

Upskill with a Teacher Externship

Relevant Learning Levels

Primary

Secondary

Post-Secondary

WHAT IS A TEACHER EXTERNSHIP?

An externship is a short-term (usually 1–5 days) professional learning experience where you shadow and engage with local industry. During an externship, you might:

- Tour facilities and operations
- Learn about career pathways
- Observe or assist with technical work
- Ask the questions students really want answers to

What's the Value?

- **Boost your credibility.** You're not just teaching *about* Energy & Natural Resources (ENR)—you've seen it in action
- **Bridge the gap.** Most students (and teachers!) don't know what these careers really look like
- **Open doors.** These industry partners often turn into guest speakers, field trip hosts, or even donations for lab materials

GO BEHIND THE SCENES & BRING IT BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

1. Find an Opportunity

Start by identifying local organizations that align with environmental and ENR-related fields: utilities, renewable energy companies, conservation agencies, waste management services, or resource extraction companies are all great starting points. Think about:

- **What you want to learn:** Do you want a broad overview of operations or a deep dive into a specific career path or technology?
- **What's nearby:** Look for companies or organizations within a reasonable travel distance.
- **What's relevant to your classroom:** Choose opportunities that align with the content or careers you teach.

You can also search for externship listings on local workforce boards or through district and community college partnerships. Some companies may already have teacher externship or job shadowing programs in place—check their websites or professional social media channels to find out.



2. Reach Out

Keep it professional, clear, and aligned with your goals:

- **Use a Letter of Request:** Introduce yourself, share what you teach, and express interest in learning more about their work through a short-term externship (examples on the [GIE Educators Page](#).)
- **Highlight Your Intent:** Let them know this experience will directly impact students—your goal is to better connect classroom content to real-world careers.
- **Be Flexible:** Offer multiple dates or timeframes. Many industry partners are willing but need advance notice or accommodations.
- **Follow Up Thoughtfully:** If you don't hear back within a week or two, send a polite follow-up. Make it easy for them to say yes.

Reaching out can feel like a big step, but many professionals are eager to support education—it just takes a clear ask.

3. Go Observe, Ask Everything

Treat it like a reverse field trip. Take notes, snap pictures (with permission), and ask about:

- Skill needs and tools used
- Career growth and hiring gaps
- Entry points for students and how to prepare them

4. Bring it Back to Class

Turn what you saw into:

- Lesson content or classroom stories
- Career spotlights and project ideas
- Guest speaker invites or field trip leads

Use what you learned to make your teaching way more connected to what's happening in the real world!