



**FAST FACTS**

**Project :** Business Operations Research

**Teacher:** Jolene Wofford, jolenewofford@wentzville.k12.mo.us

**School:** Holt High School

**Location :** Wentzville, Missouri

**Website:** www.wentzville.k12.mo.us

**Start/End date:** September 2013-March 2014

**Mentors provided by:** Citigroup, Genetech, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, Inc., Intel Corporation, MasterCard, Merck & Co., Inc., and Thomson Reuters

**Contact:** David Neils, ITP Founder/Director davidn@telementor.org

## Students gain business sense from Fortune 500 professionals



**Winning smiles**  
*Holt High School students bring home the gold*

Jolene Wofford knows it’s risky business for young adults to enter the work world without business sense. That’s why she provides her students with a clear understanding of how to successfully run and market a business through her DECA class at Holt High School in Wentzville School District in Missouri. Many high schools across the nation provide the same education to their students. What sets Wofford’s class apart is that her students are matched with top professionals from Fortune 500 companies who mentor students, helping them understand the ins and outs of business.

“Working with the International Telementor Program gave my students the opportunity to work with business professionals and understand the importance of

creating a professional business report,” she says. “My students have the opportunity to correspond with mentors in companies based in the Philippines, Washington and right here in Missouri.”

In fall 2013, Wofford challenged her students with developing a plan to rebrand an existing business or organization to breathe new life into its product and update its image. Using a business of their choice, students researched its organizational structure, culture, consumers and branding efforts. Plans could include new visions and mission statements, logos, signage, social media campaigns, store layouts and other marketing concepts. Wofford feels mentors added a realistic perspective and value to her students’ work. She says, “The ITP program...provides students with experience collaborating with a career individual who can give them professional advice on how to conduct market research which is essential for this project. In addition, students learn time management and effective communication skills.”

While the quality of Wofford’s students’ work increased, they weren’t just chasing a grade. Their advanced marketing research projects helped them become serious contenders in DECA competitions. Three groups competed at the state level and placed in the top five. One group even qualified to compete at the international level in Atlanta, Georgia. Six of the eight team members received a “Certificate of Excellence” at that competition.



***“Working with the International Telementor Program gave my students the opportunity to work with business professionals and understand the importance of creating a professional business report.”***

**Jolene Wofford, Holt High School Teacher**



### **Communication is key**

***Students work with mentors via ITP’s secure website***

Wofford wasn’t surprised. “I expected the students to accomplish a variety of experiences from working with a business professional, like conducting market research in a professional manner with well-written surveys, and creating a presentation to display all their information. Some of the outcomes were phenomenal! The students who had mentors who were engaged from start to finish and established an initial rapport had an upper hand and worked very hard on their projects.”

David Neils, ITP founder and president, agrees that engagement on the part of students and mentors is key. “When students collaborate and communicate effectively with professionals, the benefits are wide and deep. Oftentimes, students have a negative view of collaboration based on classroom group work. It’s a view that isn’t connected with the reality of collaborating way beyond the school walls. Jolene’s students overcome this view by leveraging the iterative process of student draft, mentor review and feedback, new student draft incorporating feedback. Quite quickly they see a direct connection between successful collaboration and the quality of their work moving up and to the right. Another clear benefit is understanding what constitutes

excellence for a given task or student outcome. Mentors know where the bar is set and help students discover this, own it and attain it.”

At the end of the day, Wofford and the mentors who work with her students feel the experience students gain from working with professionals through ITP is like none other.

Wofford says ITP’s mentors provide students with excellent feedback from a real-world perspective that she couldn’t provide herself. Telementoring “...is a good concept and the program is user friendly. I’ll definitely work with the ITP program again.”

A MasterCard employee who mentored one of Wofford’s students echoes her sentiments: “ITP provides positive exposure to the business world that other students may not otherwise receive. I love being a part of affecting the future of young people who may become the movers and shakers of tomorrow.” 🌍

## **STUDENT OUTCOMES**

### **Students will:**

- Set and meet deadlines
- Research a business/trends
- Describe the business’ or organization’s mission, target market and existing branding efforts
- Describe the research methodologies and process
- Propose a rebranding plan, timeline and budget that takes into account research findings, plus economic, geographic, demographic and socioeconomic factors
- Develop an evaluation plan including metrics to measure return on investment (ROI)

**WWW.TELEMOTOR.ORG**

The International Telementor Program ■ David Neils, Founder/Director

