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DuPage Career Pathways and Work Based Learning Initiative:
Next Generation Community Partnerships and Career Pathways (NextGenCP²)

Our Vision

Our vision is that every student in DuPage County will have access to a high quality, sustainable, work-based learning program, coordinated by school districts, that accelerates their college and career readiness skills. School, community, and business partners will provide students with multiple pathways to meaningful careers and a variety of other postsecondary experiences that lead to employment, industry credentials, certifications, and college degrees.

Our Why

Our why in one word is equity. While there has been an emphasis on career readiness at the state and national level, implementation of scalable college and career pathway models has not been realized. Instead, gaps in college and career resources available to schools and students persist. Neglecting access and equity issues only serves to perpetuate generational disparities, especially for our underserved students. We need to build new models that value experience-as-learning and accelerate progress toward industry credentials and post-secondary degrees. This requires community-based partnerships, new ways of thinking about education and training, and clear strategies to execute a systemic model for change.

Our Partners

Implementation of this model requires an ecosystem of aligned and committed partners. Our partners from business and industry, local and state governmental entities, and community-based organizations have combined efforts to create a work-based learning model that addresses our shared concerns about equity and access to educational opportunities. What we believe has been missing in many models has been **the inclusion of a work-based learning intermediary**. Intermediaries speak the language of education and business. In their role as a bridge between school and business, intermediaries ensure that work-based learning is more than on-the-job training. Instead, best practice work-based learning includes educational outcomes aligned to industry credentials, certifications, and other professional competencies. We have engaged a not-for-profit organization, GPS Education Partners, who has served this role in Wisconsin for over two decades. Consistent with their mission to serve students nationally, GPS Education Partners has joined our efforts to launch a pilot initiative. We believe the involvement of an intermediary will be the support that schools and business communities need to sustain and scale work-based learning experiences. We believe our pilot has potential to be a state model for relevant college and career programming.

Our Pilot

We have embarked on our pilot this fall in the manufacturing pathway. Our goal is to build on this success by adding additional career pathways like health care services, cyber security, and information technology, to name a few. We are proud to welcome three high schools to our pilot: Lake Park (Roselle), Glenbard North (Carol Stream) and Addison Trail (Addison). All three are currently recruiting students and businesses with the assistance of GPS Education Partners, the Technology and Manufacturing Association (TMA), and Apprenticeship Illinois. Our goal is to successfully provide students with rigorous work-based learning that sets them on a path to industry credentials and employment, while also helping to identify successful strategies for sustainability and scale as we expand to other pathways.