

Work-Based Learning Program Gives Windsor High School Seniors

# COMPETITIVE EDGE



**Windsor High School students graduate with robust resumes and professional references thanks to a program connecting students with paid workplace positions while also earning high school credit.**

The Windsor High School Cooperative Office Education (COE) program is offered to seniors who are interested in gaining professional experience in part-time entry-level positions with local businesses and organizations.

Each year, an average of 18-20 students gain on-the-job experience by participating in the COE program. Working up to 20 hours a week in paid positions, students seek employment in a variety of pathways. This year, students held positions as bank tellers, customer service representatives, auto body repair technicians, and information technology coordinators, among others. Some students opt for specialized career experiences, and Community Partnerships Coordinator Michelle Smith seeks out new partners that best fit the students' career interests.

“The Cooperative Office Education program links our students to career pathways and provides seniors an opportunity to explore careers they may be interested in,” said Community Partnerships Coordinator, Michelle Smith. “The experience helps guide their long-term career aspirations while immediately helping them make informed decisions about what they want to do after high school.”

Windsor High School's COE program has been offered to seniors since 1972, and over the years, it has evolved in response to a rapidly changing economy.

**Community Empowered**  
Extending Learning Beyond the Classroom





*Windsor High School senior Jackson Ladd fulfilling his responsibilities as a teller at Points West Bank on Main Street in Windsor. Photo credit: Don Reichert/Weld RE-4 School District.*

Originally aimed at teaching students office skills—such as how to operate phone systems, file documents, and perform other office management tasks—the program now emphasizes introducing students to different career pathways and helping them to build both their technical expertise and interpersonal skills, which today’s employers are looking for. Customer service, critical thinking, and collaboration are some of the skill sets Windsor High School students gain, thanks to their experience working with real-world professionals, customers, and supervisors.

As part of the COE program, students create resumes and cover letters, apply for jobs, participate in interviews with employers, and commit to regular

networking students gain through the program helps them to seek out and apply for jobs later in their careers. “Our business partners serve as references and mentors

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to our students as they navigate the professional world during and after high school, as well as in college.”

“My communication and problem-solving skills have

weekly work schedules for their senior year.

“We’ve had many students who continue working with their employers after graduation and, in some cases, while they are enrolled in college,” Smith said, adding that the relationships and

really grown,” said COE student Katelyn Miller, who works as a customer service representative with the Windsor Community Recreation Center. “By collaborating with my coworkers and interacting with customers, I have learned how to communicate effectively, which makes my job



easier and adds to how much I enjoy my time at work.”

“This has become a great part of my job,” said Shannon Brockmeyer with Points West Community Bank, who directly supervised student Jackson Ladd. “Jackson would often ask for additional projects, and he developed a strong understanding of his responsibilities as a teller. I have thoroughly enjoyed seeing him grow. It is always rewarding, at the end of the school year, to see how far each student has come and how much they have learned.”

Over the years, the success of the program has attracted more and more partners interested in hiring a high school student to join their team. Employers partnering with the COE program include multiple departments with the Town of Windsor, Points West Community

Bank, Allstate Insurance, Auto Collision Experts, Dora Grace Bridal, Faithsteps Preschool, Memory Lane Antiques, and Pelican Lakes Golf Club.

“As employees with our organization, these students are part of our team,” said COE partner Sherry Unruh of the Sherry Unruh Allstate Agency. “I love working with young people



*Windsor High School senior Katelyn Miller working at the Windsor Recreation Center where she has built strong customer service and communication skills. Photo credit: Don Reichert/Weld RE-4 School District.*



## THE STUDENT IMPACT

My communication and problem-solving skills have really grown. By collaborating with my coworkers and interacting with customers, I have learned how to communicate effectively, which makes my job easier and adds to how much I enjoy my time at work.

— Katelyn Miller, *Windsor Community Recreation Center*



My experience in the COE program has been life changing. I have been introduced to the business world and enjoyed the change of scenery from the classroom to the office. I am ready for the future and to start my life after high school.

— Andre de Angel, *Sherry Unruh Allstate Agency*



and sharing my knowledge of insurance. They are hardworking and bring excited energy to our workplace. It's been a very rewarding experience for my team."

"My experience in the COE program has been life changing. I have been introduced to the business world and enjoyed the change of scenery from the classroom to the office," said Andre de Angel, who works at the Sherry Unruh Allstate Agency. "The combined knowledge I gained from the workplace and the class has helped me become more confident. I am ready for the future and to start my life after high school."

Andre also has some advice for his peers. "Think through your career goals and where you want to be in five years. Taking part in the COE program is the best gift to yourself because you can't get a paycheck, school credit, and gain work experience for free anywhere else. This is a trial opportunity for you, take advantage of it."

Windsor High School students interested in participating in the COE program must complete a career development course at Windsor High School before applying. Students undergo multiple supervisor reviews during their tenure with their workplace.



**18-20 students**  
each year gain on-the-job  
experience.



Students can work up to  
**20 hours each week.**



Students work in a variety of  
settings — from auto body repair  
technicians to bank tellers.



GET INVOLVED

**Businesses and organizations interested in partnering with the Weld RE-4 School District are invited to contact Michelle Smith at [community.empowered@weldre4.org](mailto:community.empowered@weldre4.org).**