

Hennepin County HECAPP Progress Report - Narrative
Final Report 7/1/2014-6/30/2015
7/31/15

1) Summary of WSA Project Model

- The Workforce Service Area-9 (Suburban Hennepin County) staff, the WSA-9 consultant/HECAPP project director (Martin Adams), and the North Hennepin Area Chamber of Commerce (NHCC) Executive Director (Steve Erickson) developed the strategy for engaging key staff members of targeted school districts identified in the project proposal.
- Adams and Erickson met with high school district principals and senior staff members to explain project goals and objectives, to obtain buy in for participating in the effort and to receive permission to engage students in HECAPP activities.
- Key contacts within the schools were developed and utilized to assist with connecting with students, teachers and staff members.
- HECAPP activities were aligned with existing efforts at the schools to increase awareness of pathways to post-secondary education and to provide students with steps to prepare for collegiate-level academic work.

2) Need for project at the Partnering School District

Early in the project's development, District 279's Coordinator for Career and Technical Education, Julie Halverson, emerged as a key contributor and liaison to the Osseo Senior High School, and other resources and planning efforts within the MN Department of Education.

Unfortunately for those involved in this project, Ms. Halverson retired just prior to the end of the 2014 – 15 school year. Given approximately 30 years of experience in public schools and workforce education, her departure was a significant loss to this effort in the Northwest Hennepin area.

There are other staff members at the schools who have the knowledge and skills to pick up in her absence. However, given the press of time available, limited resources for specific workforce education efforts and the skills to coordinate efforts throughout the northwest Hennepin County school districts, continuing to do this work with the schools will be a challenge. The amount of resources available through the continuation of HECAPP funding may not offer what is needed to keep a strong, multi-district effort in place. Given NH Chamber resources, the continued involvement of key collaborators and commitment from the school districts will be the determining factors in keeping this effort moving forward. Connection with a broader workforce initiative focused on building a network of employers,

schools, community and youth service organizations and strong, committed volunteers are key components that will contribute to keeping this effort going.

The emergence of the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance, given their revised organizational approach and direction, will be an additional asset as a program-provider and direct youth serving organization that will be necessary in continuing to move this type of effort forward.

3) Activities – What Was Accomplished

During the Fall 2014 Semester, the following activities took place:

- The Career Center staff of Maple Grove Senior High School held Mock Interview sessions with senior students on January 13th and 16th. Approximately 500 students participated along with 80 volunteer interviewers over the two day period. Interviewers were provided with sample questions to help students prepare for actual job interviews and the types of questions that employers are likely to inquire about in actual interviews. Feedback was provided to students on their performance in the interviews, appearance and professionalism, in addition to answering any questions that the “interviewees” asked.

- The 2014 Star Student Awards Breakfast, a North Hennepin Chamber of Commerce event, took place in honoring over 70 students from Brooklyn Center, Maple Grove, Osseo, Osseo Area Learning Center, and Park Center High Schools. An additional four non-public schools also participated in the event. Students were recognized for their scholastic efforts and achievement, as well as their community and volunteer service.

During the Spring 2015 Semester, the following activities took place:

- Mock interviews at Maple Grove Senior High School (See attached report of numbers of contacts.

- Mock Interviews at Bloomington Kennedy High School

- Career/College Readiness Meeting at Northwest Suburban Integration School District Offices

A group of 25 colleagues, educators, social service staff and volunteers met to discuss how to take matters a step further in promoting workforce education throughout the school curriculum and tie it in with the curriculum. A good discussion ensued, and those from a variety of occupations were very interested in determining next steps.

However, it was learned in the aftermath of this meeting that facilitator’s retirement date was soon approaching. Unfortunately, there was not another staff person that was able to take the initiative from the initial meeting and to develop a further “school to work” agenda to continue the effort.

- Meeting with Osseo Schools Instructors

An In-Service meeting was held with Osseo School District instructors that included presentations from Steve Erickson, the North Hennepin Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, and Martin Adams, Hennepin County HECAPP Program Manager, that included a presentation on the inclusion of school to work orientation for faculty members and instructors. Presentation material on key industry and employment areas was also distributed to the instructors that students would benefit from to learn more about employment opportunities.

A Labor Market Information Overview power-point presentation identified key industry areas in the Twin Cities area offering employment opportunities that current and emerging high school graduates should be aware of, in terms of local employment prospects. The key points that presenters Martin Adams and Steve Erickson made to high school instructors included the identification of six key employment areas that high school students needed to be aware of that would likely provide employment opportunities.

- Financial and Insurance Services
- Healthcare, Bio-Science and Medical Technology
- Manufacturing
- Food Manufacturing
- Clean Technology and Renewable Energy
- Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship

4) How the Students/Schools were Impacted

- The mock interviews are one of the key skill building efforts that prepares students for the job market and obtaining employment.
- The students represent a “mixed bag’ of those who are able to demonstrate the necessary skill levels to be successful in job interviews. As is typical of students of this age, there are many that require much more practice, skills and knowledge in making a good impression personally and professionally in an interview setting, and demonstrating the ability to present themselves as a well-qualified candidate for a job placement.

While the schools are doing as much as they can in offering this experience, it needs to be supported by additional opportunities from volunteers and those in professional positions and elsewhere in the working world to assist them in building these skills.

5) Individual Stories of How the Project Impacted a Student

The Mock Interviews offered opportunities to not only assist students in building upon their interviewing skills and discussion career exploration opportunities with local volunteers, but to also answer questions from students beyond the scope of the interviews.

One student in particular was interested the legal profession and had numerous questions not only about transitioning from high school to college, but also to graduate school, and in particular to law school. In addition to discussing employment opportunities and preparation for entering the workforce, this particular student was more interested in attending law school and requested information about the various local law schools, undergraduate schools and programs that would best prepare him for advanced studies.

In addition to the interview and the additional discussion of graduate work, the interviewer noticed that the student wasn't properly dressed for a job interview. The consultant asked the student if he was aware that wearing a suit and tie was necessary for job interviews. The student replied that he was aware that a suit was more appropriate, but that he didn't have one. The interviewer asked him if it was possible that his parents might be able to buy or obtain a suit for him to use for interviews. The student admitted that his parents were unable to provide a suit for him, and that it was his goal that over time, he would earn the money to buy a suit when he could.

After concluding the interviews, the volunteer met informally with some of the instructors, and said that the student made an exceptional impression during the interview, given his preparation and very specific and thoughtful goals and objectives for school, graduate school and employment. Very specifically, the volunteer said to the teachers, "This guy already has what it takes to be successful. If there was a way to get him in a suit and tie, all he needs to do is to begin to present himself and he will be very successful in any interview for college or employment." The school faculty members acknowledged that observation, stating that the student was one of the most gifted students of African (Somali) decent that they have had at the school, and that they were certain that this student would excel in higher education and in the job market. The interviewer strongly suggested that if there was any petty cash available at the school, it would be a very wise investment to allow this young man to own a well-fitting suit to use for interview. The instructors knowingly agreed.