

**Rural MN CEP, Inc.**  
**Higher Education Career Advisors Pilot Project**  
**July 2014 – June 2015**

**Project Goal:**

This project is designed to provide Career Advising Services, to include career awareness, career planning and regional occupations in demand labor market information to select high schools to assist youth to form and develop post-secondary plans and make informed decisions about career choices.

**Project Model:**

Rural Minnesota CEP (RMCEP) partnered with the Moorhead, Dilworth/Glyndon/Felton, Ulen/Hitterdal and Barnesville school districts to provide the following services to students through 2 Career Advisors:

- Career exploration instruction including information on career pathways and occupations in demand. (Labor Market Information – LMI)
- One-to-one career counseling including interest assessment, skills identification, goal setting and development of a career plan.
- Information on training programs and the value of continued education and high demand occupations.
- Assist students to tour training facilities and colleges.
- Individual assistance to students and families in completing financial aid applications.
- Job search assistance, including information on job search strategies and processes
- National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) system including assessment, KeyTrain/Career Ready 101 curriculum for remediation, and testing for NCRC certification.

**Need:**

Some school district staff have stated that with the number of students they are expected to work with, they have very little time to spend working one to one with students in regards to post secondary school planning and virtually no time with those students who plan to obtain employment rather than go on to further training or post secondary following their graduation from high school. Having a person to whom they can refer these students to for assistance with this who is on site at the school is a great asset.

In Ulen-Hitterdal the school counselor and superintendant were excited to have the Career Advisor provide extra help with careers as the “counselor is spread very thin” as she works with 260 students in grades K-12 on a half time basis and does not have much time to spend on careers.

**Activities accomplished:**

Below are activities that have occurred at each of the partnering schools from August 2014 – June 2015.

**Moorhead (MHD) High Schools**

Met with Principal Lawrence and schools counselors to discuss Career Advisor position, what we would continue to offer and finding out what additional services they would like.

**Presentations delivered:**

**Senior/Parent night** – over 200 seniors & parents – presentation on Career Exploration, NCRC, Career Advisor services – Also table set up before/after auditorium presentation to answered questions and

promoted information on our programs through RMCEP and the Workforce Center (WFC) as well as Career Advisor Services.

**Attended P/T Conference night** – Presentation regarding services that are offered through Career Advising at the school as well as services through the WorkForce center for approximately 85 parents and students. Also had booth at the Career Fair same night to meet with parents & students regarding all of our services through RMCEP, WFC, Career Advisor position, promoting NCRC, career exploration, and financial aid information.

**Survey - 154** seniors from Moorhead High completed “2-minute” **survey** on their career goals & their knowledge of: schools, how to pay for it, employment outlook, and other related topics. The purpose is to gather data on what we can do to better prepare students on careers, financial aid, LMI information, college & training options.

**Presentation in Careers Class** – Presentation in classroom for regarding WFC Resource room and services that are offered. This included promotion of NCRC, workshops that we have available, along with Career Advisor services. The MNCareers books were used to complete an Interest survey for each student, discussed LMI, training options, also how to “use” these books.

**Presentation for 7 other classes on** Careers, LMI, Interest assessments, scholarship, post-secondary options.

**P/T Conference/ Presentation on services & financial aid.** – Approx. 150 Juniors/Parents

Have collaborated with school counselors and special education teachers for presentations in classrooms, attended individual education plan (IEP) meetings, and met one-on-one with students and parents – This was mostly Junior & Seniors with a few sophomores. Approximately forty two (42) one-on-one meetings were held.

**Naviance Training** - Participated in Naviance training as the school district transitioned to new software as part of the student career skills building.

**“Outreach” presentations** – the Career Advisor has been presenting information to specific targeted groups such as a “boys group” which consists of 10<sup>th</sup> grade boys who are at-risk of dropping out to provide hands-on workshops on interest inventories, career exploration, etc.

**FM College Fair** – Promoted the college fair with over 100 college and training programs represented. In previous years this school had informed seniors of it but promoted it as “go on your own” activity. The Career Advisor shared with the school counselors what a wonderful opportunity it is for seniors to be able to be exposed to a variety of different post-secondary opportunities which included short-term training options such as welding to longer term training options such as pharmacy. She provided the counselors with contact information as well as the details of the event. She let them know that she would attend and chaperon if needed. The counselors were informed that by registering and attending the event, all of the resource materials – programs, catalogs and other resource materials from the 100 plus represented training providers would be gathered for each school to take with them upon leaving the College Fair. The school decided to schedule the event and attend. They agreed that it was indeed a positive opportunity for the students.

**Fargo Dome Career Expo** – The school had not attended in many years but does have interest. The Career Advisor requested information from last years organizers on registration information, deadlines, etc. and provided that information to the school counselors and principals with regard to this year’s Career Expo to assist them with budgetary planning for buses and other activity coordination for next year. Connections were made with the schools Instructional Coach and the Executive Director of school improvement and accountability to assist with the facilitation of participating next year.

**On-site Career Fair** – Held the first ever on-site Career Fair for the senior class. Forty seven (47) employers/training programs as well as Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. participated. It was very well attended by students and a huge success. Surveys were completed by the seniors as well as feedback obtained from employers. Sophomores also attended once they had completed their Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) testing that same day. It was a great opportunity to explain services as well as the students to explore career options. Plans are already in process to follow-up with a Career Options Job Fair for next fall.

## **Dilworth-Glyndon Felton (DGF) Schools**

### **Presentations delivered:**

**Met with** 92 Seniors & 76 Juniors - Total - 168 students - Group presentation of Services - CEP, WFC, NCRC, Career Advisor position, had all of them complete the same “Two-minute” Survey - for same data collections as used with the Moorhead school. I encouraged all the attendees who had questions to meet with me.

**Accompanied** entire Junior & Senior class (3 bus loads) to the FM College Fair located at the Scheels Arena with over **75** Colleges and training Providers. Gathered information from schools, talked with students about what they were looking for, helping them find the college and gather information.

**Attended** parent/teacher conferences, had booth set up with information on all services, answered questions, promoted services.

**Group presentations** of the ACT PLAN results & interpretation along with start of career exploration for all 10<sup>th</sup> graders in the computer lab.

**M-State:** Collaborated with M-State on group lesson plans with multiple classes for this school.

### **Miscellaneous Activities:**

- I usually have all periods booked with student appointments. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of Dec. I have appointments already into the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of January.
- More than **79** one-on-one appointments with students - from interest surveys, career exploration, financial aid and scholarship information, going over questions to ask on a college tour, and connecting with employers for Job shadow appointments, school exploration, completing applications for post-secondary schools, promoting NCRC, creating and then adding to student portfolios
- Worked to provide school with information and necessary application information to promote attendance at the Career Expo at the Fargo Dome. The school had not attended in the past. I am very happy to say that this paid off as the freshman class at DGF High School attended.

- Setting up job shadows for students. Fall Sem. – Moorhead Police Dept., Dental office, and the Hjemkomst/Clay County Historical Society.

This spring semester, the Career Advisor had a great opportunity to connect with the underclassmen take place. A school organization started meeting over part of their lunch in the location area that she works. Some of the students asked what she did. This gave the Career Advisor the opportunity to share some information on Career Advising. The students stated that they were “just sophomores” and thought that they were too young to get help with looking at options; they thought the Career Advisor was there mainly for the seniors. She was able to let them know how she felt regarding the importance of exploring career options and not postponing that until their senior year. She let them know that she would love the opportunity to work with them so that they could start exploring and planning their future beyond high school. Once they realized this – they took the sign-up sheet and started writing their names on the schedule for the following week and were passing it around. The Career Advisor has been booked almost 100% for every class period each day throughout the entire school year.

On the final week the seniors had school, many of them came by to thank the Career Advisor as well as say goodbye along with invites to their graduation. The school counselor told the Career Advisor in that final week how she felt it really showed what an impact the Career Advisor had made with the students who came in say thank you.

## **Barnesville High School**

- Initial meeting with Kyle Gylland, the Barnesville school counselor to discuss Career Advisor position, what we would be able to offer them and finding out what additional services they would like.
- I introduced myself to the principal, office staff, and superintendent for the Barnesville school district and toured the school.
- Group presentation to classrooms about services at the WFC & Career Advising
- The senior class - 56 students completed survey on future career plans and knowledge of financial aid, LMI, and other questions.
- Provided a job shadow for Minnesota State University of Moorhead (MSUM) counseling intern.
- Met with 48 students for one-on-one meetings. Very well received by the students including a stronger interest from underclassmen which I have not seen at other schools –booking out into the middle of Jan. with most periods signed up for.
- Very supportive school counselor, providing input on individual students with regard to academics and goals.
- Presented to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in spring that will be in 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Fall 2015. Shared the hand-on “Drive Of Your Life” career exploration tool found via internet.

Spring semester was spent meeting with students who were in the “panic mode”. These were students that had not made plans after high school and were now worried. Some of these students want to start work right after high school while others were coming to the realization that they had not done anything in regards to post-secondary education including financial aid and other related processes. Some were looking at options for On-the-job training and internships. Since this was the first year for this school to have a Career Advisor work with students, plans are being made to coordinate with the school counselor during this summer to look at guidance/career planning lessons that can be built on throughout the students high school career started at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level and continuing through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level.

## **Red River Area Learning Center (RRALC)**

- Presentation to Youth Educational Services (YES) regarding Youthbuild and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth programs available through the WFC.
- Presentation to RRALC regarding Youthbuild project and WIA youth program along with follow-up to complete program applications.
- Completed four (4) presentations to students in credit-recovery to Connect to Careers through M-State Moorhead.
- Collaboration presentation to RRALC students GPS Lifeplan and Reality Check
- Collaboration presentation to RRALC teachers on GPS Lifeplan
- Health & Trade Career Expo – Fargo Dome –Over 2,880 students from Northwest MN and Southeast ND attended.
- Transitional Expo for students with disabilities – two day event – provided multiple workshops for student/teachers on Reality Check – Also partnered with Department of Vocational Rehabilitation services providing information on our services, along with Resource Room Services at the WorkForce Center.
- Collaborated with M-State on “train-the-trainer” for ALC teachers on GPS Lifespan.
- Provided job search, application, and interview workshops to include mock interview with area ALC students as they prepared for competition at MAAP STARS in the Twin Cities.
- Became a part of the RRALC planning committee which included presentation to RRALC staff and students on workshops available to students in Clay County in credit recovery classes.

## **Ulen –Hitterdal School**

- Reviewed and critiqued resumes and conducted mock interviews with students in advanced agriculture class.
- Met with the advanced art class students to review career opportunities related to art.
- Went with all students in the Junior class to the Fargo/Moorhead College and Career Fair.
- Organized and conducted a financial aid night for students and parents during parent teacher conferences.
- Created and administered a questionnaire to all seniors in regard to post secondary education and employment planning.
- Have met individually with all seniors to assess postsecondary planning done to date.
- Met with superintendent, counselor and district testing coordinator to discuss mandatory ACT testing for all Juniors, as well as what can be done to prepare them for the test.
- Went with a group of 17 students to a Health, Tech & Trades Career Expo
- Assisted with the administration of the ACT test and accompanying interest inventory with all Juniors.
- Accompanied 4 students interested in health careers to a Health Careers and training event at M-State. Occupations in the health field are in high demand in this part of the state so exposing students to these was a high priority.
- Arranged job shadows for interested juniors and seniors (6 in total) with area employees in careers of interest to the students. Half of the students that job shadowed employees were in the health field.
- Held an orientation for next years incoming freshmen on what to expect in high school, talked about grades, transcripts responsibilities and careers and post-secondary training.
- Met with superintendent, counselor and principal this spring to discuss what was accomplished this year and discussed thoughts for the future.

- Met with all the high school staff members to summarize this year's accomplishments and discuss ideas for the future.
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**Additional Accomplishments:** Our career advisors have worked as a resource for parents as well. They have provided a wealth of information during parent and student events such as Senior and Junior parent night, college night, career night, and other venues. Parents are obtaining career planning information in general as well as specific resources through these activities as well as what is being discussed with the students. A financial aid night hosted during the parent teacher conferences was really appreciated and provided another resource through the schools that questions and concerns can be addressed with information being provided in a prompt and timely manner.

### **Examples of one-on-one student meetings from Career Advisors:**

- A) I met with a student that wasn't sure what to go into for a career. She wanted to work with children with disabilities, but not interested in being a Special Education teacher, interested in social work with children, but not really interested in the variety of places that I shared with her on where she could utilize a social work degree in the field. She was interested in the hospital setting and working with children but had no interest in being a nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist, audiologist and other similar occupations. This became apparent through a few times of meeting with her and researching the different careers and opportunities in the field, training, LMI, etc. As we spoke I started putting all of her interest areas together and then I asked her what she thought of the career field of a child life specialist. She had not heard of that. As I was explaining what information the computer was pulling up to give her – her eyes widen and she started grinning ear-to-ear. Then she said, "That's it!!!!!!!" That's what I want to be!!! I thought she was going to jump out of the chair. The rest of the day, she kept coming back in my office with students, introducing them to me and having them sign up. I asked her jokingly, if she had decided to become a recruiter. She laughed and said that she kept telling everyone that she knew what she now wanted to do for a career from meeting with me and that they should meet with me so they can get help figuring out their careers also. Needless to say I have been very busy meeting one-on-one with students that are struggling with this same dilemma.
- B) I met with a student last fall (Tyler) that came in with questions regarding school choices. He wanted to go into agronomy, he had received a baseball scholarship for one school which was out of the area, but his heart was set on another school that was more local and which he felt offered a "better" program. He stated that his mother was adamant that he attend the school where he could continue to play baseball and was given a partial athletic scholarship. He stated that his father would say that Tyler should go where he wants. We had discussed that he had not been recruited by the other school's baseball team as it is a bigger school and in his words, "not good enough" to be recruited or offered a scholarship. But we did talk about checking into doing a "walk on".

We created a pro-con list...cost, length of time to earn a degree, as he stated that being on the school's baseball team would mean it would take him longer to complete his degree. An employment opportunity that was offered, would not work if he were to attend school out of the area. When the list was compiled we went over it and also calculated the cost of the local

school versus the out of the region one, etc. He was then “armed” to discuss this with his parents. We met weekly over a course of a few weeks with regards to programs, the pro-con list, and other objective data. Tyler came back in to meet with me and I could see he was still struggling with what to do. I told him that I could not tell him which decision to make. He was going to have to look at both the objective information we had compiled and then also his own feelings. I asked him to look at both scenarios and if he looked back in the future, which choice would be easier to live with. Which choice would he have less regrets or “what ifs”. I let him know that everyone can give their opinion but the bottom line was that he would need to make the final decision and figure out which option is best for him now and in the future. Tyler said he knew I was right but had hoped that I would just tell him and he smiled. Tyler did make the decision to go to the school that did not recruit or offer him an athletic scholarship. When he came in to give me a graduation invitation and say goodbye during the last day of classes, he stated that his mom has finally accepted his decision and he was very happy with this decision and thanked me for all my help and support.

- C) I have been working with a student – Mackenzie since I met her 1 ½ years ago when I did a classroom presentation. Mackenzie struggles with some disabilities including SLD, anxiety and ADD. This year she continued to meet with me even during her lunch time. We worked on career exploration, interest inventories as well as a personality style inventory to help her in determining a good match with not only her abilities and interests but also what would be a good match for her overall. From there we explored schools, both locally and across the country, where she has family members in order to ensure she would have a support system. I assisted with school applications, scholarships, and the FAFSA. I assisted with arranging a one-on-one Accuplacer assessment required for M-State. We also worked on employment applications, job search, interviewing skills, etc. Mackenzie graduated from the Moorhead high school this spring, works at a local restaurant, and is enrolled at M-State in Moorhead where she plans on going into graphic design. It was truly a pleasure to work with this young woman, be a part of helping her progress with future career and life plan, and see her excitement towards the future.
- D) I met one-on-one several times with 2 seniors with learning disabilities at the request of one of the special education instructors. One student had an interest in the medical field. We reviewed his test scores and his interest inventory results, I then assisted him with reviewing schools and programs. He made a career choice, chose a school and has completed both his admissions and financial aid applications and plans to start school this fall. I also reviewed interests and test scores with the other student. He had an interest in retail sales so we covered how to complete an application and interviewing. We attempted to set up a work training site but were unable to due to a lack of transportation and available sites. He was then referred to the WFC in Moorhead for possible Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services.
- E) In mid-spring I had a young man sign up to meet with me. Lynn was a good student but stated that he truly disliked school. He stated that he liked being outside and although he did okay in his business classes, he stated that it wasn't the type of work he wanted to do. I met with him weekly, working with him on a variety of inventories, occupations, and other career information. He came in a few weeks before he graduated. He seemed nervous, and I asked him what was up. His response was “So is it really bad if I don't go to college?” I told him, it depends on what type of career he wanted. He said what do you mean? I said, do you want to be a doctor? - No! do you want to be a teacher? – No, do you want to be an accountant – No! I said, okay then, if

you do not want to go into a career that a 4-year or more degree is required, and then no, it is not “bad”. He likes working with his hands and to get a more realistic view of careers and work, he looked at training as a “necessary evil”. We discussed short-term training for different types of trades as well as paid apprenticeship programs. Lynn stated that he felt pressure from what he perceived was “expectations” that to be successful you need to have bachelor’s degree. Most of his friends were going to a 4-year colleges and being from a small town community that people acted like it was “expected” as a sign of “success”. I told him that there truly is a difference between having to go to work and getting to go to work. I said he needs to follow what his passions and interests are, and what he would like to do, so he can GET to work. His success is not based on a 4-year degree. We watched the video Success in the New Economy and it seemed to be just what he needed to see.

Through the variety of activities it became clear that Lynn wanted to work in the trades where he could learn on the job or through an apprenticeship program where he could learn as he earned. I provided him with local apprenticeship programs in the Fargo-Moorhead area as well as contact information. He was told that he could call or email me even after he graduated through the universal/career services at the WorkForce Center. Lynn thanked me for all the support. He recently emailed me to let me know that he had followed through with the Grant’s Mechanical Apprenticeship program. He also shared that his friend who had referred Lynn to me and registered to start college in the fall, told him he was “just going through the motions” with regard to college and has now made the decision to look at careers that do not require a 4-year degree also.

- F) James started working with him in the fall after a class presentation. James has and IEP for SLD. He was a hands-on learner and wanted to be a welder but was unsure of the different programs. We explored options in the welding field, both training and employment opportunities. James was at risk of dropping out during the winter quarter of school. Working along his school counselor, his IEP manager, I let him know about scholarships through the WorkForce center and that he may be eligible for once he graduates from high school, to assist with his career goal. James is finishing up a summer school class in English in June to earn his high school diploma.

### **Comments from school staff:**

**School counselor:** I am one of the school counselors and I am so glad to have the career advisor on board as a resource for my students. I have a case load of 400 plus and don’t always have the time to spend doing research and inventories with students so having a person to whom I can refer these students to is fantastic. Parents also have shared that they are very glad to have what the career advisor can provide in the way of search engines, interest and career inventories as well as expertise in filling out job applications, the FAFSA and other important and needed career information. I have referred many students to the career advisor and have given out their contact info to many parents as well. Students have reported that the career advisor is very knowledgeable and helpful. Some have returned more than once to explore other options and opportunities that she has available. Parents feel comfortable and are very glad to have a resource person in our school that they can relate questions and concerns to and be provided with prompt and helpful responses. I sincerely hope that this program will continue to be funded and that the career advisor will be with us again in the future.

**School counselor:** It has been great having the career advisor and their skills and knowledge at our school. Students that I have that have worked with the career advisor have really appreciated all of the

ideas, thoughts and discussions that they have provided them. I, as a school counselor, appreciate the career advisor being able to provide us with the up to date info that is going on in the community – college fairs, career fairs, tours, and other activities. I definitely hope that the career advisor and their program can continue at my school. It would be nice if the career advisor could be here every day, all day!

**Special Ed. Teacher:** the career advisor and the career counselor program is essential in guiding students as they learn more about themselves and what opportunities are available for their future. The career advisor does a wonderful job of talking to small groups and individual students. The career advisor has a wealth of information and resources to assist students to see their strengths and what options are available to them. The career advisor gets students excited about their future and helps them to see how what they are doing in school leads to what is possible after graduation. Giving students this opportunity to work with a caring adult makes the transition to post-secondary institutions and jobs easier and more successful. We really appreciate what you do here at the school. You have changed lives!!!!

**School counselor:** The students at my school have benefited tremendously from the career advisors work. Individually, students of mine have had appointments with the career advisor to discuss career opportunities, college options, and financial aid questions. They are able to receive so much more in depth guidance from the career advisor than they are from me. The career advisor is truly the school expert in these areas. Not only has the career advisor helped students in my alphabet group, but parents as well. Her work is a blessing to students. In addition to individual work, the career advisor has been a wealth of information during parent and students event. The career advisor also goes into classrooms to do guidance lessons and has served as a huge resource to our AVID students and our LSS students. Our school has needed this sort of support for years, and if I had my choice, the career advisor would be full time with us!!!!!!

**High School Principal:** The students, families and staff at my school have truly benefitted from their experiences with the career advisor and the career counseling services that they provide for our community of learners. Watching our students interact and engage with the career advisor is remarkable. The career advisor takes them on a journey of career exploration using resources that are new to our district. The days here are completely scheduled with students that are excited about the opportunities to take with the career advisor about their next steps after high school. I have visited with many parents about the financial opportunities they were unaware of until their son or daughter met with the career advisor. The advisor provides individual and group introductions to serve in order to promote the planning for financial supports. Our staff equally benefits from the impact the career advisor makes. The career advisors time with our students allows our other counseling staff to be exposed to resources that assist our students. The career advisor provides services to our students that give them leverage to be successful in their pursuit of a successful transition from high school to their next stage in life.