

Dream It Do It – Increasing Exposure to Manufacturing Careers

Anoka County Job Training Center *Empowers* Program

Overview describing the innovative practice:

The Anoka County Job Training Center's (JTC) Empowers program serves young people ages 14 – 24 that live in Anoka County. As part of our Outreach to Schools efforts and our Higher Education Career Advisors Program goals, our staff work closely with the Dream It Do It staff as well as local schools and chambers to educate our young people about manufacturing careers. This will be our third year participating in Dream It Do It. Each year our program has grown and this year we have expanded to cover the entire county. Every school district in Anoka County has been given the opportunity to have a tour for their students. Students ranging in age from 9th grade through Alternative School age (19 – 24) benefit from this effort. Career Advisors, School Counselors, Work Coordinators and Administrators are contacted during the school year to identify the needs of their students and the type of manufacturing that best meets their student's interests. JTC staff then work with our Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Business Services Representative to coordinate a tour with local manufacturers.

Many different types of manufacturers are highlighted including high tech, precision sheet metal and medical device manufacturing. For the businesses, the worker shortage is projected to grow in the field of manufacturing. Manufacturers are struggling to find individuals with the skills required for today's advanced manufacturing field. The Manufacturing Institute states that these skill shortages are evident at all stages of manufacturing, from engineering to skilled production. Because of this projected shortage, employers are eager to partner with the JTC and the schools to host these tours to increase their visibility to young students and their families as they start to develop their future career directions.

The main goal is to expose young people to advanced manufacturing in the new high-tech world of manufacturing. Per Dream It Do It research, they have found that only 35 percent of Americans say they would encourage their children to pursue careers in manufacturing, despite the advanced skills and above average pay that are characteristics of work in today's manufacturing businesses. The JTC partners with this goal to help change the perception of the industry and inspire the next-generation of workers to pursue manufacturing careers. This is achieved by increasing awareness of not only the young people, but also the parents about the possibilities available in manufacturing.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers):

Increasing exposure to manufacturing careers creates opportunities for young adults to make informed career choices. Perceptions of manufacturing are less than positive because of the industry's historical image of dirty warehouses with low skilled and poorly paid employees. However, times have changed, and so have careers in manufacturing. Once they see the advanced machines, clean shops, hear how much money they can make with minimal training, they get excited. Manufacturing offers many opportunities for young people to enter the field with minimal training at great paying entry level wages. It also has multiple opportunities for career advancement with apprenticeships and college degrees ranging from a 4 month welding certificate, 2 year CNC Programmer to a BS Engineer.

Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers):

The JTC hosted a Manufacturing On-Site Hiring event in June and had over 25 business all with multiple openings. These employers voiced their concern about not being able to fill their vacancies.

The JTC along with our DEED Business Services Representative created and distributed flyers asking them if they wanted to host a tour for High School Students in the fall of 2016 for Dream It Do It. The result - we have more companies wanting to participate than we have schools! At this time, we have twelve companies wanting to participate and eleven schools. The employers are excited about the idea and are anxious to get people in their doors so they can highlight their company and show the opportunities to advance within their business.

Anoka County is a blue collar community comprised of many small manufacturing businesses. The goal is to reduce the skills gap by increasing the awareness of the manufacturing industry, and providing career pathway training. Providing low income and at risk wage earners the opportunity for higher paying jobs providing financial benefits to their families resulting in economic growth in the community.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators:

This partnership is a massive collaboration with Dream It Do It, private sector manufacturing businesses, the State Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Anoka County JTC, local school districts (including Adult Basic Education, Charter Schools and Alternative Schools) students/job seekers and their families. By working together, worker shortages are met, people are employed, wages increase, family's income raises, the local economy grows and manufacturing expands creating a solid economic foundation for the community.

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources:

The Manufacturing Institute through Dream It Do It funding has paid for the expenses of the transportation of the school tours. The schools provide the staff to chaperone the events. DEED provides the staff person to coordinate the tours and provide all communication with the employers. The Empowers staff coordinate with the schools, community partners, Dream It Do It staff and the DEED staff to bring it all together. This expansion of Dream It Do It aligns perfectly with our local strategy to leverage resources to provide training funds to eligible students. In addition to these efforts through Dream It Do It, the JTC Career Connections Program offers Precision Sheet Metal training as a career pathway. After students complete 125 hours of training at Anoka Technical College and 40 hours of Basic Shop Math with Metro North Adult Basic Education, they have the certification needed to be hired into an entry level position in the manufacturing field. To fund this, staff braid resources from the Pathways to Prosperity grant and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act Funds to pay for the training expenses of students. This type of collaboration with Anoka Technical College, Metro North Adult Basic Education and the JTC provides the training which is critical in moving people into the high growth career pathway of manufacturing.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned:

This year Empowers staff started outreach to the schools in the early spring to identify the needs of the schools and the students. The governor has set the month of October to highlight manufacturing in the state. October is a very busy month for the schools as they are just getting back into the school rhythms and scheduling conflicts of fall sports and activities. The first two years we worked with DID, it was difficult to reach the school staff and coordinate dates on calendars that would work. Our first year we had three tours. By starting our planning in the spring, the fall calendars are already set and we have 12 tours set serving 11 schools. Also due to the growing concern of the workforce shortage, the cities and chambers are becoming more interested in supporting events like this as the benefit of the project is far-reaching.