

**HIGHER EDUCATION CAREER ADVISING PILOT
FINAL REPORT
NORTHEAST MINNESOTA OFFICE OF JOB TRAINING
ACTIVITY FROM JULY 2014-JUNE 2015**

Model Summary

Northeast Career EdVenture began in the fall of 2012 to provide free career planning and guidance services to local school districts using the expertise that resides in the local Workforce Center system and the partnerships our system has developed over the years. Some districts have robust career planning resources to guide students and many, if not most, have very little to offer students for career planning. Career EdVenture offers a standardized menu of services from which any school district in our region can select resources needed for their students.

Services are divided into two categories: *services for individuals* (one-on-one career guidance, career assessment, postsecondary planning, resume development, personalized job search strategy, and transitioning from high school) and *services for groups/classes* (CEOs in the Classroom, eMentors, Navigating Business Culture, Financial Literacy, business and industry speakers and tours, postsecondary planning, career interest and values assessments, and games and activities with career exploration themes, and more). Services aren't targeted to any specific at-risk population through the schools, but are used to educate and assist enrolled 'at risk' participants in our youth programs. In some cases, resources are delivered by request to unique groups such as special education students or groups of Native American students.

All services are geared to help students understand the opportunities available to them in the world of work. For example, our postsecondary planning workshop addresses how to identify programs that lead to jobs in high demand careers using various research approaches that include labor market information on high-demand, high-pay jobs. When asked to provide business and industry speakers for classrooms, representatives from high demand industries are sought to provide insight into career opportunities from a local perspective.

We have developed numerous resources that help students identify and explore high growth industries and in-demand occupations, including a 2-part Career Exploration series that covers making the connection between assessment results and labor market information, discusses what is really a livable wage, what success in the 'new economy' looks like, and how to explore corresponding training programs. Additionally, we have created several worksheets to engage students in understanding high-demand, high-wage occupations, entitled 'Job – What Do They Pay?', 'Myth Buster Career Planning' quiz, and the 'Where Would I Go To...' worksheet to help student determine where to find reputable sources of information on in-demand occupations.

Office of Job Training youth counselors market this menu to school personnel who then select the services best suited to their student population. We make ourselves available to meet with students one-on-one and have regular office hours at many schools so students can conveniently schedule appointments.

The Need for Services & Impact of Program

Since the project's inception, the increase of requests for Career EdVenture resources have illustrated the need local schools have for this service. Most schools simply do not have the staff or resources to

provide career counseling to their students. Through Career EdVenture many students have had their first opportunity to interact with a professional from a field of interest or have been exposed to alternatives to traditional career paths such as entrepreneurship or apprenticeship. In cases where we have offered Financial Literacy workshops, it is the first time students are taught how to manage personal finances, credit, and avoid identity theft. Local schools have been very thankful to have access to these resources and as a result, the requests for Career EdVenture activities are becoming more and more frequent in most schools. Teachers also report that participation in Career EdVenture activities improves class attendance – in many instances where we provide weekly content to teachers, it is rare for students to miss class.

The World’s Best Workforce legislation has also created opportunities for us to connect with schools as districts work through the new requirement of providing students with career exploration opportunities by no later than 9th grade. Career EdVenture is perfectly poised to assist northeast districts with this overwhelming task. We continue to connect with districts on how Career EdVenture can assist with the implementation of World’s Best Workforce as plans become more solidified.

We measure the impact of services through an evaluation form given to both students who receive individual services and those who participate in group settings. Upon the completion of Career EdVenture activities, we ask students to indicate:

- Whether they feel they have a better understanding of their career options;
- Whether this experience will influence their future career or education decisions;
- Whether as a result of their experience they are considering careers they hadn’t before; and
- Whether they would recommend meeting with a Career EdVenture counselor to their friend.

The answers to these questions are consistently and overwhelmingly ‘yes’, indicating that we are providing a much-needed service to students who are just now on the brink of determining their path into the workplace.

Participating Schools

Twenty-one districts have participated in services this year, less than in years past because staff have been otherwise occupied dealing with the high number of dislocated workers in the region resulting from the downturn in the mining industry. These districts include:

Silver Bay	Eveleth-Gilbert	Grand Rapids HS
Southridge	Cherry	Grand Rapids ALC
International Falls	Virginia	Greenway
Aitkin	Floodwood	Nashwauk ALP
McGregor	Wrenshall	Northern Lights
Carlton	Barnum	Two Harbors
Cloquet	Esko	
Cromwell	Moose Lake	

Final Summary / Highlights

This year we were again asked to participate in the Northland Foundation’s Career Expo for 11th and 12th grade students from across the region. Last October more than 1,200 students attended this event at

the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center where the Office of Job Training played a major role in inspiring students who didn't yet have solid career goals. This event was structured to include industry-based breakout sessions, each with a panel of local experts in the field, along with a hands-on expo where students are able to try out a variety of occupational skills. Student evaluations indicated, over and over again, that the young people learned so much and appreciated the day, and many discovered career opportunities in the region that they never knew about.

Using Career EdVenture materials and expertise, the Office of Job Training operated an breakout session for those undecided on a career path, called the *Career is Right* where students played Price is Right-themed games focused on career exploration and labor market information. This session was geared to educating students about the connection between postsecondary training, wages, and occupations in demand in the Northeast region. Staff also developed a booth for the expo with additional Price is Right-themed games, takeaways that discussed in-demand careers and a brief career assessment, the results of which were then connected to information on occupations.

Perhaps one of the most exciting highlights from this year is the compilation and distribution of our Career EdVenture materials to each workforce service area in the state. There is a tremendous appetite for resources to use to service students/schools and it was a major undertaking for Office of Job Training staff to develop and compile these materials in a uniform, branded way. This resource is over 300 pages of materials include the following ten units, each with corresponding presentations, activities, quizzes, worksheets, and handouts:

1. Career and Job Fairs
2. Career Assessments (ability, interest, skills, personality and values assessments)
3. Career Exploration/Planning
4. CEOs in the Classroom (a service that places local business leaders in 8th grade classrooms to talk about the importance of early career planning)
5. eMentors (a service that pairs a classroom of students with an equal number of individuals from a local business to exchange career-exploration and workplace readiness emails for 8 weeks)
6. Financial Literacy and Money Management (4-part progressive series)

Spring and summer activities included CEOs in the Classroom, this offering is conducted in most schools in northeast Minnesota. Business representatives/CEOs are provided the opportunity to share insights to youth about the importance of making appropriate life choices and the overall impact that those choices may have as they relate to careers. CEOs delivered their message to 8th grade students as primer for subsequent grades to graduation. Unique to CEOs is the individual insights shared by successful community members/CEOs framed in their particular story. CEOs reached more than a dozen schools in the region. An ancillary benefit of the program is the alignment of key community partners such as local school districts, chambers of commerce's, and workforce development professionals all working to assist youth with their career development.

In March of 2015 students involved with Career EdVenture participated in Construct Tomorrow held at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center. The event showcased opportunities for youth and others to explore careers in the crafts and trades. Local employers and trade unions provided hands on activities, interactive displays, and apprenticeship information. Overall the message provided was for long-term growth and opportunities for youth in the construction trades as the "baby boom" continues to leave the workforce.

Career EdVenture youth participants engaged two regional Minnesota job fairs, the Northland Job Fair in Duluth and Iron Range Job Fair in Virginia. A special activity offered by Office of Job Training staff was an activity where youth could engage in an interactive "Interview Snapshot." This activity had stations staffed by counselors that asked common interview questions. Youth received constructive input about their response. Before both regional job fairs Office of Job Training counselors provided training as an EdVenture activity about how to make the most of a job fair and how to create positive impressions.

The three day Iron Range Science and Engineering Festival held in April at the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm Minnesota focused demonstrated how early engagement by staff of 7th grade students exposed youth to local occupations that involved Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) skills. Staff met with youth and guided them to hands-on activities, college and technical school information, and industry related information. More than 1100 students participated, for Office of Job Training staff this was one of the first opportunities to meet students that they would be providing EdVenture services at their schools for years to come.

Rounding out the program year CLIMB Theater was offered to those served in regional classrooms as an EdVenture summer activity. Climb Theater is a workshop that helps students develop the skills that need to get and keep jobs. Using a combination of theater skills, role-playing techniques, instruction, and activities students learn: how to interview for jobs, about communications skills for the workplace, creating a "persona" that gets and keeps jobs, and techniques for interacting with bosses and supervisors.

In addition to a robust Career EdVenture curriculum delivered throughout the region, staff offered a spectrum of services on a continuum beginning with the early career development activities starting in 7th grade, then to CEOs in The Classroom in 8th grade while providing classroom and individualized services from 9th grade to graduation. As Career Ed Venture has evolved information is reaching back to younger participants and continues to be a model for others to use by virtue of the distribution of Career EdVenture materials to other program providers in the state.