

MWCA Best Practices

WIB Name/WSA: South Central Workforce Council
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MWCA Best Practices Partners In Career Exploration

Overview

The Partners in Career Exploration (PICE) program which utilizes the Outreach to Schools funding provided by DEED is a partnership between workforce development and education that placed four interns in five local schools districts to provide career exploration and career counseling assistance to high school students.

The interns are first year graduate students in the Student Counseling Program at Minnesota State University-Mankato. Prior to placing the interns at area high schools, the interns received training from WorkForce Center staff (Job Service, Minnesota Valley Action Council, Rehabilitation Services), MSU-Education Talent Search, South Central College, and our local labor market analyst who provides the interns with information on our labor market including high growth/demand industries and occupations in the region.

Once the interns have been trained, they are placed at local school districts to provide career exploration and career counseling assistance through one-on-one advising and classroom presentations. Interns work with school guidance counselors and assist with a number of activities including: administering career assessments, reviewing local labor market information-including high growth/demand occupations, providing job shadowing opportunities, field trips, college fairs, career planning, and exploring post-high school plans including post-secondary admission requirements and financial aid. It is a priority for the interns to meet with every high school junior and senior.

Jobseeker Impact

Minnesota ranks as one of the lowest in the student to counselor ratio in our schools. Many of the local school districts only employ counselors on a part-time basis and they are unable to give the time needed to meet with high school juniors and seniors to make post-secondary plans. PICE gives students the opportunity to meet with a knowledgeable intern to receive one on one career counseling assistance. The intern meets with every high school junior and senior so is able to reach students that are not proactive about their plans after high school and would otherwise go unnoticed and fall through the cracks. The interns also provide career exploration activities for younger grade levels so that they can begin to consider their plans after high school.

In the 2008-2009 school year, PICE impacted a total of 844 students including: 110 eighth graders, 129 ninth graders, 120 tenth graders, 248 eleventh graders, 237 twelfth graders.

- 718 students completed a career plans survey
- 130 students completed career assessments
- 446 students received one-on-one career counseling
- 786 students participated in classroom career exploration activities
- 403 students participated in field trips to the Workforce Center, College Fairs and Career Days

Community Impact

PICE not only benefits the students, it has been a positive experience for the parents, the school districts and the interns. The parents are appreciative of the one-on-one assistance that their teenagers receive with their career plans. It also gives parents a person to go to for assistance when there are questions about post-secondary planning such as admission requirements and financial aid applications.

The schools have benefited from PICE as the school counselors' responsibilities are spread so thin that they don't have the time needed to provide one-on-one career counseling. The interns have been able to assist counselors by providing quality services to reach more students.

Through participation in PICE, the interns confirmed their career choice as a school counselor while they gained hands on experience at a high school. This experience has been beneficial to the interns in finding their second year internship as they already have work experience in the field.

Collaborators

Those involved in PICE include:

- Cleveland Public Schools
- LeCenter Public Schools
- Montgomery-Lonsdale Public Schools
- Nicollet Public Schools
- St. Clair Public Schools
- Minnesota State University – Mankato
 - Education Talent Search
 - Student Counseling Department
- South Central College
 - Financial Aid Outreach
 - Service, Work and Learning Center
- MN DEED Regional Labor Market Analyst
- Mankato WorkForce Center
 - Job Service
 - Rehabilitation Services
 - Minnesota Valley Action Council
- South Central Workforce Council

Leveraging/Alignment of Outside Resources

In the 2007-08 school year, approximately \$33,000 was identified as matched funds. Our collaborating partners volunteered staff time to provide training for the interns. The schools provided space, supervision of interns, access to office equipment, technology assistance for classroom presentations, referrals of students for career education services, and staff assistance and cooperation. Minnesota State University – Mankato provided the interns that participated in this valuable effort.

Ideas for Replication/Lessons Learned

The PICE program is a positive experience for students, parents, schools and interns. In order to improve the program, next year we plan to add tours with local businesses to our training so that interns have hands on exposure to demand occupations in industries such as manufacturing, health care and the trades and can better inform high school students about these viable career options. In addition, we plan to provide monthly intern training and give the interns an opportunity to learn from each other what they are doing at their schools.