



Division of Apprenticeship Standards

Best Practices for Increased Graduation/Completion Rates of Apprenticeship Programs

This list was compiled from comments received from apprenticeship programs with above average graduation rates. It is intended to provide suggestions only and is based on continuous learning and frequent improvement. Economy and culture play a role in apprentices working through to graduation, but how a program is run makes a difference as well.

Best Practices

1. Start with high expectations. Individuals will rise to meet the occasion.
2. Be very clear on what is expected of apprentices, even if you have to explain something that seems perfectly obvious to you. It is not always obvious to the student.
3. Identify problems, both disciplinary and academic, early on. Put apprentices in remedial classes if necessary. Provide access to English language classes for non-English speaking apprentices.
4. From the start be consistent with discipline; hold apprentices accountable. Establish these boundaries early on. If someone does not agree with the discipline process they will be out early. Be firm but fair.
5. Make sure whatever disciplinary actions are taken are done evenly across the board. Don't favor an apprentice who is a good worker but had poor attendance in the classroom.
6. For attendance and other disciplinary issues, build a system into the program where the apprentice sees direct consequences to their actions and take responsibility for themselves.
7. Check employer evaluations carefully; investigate every complaint, bringing the apprentice forward to explain.
8. Encourage employers to emphasize to apprentices that their work is more than a job, it is a career.
9. Have apprentices evaluate employers. Investigate the apprentices' complaints.

10. Provide counseling and emotional support but still require them to meet their individual challenges.
11. Be committed to all who are willing to try as long as they follow the rules.
12. Hold regular mentoring sessions. This could be with coordinators and apprentices or the graduating class with newer apprentices. Individuals learn a lot as they teach others what they have learned.
13. Give apprentices tools to find their own work, teach them how to network when it is slow and encourage them to network with past employers, program coordinators, business agents and others; teach them how to establish themselves.
14. Apprenticeship coordinators and instructors need to have a passion for the trade and a desire for young people to learn the trade and improve his/her life. The program will automatically grow if they love what they are doing.
15. Make a big deal of the graduation ceremony. Give a gift such as a watch with the program name on it, or pass down the tools.
16. Perform a self-assessment of your program on a regular basis.
17. Survey apprentices and ask if they are learning what they want to learn. Make sure the survey does not ask for a name so the apprentice feels free to answer honestly. Get feedback about the program from the employers as well as evaluating the employers and the classes.
18. Create specific goals for retention, study what your program's trends are and keep statistics. Spend some time analyzing what works and what doesn't.
19. Develop a computerized system that gives coordinators information regarding performance and attendance of the apprentices so they can keep on top of business.
20. On the union side, have coordinators go to union halls on roll call days and make themselves available to talk to apprentices.
21. Coordinators should spend time on job sites to make sure that the training is well rounded as promised and that it is accomplished.
22. Quality of instruction is very important. Employing a diverse group of part time instructors that are lead journeymen or forepersons currently working full time in the industry can be very helpful.
23. Constantly review curriculum. Make sure it is updated to meet the needs of the industry.
24. Indenture apprentices based upon the needs of the industry, so that they can all have an opportunity for full time employment.