtual Externship experience and how the Virtual Externship might be further adapted to address educators' and their students' needs.

The remainder of this report outlines findings of the Fall 2020 Virtual Externships Impact Study, explores trends in educator responses, and highlights considerations for continued growth of the Virtual Externship model.

Fall 2020 Impact Snapshot

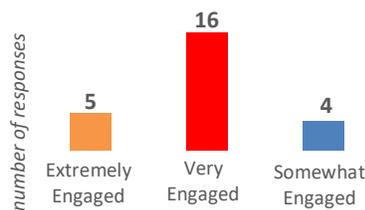
The Fall 2020 Virtual Externship Impact Study was undertaken to gain insights into the initial impact the Virtual Externships had on participating educators and their students. Participants were prompted to respond to a survey asking if and how they had implemented externship related activities; utilized externship resources; and followed up with industry contacts made through the externship.

Of the 38 respondents (58% of all externship participants), 33 were able to implement externship related activities or lessons in the 12–14-week period following the externship. Educators reported that they applied their externship learnings most often as classroom activities and lessons that ranged from creating resumes for historical figures to practicing STAR for behavior interviews to linking learning units to career opportunities with local companies.



Educators shared their learnings with students as classroom activities and lessons.

Approximately ¼ of the educators implemented application and interviewing activities and lessons.

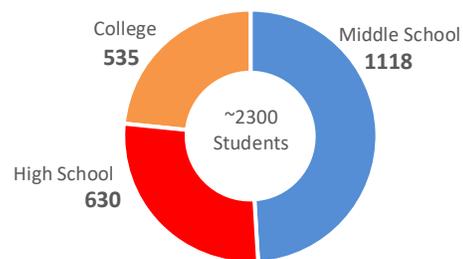


Educators noted that students were very engaged.

Another ¼ shared local career pathways information through a variety of activities. Eight educators leveraged new network connections to bring guest speakers into their classrooms. Finally, the majority of respondents who selected 'other' explained that they shared externship resources one-on-one with students in a variety of settings, both formal (advising) and informal. Most respondents indicated that their students were very engaged in externship-related activities.

Educators who were unable to implement externship-related activities in the weeks following the program, indicated that they recognize their students' need for world of work guidance, whether for higher education or for careers after graduation. Nevertheless, time and curriculum constraints posed challenges.

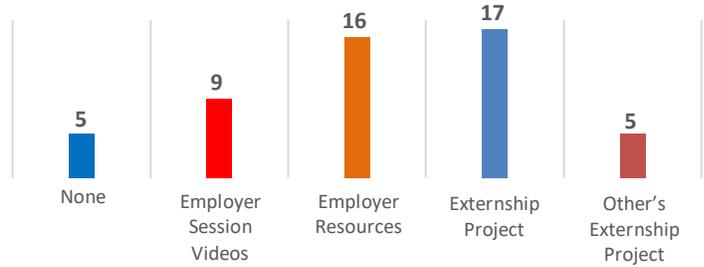
The educators who were able to implement learnings from the externship experience directly impacted ~2300 students. The grade levels of students who received externship related learnings ranged from



Middle school students benefited most directly from externship-related learning activities.

junior high through college, with the majority of students being in middle school.

Educators were eager to share information with students who would soon be entering the workforce or making educational choices that would impact career opportunities. Information that educators noted held the most relevance was internship or job shadowing opportunities and information about high-paying careers that don't require a college degree. Educators reported that the externship resources that they utilized most included employer provided resources and participants' own externship projects. Educators' comments indicate that they highly appreciate the information directly provided by employers. Considered "insider information," these resources are not always available to educators or students. Consequently, they expressed an interest in having greater access to timely information and resources directly from employers.



Educators utilized employer resources and their externship projects to implement learnings.

Despite educators self-reported interest in additional employer resources and connections, only 8 (25% of respondents) indicated that they had followed up with industry or educational network contacts made during the externship. However, those who did reach out after the externship reported connecting with multiple individuals whom they met during Employer Sessions.

Fall 2020 Impact Insights

In order to add depth for understanding the impact of the Fall Virtual Externships, follow up interviews were conducted with seven different participants who volunteered to share their experiences. Two of the participants who were interviewed work in an advisory capacity at two-year colleges (Pima Community College and Phoenix College), two are high-school teachers (Gila Ridge High School in Yuma and The Academies at South Mountain in Phoenix), and three are Gear Up Success Coaches in Santa Cruz County. Unfortunately, no middle school educators were available to be interviewed for this study.



Fred Amador
Career Coach
Phoenix College



Employer
Engagement and
Career Services
Pima College



James Kuzniak
CTE Instructor
Film & TV
Gila Ridge HS



Jerlita Buranday
Science Teacher
Academies at South
Mountain HS



Gear Up
NHS and RRHS
Santa Cruz County

The follow up interviews provided rich examples of the way externship learnings were adapted to address educators specific contexts and communities (See Appendix A: Implementation Reports). Additionally, when paired with survey responses, the interviews reveal several important trends that inform how the Virtual Externship is perceived by educators and how they understand their needs and their students’ needs in relationship to career exploration and world-of-work learning.

TREND 1: Educators appreciate the unique externship opportunity and want more.

Those who were interviewed expressed the importance of the externship and the direct connections made between employers and educators. The opportunity to make personal connections and engage in conversations with the employers made the learning rich and markedly different than other PD opportunities. This echoed the comments from survey respondents who found first-hand information and employer connections the most valuable part of their experience, leaving them hungry for more resources and connections.

It’s great being able to have updated information about the different industries first-hand. The connection between classes and careers is so valuable.
---Survey Respondent

Several survey comments also noted that there was a need for additional support connecting students/classrooms with employers in specific industries after the externship. Several other respondents noted a desire to “check-in” or participate in “refresher classes” to keep

externship learnings fresh and front of mind. Others noted the desire for continued access to updated internship information from the companies as well as a regularly updated repository for employer resources. One interviewee recommended leveling up the experience by providing a tiered externship experience with hybrid programming—the initial externship experience being virtual with the opportunity to follow up with an in-person experience in a specific industry or company for those who were interested in developing deeper understanding and personal connections.

TREND 2: Include information on skilled trades and alternative pathways.

In every interview, educators expressed the value of highlighting pathways in the skilled trades and other careers that do not require a bachelor’s degree for entry-level positions. Educators noted that both students and teachers rarely receive information about career options that do not require college completion. Several educators expressed that they sense many students have little interest or motivation to continue with their formal education after struggling through remote learning during the pandemic, so it is good to present alternatives.

Two interviews also expressed that the students they work with come from families and cultures in which working with your hands is considered important work that is rarely recognized as such in academic settings or in career and college counseling materials. These educators made clear

that by stressing the importance of sharing information on career pathways in the skilled trades they were not promoting tracking students, which has racist and classist origins. Instead, they noted that providing a broad range of possible career paths, as well as opportunities to manage financial obligations while pursuing a career, provides more of their students to see their own interests addressed and helps them make more informed choices about their futures.

TREND 3: The Virtual Externship is a model for local, world-of-work connections in classrooms.

Of the seven educators who participated in follow up interviews, five adapted or replicated the Virtual Externship model to bring local world of work connections to their students.

- James Kuzniak, a Film and TV instructor at Gila Ridge HS in Yuma, was inspired to create short video interviews with professionals from a variety of industries in his community. These videos are serving as the entry point for students to explore how each industry/profession intersects with the skills they are learning in their CTE course.
- The Santa Cruz County Gear Up team was inspired to create a series of short presentations highlighting six, high-growth sectors in their community. Each presentation contains an interview with a local professional, information about career clusters, and local educational.
- Jerlita Buranday, a teacher at Academies at South Mountain, also shared pathways options tied to local companies. She brought this information to her freshman classes by adapting slides from three different Employer Sessions and the materials engineering unit the students had just completed.

While these educators are clearly creative and committed to bringing relevant, local career opportunities to their students, a handful survey responses indicated that some educators would appreciate additional support or models for bringing world of work learning into virtual settings in creative ways that will inspire their students.

TREND 4: Tailor programming to address gaps in teacher and student knowledge and access.

Educator interviews and survey responses provided insights into ways to tailor the externship experience to better meet teacher and student needs. All of the educators interviewed noted that local industry connections were very valuable for schools in underserved, high-needs communities, because these connections provide much needed access to professional networks and offer a deeper understanding of the skills local industry seek.

Several interviews highlighted the fact that whether working at post-secondary or K-12 level, educators have little time to network outside of their own professions. This limits their ability to provide first-hand knowledge and connections for students who don't already have the privilege

of personal networks within any given industry. Two of the educators who were interviewed noted the importance of network connections in their own life and how a lack of access to specific professional networks has limited opportunities for other members of their families. Another educator mentioned the opportunity to lift up specific segments of the local economy, such as Black or women-owned businesses that teachers might not know about. As these educators note, networks transmit opportunities, and so teachers and students who have no direct access to information or networks miss out on life-changing opportunities.

In similar reflections, four of the seven educators interviewed recommended offering tailored externship experiences that provided a “deeper dive” around specific pathways to offer more local industry knowledge and network access. They believe that connecting educators with hyper-local knowledge and professionals from the community would help level the playing field for their students. One educator noted, his knowledge of career opportunities in Arizona is useful, but it isn’t going to help his students get a job unless he knows someone who can help them. Students and teachers need information and direct connections to career paths that offer economic stability and mobility. As another educator stated, her students need access in the way that they understand – personal examples and relationships.

Who you know, makes a difference. I want my students to have that advantage.

--- Interview Respondent

Implications for Growth

The trends in survey responses and follow-up interviews highlight educators’ desire for more opportunities with even more targeted programming to address student and educator access. Educators recognize that they are pivotal in helping students engage in pathways that offer financial stability and economic mobility. Educators also know they often lack the resources and networks to help their students make those connections.

This speaks to the necessity of making experiences like the Virtual Externship more widely available and of increasing opportunities for more locally-connected, world-of-work experiences for educators and students. Through their feedback, participants provide guidance in how to leverage aspects of the current externship model and explore alternative approaches that have the potential to scale impact.

- Design the experience to increase local network connections between schools and industry. Educators indicated in the survey and follow up interviews that network connections were important for themselves and students, yet only eight reached out to industry presenters after the externship. Under the current externship model, multi-grade level cohorts and state-wide employer participation provide for rich interactions; however, small tweaks in recruitment and

structure of the externship model might foster more focused, local connections. Two examples of this adaptation were provided by educators who were interviewed:

1. Create cohorts of same grade teachers from specific schools and schedule Employer Sessions with companies from their regions.
2. Offer sector-specific opportunities that are regionally based.

Educators felt this would increase the likelihood that educators followed up with industry contacts after the externship. As the CommunityShare platform becomes more widely known, regional and grade-level focused programs may be helpful for encouraging educators to connect with local industry professionals for ongoing classroom interactions that highlight the world of work and local career pathways.

- Invest in information and resource management to increase usability and access. Externship partners and along with other state-wide organizations have done exceptional work creating the systems-wide connections and foundations to foster robust career connected pathways in Arizona. The externship is one aspect of this work that strengthens the ecosystem by directly connecting educators with the most-up-to-date information from employers.

Survey respondents indicated that beyond the activity plan that they had created during the externship, the employer materials (presentations and handouts) were the most utilized and valuable resource. As the number of externship resources grows, a DropBox folder and YouTube playlist will be more cumbersome to navigate for educators seeking resources.

There are simple strategies that can provide a stop gap solution, such as linking employer resources (slide decks, handouts) within YouTube descriptions; tagging YouTube videos with industry type, presentation type, grade-level relevance, and region; or improving the SEO for the externship landing page. Nevertheless, the wealth of resources the externship programs have generated so far warrant further exploration and possible investment in approaches to curate, organize, and manage the information. Well organized, linked resources will benefit educators and students in connecting classrooms and local world-of-work learning.

- Offer multiple levels and pathways to increase educator engagement. As the Virtual Externship moves out of the pilot phase and beyond the initial network of early-adopter participants, it will be important to understand the various participant personas. The initial Summer Virtual Externship had 22 participants. Eighteen (80%) responded to the follow-up survey and 14 (65%) reported implementing their learnings in the first 8 weeks of the fall semester. The Fall Virtual Externship had 64 participants. Only 38 (58%) responses to the follow up survey and 33 (50%) reported implementing their learnings.

Attrition in participation over time happens; however, this decline in engagement will be concerning if it continues. If educators are not prioritizing the implementing learnings from experience among other demands, it would indicate that the recruitment model and/or experience could be adjusted to offer different levels of engagement that more clearly reflect the different value participants seek from the program. For example, educators mentioned tiered programming, follow up sessions to support network connections and classroom implementation, and more involvement from college partners as possible ways to increase continued engagement and learning.

APPENDIX A – Implementation Reports



Fred Amador, Career Coach at Phoenix College

As one of the first to attend college in his family, Fred Amador was excited to participate in the Virtual Externships because he understands first-hand the importance of having a vision for your future. Fred works as a Career Coach at Phoenix College in Glendale. Each day he works with students to help them discover their passions and map pathways to the future they imagine for themselves. He was especially interested in learning more about skilled trades opportunities and connecting with local employers. After completing the externship, Fred and his colleague began plans to create a database of local industry connections. As professionals, they both understand the power of networks, and they recognize through their work that student at Phoenix College need greater access to local networks.

Although it has been hard during the pandemic, Fred has been connecting with local professionals and slowly building a list of contacts and resources that will help students prepare for their professional lives. Fred hopes this list will grow into a network of individuals who are willing to participate in informational interviews so students can hear first-hand about certain careers, or who are willing to take on interns and show them the ropes, or even mentor students who are seeking extra guidance. Fred explained how important it is to make connections for students who don't have them. Fred comes from a small, rural mining community which meant when he moved to Phoenix to attend ASU he had no access to the professional community. He noted that without caring mentors he had as a student and the networks he was introduced to through those mentors he would have had far fewer opportunities. He hopes to pass these opportunities on to the students he works with at Phoenix College.



Employer Engagement and Career Services at Pima Community College

Pima Community College has participated in Center for the Future of Arizona educator externships since the initial in-person cohort in summer 2019. Pima's office of Employer Engagement and Career Services has encouraged Pima faculty and advisors from throughout the college to participate in the Virtual Externships in order to broaden the networks and industry knowledge of individuals who work directly with students. This fall the Director of Employer Engagement and Career Services participated in the Virtual Externship. As part of the debrief from the externship, the participants from Pima met and had a conversation about the externship experience and shared resources. Ultimately, the resources from the externship were compiled and distilled by a group of individuals in the office and shared in informational presentations with approximately 500 first-year students.

During the interview, the Director noted that the work of expanding knowledge and networks is critical work. If faculty and advisors don't have first-hand information, they can't help make genuine connections for students. To this end, the externships and other programs the college puts on, such as speaker series featuring Black-owned businesses, are powerful vehicles for building networks. As the externship model grows the Director hopes that there will be more opportunities to partner Employer Sessions with educational pathways and take a deeper dive into building networks that span the learning and economic ecosystem.



James Kuzniak, CTE Instructor for Film & TV at Gila Ridge High School

When he began the Virtual Externship, James wasn't sure the experience was for him. As a Film & TV instructor in the CTE program in the Yuma Union High School District, James really didn't know why he would need to attend Employer Sessions featuring health care careers or finance. Yet, as he attended sessions and began to think about skills transfer and how his own curriculum was heavy in skill development and application, he got excited. Before the externship was even over, James had started implementing his learnings. He started contacting people in his network from a variety of industries. He'd sit down and interview them on camera, then edit the interview to share with his students.

James goal: bring the skills his students were learning in film and video editing into the real world. Through his interviews he highlights many different professions and industries that need videography and communication skills. This year he has shared these interviews with students in his classes and had conversations about the opportunities that their skill set will provide. For example, James said that he interviewed a friend who is a local realtor – because, he noted, all the kids want to be realtors so they can make good money without four more years of school. The realtor highlighted all the visual media needs he often has to hire someone else to create, edit, and manage for him. James indicated that his students eyes were opened: they hadn't made those connections. In his curriculum plans for next year, James is structuring his film editing projects around assignments related to the video interviews he created this spring. He is excited to give his students ways to more directly connect a skill they are learning and passionate about to a broad range of opportunities for their futures.



Jerlita Buranday, Science Teacher at The Academies at South Mountain

Jerlita is passionate about her students. When she heard about the Virtual Externships she was very excited to participate and learn as much as she could to bring opportunities back to her students. Jerlita

teaches in a school where many students' families face economic challenges. She notes that often this means her students are working from an early age in order to contribute to the family income. Sometimes this affects their academic progress, but it always impacts the amount of time they have to contribute to traditional resume building activities that high school students might participate in, such as clubs and other extra curriculums. Jerlita says that the typical "go to high school then go to university then get a job" trajectory really doesn't resonate with most of her students. They are worried about finances. They don't see members of their family and community following that path. She reflects that this doesn't mean her students don't see the long-term financial opportunity of the college career path, they just don't see it as attainable for themselves.

So, when Jerlita found herself in Employer Sessions highlighting skilled trades, she was excited. Throughout the externship, Jerlita gathered information about career opportunities that students could enter directly from high school with little or no college necessary. She saw an opportunity to bring world of work learning into her ninth-grade science classroom during a unit on Materials Engineering. Jerlita leveraged externship resources to create a lesson that introduced three different local companies connected to the construction industry. She then had students find available positions on the companies' websites and look up salaries, needed skills, and qualifications. Jerlita said this activity opened up so many of her students eyes, prompting them to think differently about opportunities. She also reflected on the fact that this activity validated the work that so many people in their own community do, which is something, she explained, doesn't happen much in school settings.

Jerlita is excited to find more ways to bring career awareness opportunities into her classroom that validate her students' experience. Jerlita said that growing up in the Philippines, she never imagined going on to college. Even as the valedictorian of her class, she didn't think she was college bound for a number of reasons. Now, having earned several degrees, she sees the world differently, and wants to bring opportunities to her students that validate their experience and gives them new ways to think about what is possible with multiple ways to achieve those dreams.



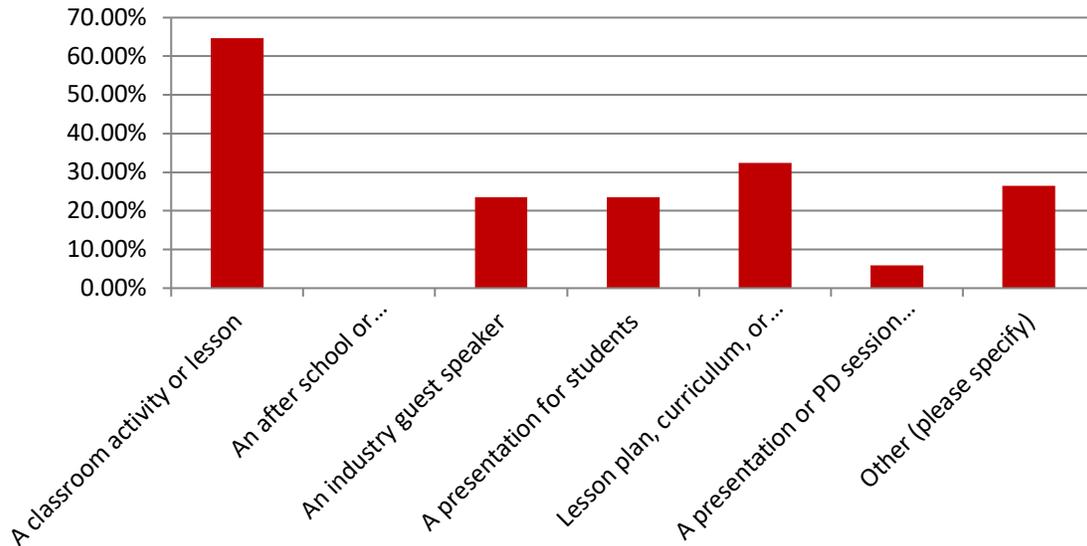
Gear Up Success Coaches in Santa Cruz County

Four Gear Up Coaches working with students in Santa Cruz County participated in the Virtual Externship. They were glad to have the opportunity to participate in the externship both to connect with employers and learn more about different industries, but also to experience the Virtual Externship model. As all of their interactions with students had been remote since March 2020, they were looking for new ways to bring career awareness activities into a virtual setting. And that is exactly what they did.

Using the basic concept behind the externship model, the team chose six career clusters within high-growth industries within the county. They then found local industry leaders in each sector and interviewed them about their work and opportunities within the industry. Each of these interviews was recorded and added to a presentation that outlined different career pathways within the industry and what educational pathways were available locally for students. These presentations were shared with all freshman students at Santa Cruz County high schools this spring. The team has plans to continue to add additional industry presentations and update the current ones so that students have access to local knowledge and educational opportunities.

APPENDIX B – Implementation Snapshot

How did you apply externship learnings in the classroom or beyond?
Please check all that apply.



Short Description of the Activity	# of Students	Grade Level
Create resumes for historical figures	40	11-12
College & Career lesson introducing the JTED related class offerings in our high schools. Career Assessment results reviewed with students to help in their academic planning for high school. Virtual guest speakers later this Spring.	300	8th
How they apply and look for jobs	18	11-12
Application and research of soft skills needed for the industry. Had students research job postings and career employability skills and expectations.	85	10-11
I tied my proposed lesson with LT6 (Material Engineering) and introduced the different careers learned and discussed during the externship program.	40	9th grade
I used some of the presentation skills and other soft skills shared by employers into presentation and project requirements for students	95	10th grade
Created career workshops with guest speakers as modeled in the workshops presented in our workshops	56	12th grade

Short Description of the Activity	# of Students	Grade Level
I presented the curriculum daily and we did the activities/lessons	60	12
Gave interview and resume tips. Discussed importance of soft skills.	35	college level
Incorporated info about career and skills necessary for job development and placement	72	9th
Presentation on how my class activities evolve to the professional work in Hollywood, music industry...also to local professions in the smaller community at large, i.e. jingle writing, commercial advertisements and marketing/ documentary work.	150	12-13
Added to a lesson for my career exploration section in my class. I also have a work study worker connecting videos from externship a to our fields of interest.	Class- 20	18 plus
Discussed during IEP Transition Plan Interviews and Development	25	9-12
Discussed opportunities for students here in the county	23	11/12
Another participant shared information about career events, I pass those along	500 receive info	college and high schools
I was able to share with students the numerous opportunities that are available now and projected to be available with local employers. Students gained insight on career opportunities they can apply to participate in that do not require college education or those that will support and train them as well.	75	9-12
I helped share information with students and I worked with a colleague to create a resource list for our students. I also connected with the Greater Phoenix Chamber regarding an initiative they are working on that can help our students.	10	Freshmen in college
I had guest speakers from local industry join us virtually to speak to the students about the various careers and opportunities available	125	9-12 Grade
Created choices for students and how they can individualize their learning to meet their needs.	8	10-12th grades

Short Description of the Activity	# of Students	Grade Level
Hearing from a number of individuals in a range of sectors helped me to have more informed conversations with students about employment opportunities	20	Community College
Students will have an opportunity to discuss and practice Behavioral-based interview processes and the STAR Method in relation to their future career roles.	50	12th
Mini Lessons for state options	180	8
Shared with students via presentation some learning/takeaways from externship.	90	9th
We discussed some of the internships available to them	200	17-21
I'm able to pass along information to graduating seniors	5	12th grade
talking with students about job readiness skills, opportunities with companies that they may not have considered (such as social media/graphic design at Pulte), behavioral interview prep and vocational ed programs.	10	10-12th graders
Used websites and career information with the students	6	Grades 11-12
Guest Speaker	25	9-12