Workforce Pipeline Through Connecting Business & Education

Nicole Schossow
Program Manager, B.E.N./REACH
Winona Area Chamber of Commerce
Points of discussion:

- Business Education Network overview
- REACH Overview
- REACH Partners
- Program Challenges
- Surprises & Successes

Great things in business are never done by one person. They're done by a team of people.

Steve Jobs
The Chamber’s Business Education Network seeks to narrow the workforce skills gap by better connecting employers with high school and college students, and with higher education and workforce training systems.

**CEO in the Classroom**
Business executives speak with 8th graders about high school prep.

**Life After High School**
Business executives speak with 11th graders to prepare for jobs.

**Teacher in the Workplace**
High school teachers experience a one-week business externship.

**Student Career Expo**
Career exploration for 10th grade students; not a job fair.

**REACH**
Workforce preparation for in demand skilled employment.
The Inception of REACH

**Businesses**
Workforce Shortages

We need to be more proactive in our response to shortages

**Secondary Education**
Student Disconnect

Focus on college created disconnect from in demand jobs

**Post-Secondary Education**
Few Competitors

Not enough students to meet local demand for skilled labor
Purpose:
To address the growing gap between employer needs and worker skills, ensuring that students will learn transferrable skills and begin career and college pathways in fields they will have meaningful employment options in the greater Winona area.

Objectives:
• Provide students with a deeper understanding of career opportunities
• Assist with alignment of student skills with current workforce needs
• Engage employers directly with students, and providers of education and training
• Align programs and curriculum to current and emerging career opportunities
• Increase classroom instruction relevance to students by connecting curriculum with work site applications
• Provide students with hands on career exploration experiences at the work site (off campus)
• Provide students with training and first-hand experiences to develop soft skills/work readiness skills
• Offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways developed for students who are interested in entering the work force immediately after high school.
• Develop credit-based courses to allow for certifications connected to those CTE pathways; these credits could also apply as college credit for those students who choose to pursue college opportunities

REACH
Prepare SE MN high school students for future careers in order to provide an employment ready, skilled workforce for major industry sectors in the greater Winona area.
Pillars of REACH

What does it take to work?

Soft Skills
- Personality & attitude

Job Skills
- Required by employers

Dual Credit
- Prepare for the future

Work Experience
- Hands on application
Who does it take to make REACH work?

Winona Area Chamber of Commerce & Business Partners (currently 33 actively involved as speakers, trainers, immersion and/or internship sites)

Regional High Schools (currently 6 regional high schools active or building program)

Minnesota State College Southeast
Winona State University
Saint Mary’s University

Funders
• Local businesses (8 financial and 2 in kind equipment)
• Grant funding (7 different grants over 3 year span)
Graduation Statistics

EDUCATION AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

- Minnesota State College Southeast: 18%
- 4-year college outside region: 9%
- No higher education yet: 73%

WORK AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

- Manufacturing Field: 18%
- Non-manufacturing: 9%
- Work study at college: 73%
Internal Challenges

- Interactions between two vastly different systems that rarely interact
  - Languages, policies and norms
  - Responsiveness to change
  - Few who have experienced both

- Overloaded and highly stressed education system with protective tendencies

- Conflicts with scheduling and graduation credits for students

- Student interest and motivation, especially if “my parents told me to sign up”

- Risk of losing focus based on different interests and/or paths
External Challenges

- High school focus on college career path
  - CTE classes do not meet graduation requirements of state
  - Even parents devalue high demand, skilled jobs
- Payments for student time between high school and college
- Business and/or Department of Labor policies that are out of date
- School reputation in community
Surprising Successes
Expect the Unexpected

- Businesses are not competing for students
- Students changed clothing and hair cuts
- Internships have one salary level for REACH internships
- Businesses outside of focus areas are donating to program
- Improved GPAs for ALL classes
- 70% + of all graduated continue education at 2-year college