

Program/Initiative Title: Southwest Minnesota Career and Technical Education Collaborative
WDA Name: The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council

Overview describing the innovative practice

The idea of schools collaborating to deliver career and technical education (CTE) has been around for more than 50 years in the form of Vocational Centers. Minnesota was rich with rural centers and they delivered a valuable service to students and regional economies. Unfortunately there is only one rural Center left in Minnesota, which has created a void. As CTE has declined over the past 20 years (combined with declining school enrollment and teacher shortages) the need for partnerships to form and deliver CTE has been renewed, driven by our labor shortages. In response, a collaborative partnership was formed and has implemented new, in-demand Career and Technical Education courses for high school students. This alone is a great accomplishment in rural Minnesota where a declining student population makes filling a class difficult and finding a licensed teacher to teach the course even more so. The high school students in the course not only earn high school credit but also college credit and gain related workplace experience with local employers. The CPP program is a result of collaboration and partnership, which includes multiple school districts, multiple employers, the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative (SWWC), Minnesota West Community & Technical College (MN West), the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC) and others. Through partnering - the classroom is full of students, only one teacher is needed with the appropriate credentials, more skilled workers are being developed and resources are braided to make the courses sustainable.

The first class started in January 2018. The Introduction to Manufacturing and Engineering course was initiated at MN West in Granite Falls and held in the college's Precision Manufacturing classroom. It was the first of many innovative Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses for the region. The CTE course was comprised of twelve (12) students from four school districts. The course was an elective that offered students opportunities to discover beyond the classroom and learn about and develop skills needed for local careers in manufacturing and engineering. The class is unique because it is 1) held off site from the high school; 2) held in partnerships with multiple school districts; 3) is directly related to local/regional in-demand positions; 3) incorporates work-based learning activities with local employers as an essential element of the class; and 4) incorporates a Career Navigator that is a single point of contact for employers and provides career advising services for students. This is just the beginning; work is currently being done to create pre-apprenticeship opportunities through the partnership.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

The Introduction to Manufacturing and Engineering is an entry level college course (offered to all students in grades 10-12 from partnering schools districts) for three college credits. This course is open to all students interested in learning more about and developing the skills needed for a career in manufacturing or engineering. Concepts covered in this class include production technologies and information to start on a high-performance manufacturing and/or engineering career pathway. Students are given opportunities to develop important workplace knowledge and skills in the areas of safety, welding processes, precision machining, mechanical systems, fluid power, electrical controls, and automated systems. This course is one of the core courses in the Certified Production Technician industry credential and transferable to the MNSCU system.

Students (future jobseekers) benefit greatly from learning about the manufacturing industry and in-demand occupations, earning high school credits, earning transferable college credits, preparing for the workforce, expanding their network through meeting with local employers, and gaining marketable skills.

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

Forty-two percent of the 2016 high school graduates in our region enrolled in post-secondary outside of Minnesota (compared to 29% statewide, SLEDS). This is significant! Our pipelines of workers are moving out of the region and most do not come back. Engaging students while in high school with our local employers is

an important benefit to employers. It gives employers the opportunity to share their great jobs and promote their businesses with future workers. The PIC's Youth and Young Adult Program Career Pathway Navigator is instrumental in helping employers develop meaningful work-based learning experience for students and preparing students for "real-life" workplaces and employees outside of the classroom. Employers are also more engaged in the curriculum development, have active and continual involvement from program inception through implementation. Engaging employers on the design of an initiative has helped ensure CTE related instruction aligns with business needs. This is accomplished through a series of work-based classroom activities, community experiences and workplace exposure over time. Currently, our partnership's employer engagement consists of job shadows, curriculum development, guest speakers, and workplace tours. Support for employer partners is provided by the Career Pathway Navigator, through ongoing contact and feedback opportunities and training for worksite supervisors as coaches.

Through the students' participation in the job shadow and business tours, students learned practical employment skills. For instance, *Fagen, Inc.* engaged the students in a discussion on how to fill out online job applications, career pathways available within their facility, and employer expectations of employees. Local companies such as Granite Falls Energy, *SpecSys*, Chandler Industries, and *CW Welding* invested time in the students by providing job shadows.

At *Chandler Industries* each student was paired up with an individual specialist which demonstrated and explained their specific trade, tasks, and responsibilities. The students also learned about the types of career pathways available at Chandler Industries and the education requirements necessary to hold those specific careers. *Granite Falls Energy* set up personal tours with plant managers, and the students were able to learn the ins-and-outs of ethanol plant energy and maintenance. Fagen, Inc., the students learned about their pipe-welding division and were given a chance to show off the welding skills they learned in their CTE course. Many students were encouraged to come back to learn more about pipe-welding, and several students were thrilled about the access to do so as a result of their job shadow.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

Southwest West Central Service Cooperative – Convener
Minnesota West Community & Technical College – Post Secondary Instruction
Minnesota River Valley Education District (MRVED), Yellow Medicine East High School, Montevideo Public High School, Lakeview Secondary School, Renville County West, MACCRAY High school – School Districts
Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council – Youth Career Pathway Navigator/Employer Engagement
Granite Falls Energy, SpecSys, Chandler Industries, and CW Welding - Employers

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources

The project was possible due to funds leveraged and aligned through various funding sources administered by the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative (SWWC), Minnesota River Valley Education District (MRVED), Minnesota West Community & Technical College (Space, Equipment, Instructor), Yellow Medicine East High School, Montevideo Public High School, Lakeview Secondary School, Renville County West, MACCRAY High school, and the PIC (Youth at Work, Youth Intervention Prevention, Minnesota Youth Program, DEI, WIOA Youth), and several local employers.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned

Through developing strong collaborative partnerships, any community can bring together neighboring school districts, the youth employment and training service provider(s), the college(s), service cooperative, employers and any other related organization to design an industry focused CTE course(s) incorporating work-based learning opportunities as an essential component that aligns with local/regional workforce needs. All partners came to the table with an idea of what they can bring, not get, in order to fulfill the mission.