Overview of the Manufacturing Connect YCC Program

Manufacturing Connect (MC) is a school-based program that serves 9th-12th graders by providing them with nine interrelated career pathways program element services and activities. MC links high schools to opportunities in the surrounding manufacturing sector, benefiting the school and its students, the surrounding community, and local manufacturers. MC participants:

- learn about a variety of manufacturing and engineering related career paths;
- earn nationally recognized industry credentials and college credits;
- and are given multiple opportunities to participate in paid work experiences, professional and leadership skills development, individualized mentoring, and career and college coaching.

The goal of MC is for each of its participants to experience a high-quality career pathways program that leads to career-track opportunities (preferably but not exclusively in manufacturing) after high school through college, employment, or both.

Program Highlight

Manufacturing Connect not only knows how to help a young person get a job in manufacturing, we know how to help them keep a job in manufacturing. Our strength is in our relationships with our participants and with our manufacturing employers; 55 employers participated in MC program activities during the 2017-18 school year.

MC knows how to get a young person excited about manufacturing and how to work with employers to help them attract and retain younger employees. MC graduates who chose a career-track job in manufacturing after high school experienced an average retention of 10 months on the job; the average retention is 18 months for those completers currently employed in manufacturing.

MC also has a positive track record in helping participants earn industry credentials. This year 86% of MC seniors graduated high school with at least one credential from the National Institute of Metal Working Skills (NIMS).

Success Story

Shameka, Class of 2018, qualified to participate in a work-study internship at Ferrara Candy Company during her senior year as a result of her preparation through the MC program. As an MC Work-Study
participant, she worked part-time making $10 an hour as a Packaging Operator while attending school and earning her second NIMS credential in CNC Turning Operation.

Shameka joined the MC’s Young Manufacturers Association (YMA, a network of MC program alumni working in manufacturing) and attended regular peer-support meetings. She learned to balance work, school, and life challenges by sharing experiences with her peers and receiving individualized coaching from MC staff.

Shameka graduated in June with a 3.4 GPA, earned her second NIMS credential, and accepted a full-time job offer at Ferrara Candy. She received a pay increase from $10 to $16.75 an hour plus benefits, and Ferrara agreed to accommodate her fall school schedule at Triton College.

**Community Impact**

YCC has helped Austin College and Career Academy (ACCA), a school with limited resources on the west side of Chicago, become a city-wide example for implementing high-quality career pathway programs in manufacturing. The Manufacturing Connect program is now being used as a template for manufacturing programs in two other schools in the district, which will ultimately expand access for low-income youth to training and supports that lead to career-track employment after high school.

YCC also made it possible for ACCA to become the first high school in the city with a dual-credit Manufacturing Technology course, setting an example for other schools to follow. YCC’s investment has significantly increased the number of young people in the community who view manufacturing as a tangible opportunity for success. In turn, MC program graduates are becoming more visible in the community and are taking an active role in convincing other young people to pursue careers in manufacturing.

**Manufacturing Connect**

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