

Workers' Project launches Student Workers' Education and Training Initiative

The Workers' Project established the Student Workers' Education and Training Initiative (SWEATI), a project that focuses on giving working high school students a voice and power in education and work policies that affect their lives.

In response to Indiana's repeal of several child labor laws and decreased school funding, the Workers' Project is working with educators and student workers to develop a new curriculum that helps students understand work and how to make work better for themselves and others.

This process began in spring 2025 with the development of an anonymous SWEATI survey by students from New Tech Academy in Wayne High School with help from members of the Workers' Project. This survey was designed by working students for working students as a way to share their collective self identity, successes and problems.

The survey is currently being circulated around New Tech. The Workers' Project anticipates the survey to be circulated across Northeast Indiana as SWEATI progresses.

SWEATI has seen some success from its initial efforts. Students better understood their work and their responsibility to improve their jobs. In one instance, a student asked for an improvement in wages, hours and working conditions and received them.

The limited experience from spring demonstrates the benefits students can get when they are encouraged to engage in protected concerted activity. This is important for building a workers' movement that is needed in this day and age.

Additionally, the Workers' Project is working to integrate public education from the U.S. Department of Labor Wage & Hour, National Labor Relations Board, Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Employee Benefits Security Administration and other agencies into the curriculum.

SWEATI will facilitate the creation of an independent, self governing organization of working students formed to organize their peers. The Workers' Project will assist only when asked.

In the future, SWEATI will be developed further to highlight student workers' case studies in the curriculum, on social media and through partnerships with publications. Case studies are among the best tools for workers to learn about work and so the Workers' Project hopes to develop ways for students to tell their stories.

The Workers' Project believes working students have standing. While many working students cannot vote, they pay taxes and should have a say in the policies that govern them.