Overview of the Denver Public Schools CareerConnect YCC Program

Denver Public Schools (DPS) CareerConnect offers rigorous and engaging college and career pathways in nine different industries. Over the past three years, the program has expanded its offerings in five of Colorado’s highest-opportunity industries: finance, engineering, advanced manufacturing, bioscience, and technology. The DPS CareerConnect program grew from 4,200 high school students in 2013-2014 to more than 8,600 in 2016-2017.

In the fall of 2017, Denver voters passed a ballot initiative that provides DPS CareerConnect with sustainable funding – a $5 million bond to be used for facility upgrades and an annually recurring $4.8 million. DPS CareerConnect has also raised nearly $20 million in corporate, federal, and philanthropic grants since 2014. These funds will enable DPS CareerConnect to continue our mission and grow the program.

Our program is proving that we can provide a new landscape of opportunities for Denver’s students while building an unmatched talent pipeline for Colorado’s booming economy. We can change lives for children and families in our community while building a national model for success.

Program Highlight

CareerLaunch is a work-based learning program that is part of a continuum of services provided by DPS CareerConnect. CareerLaunch places student interns in STEM-related positions in local businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Students are required to complete 100-120 hours at the work site and learn practical applications of their STEM coursework, explore potential career paths, and make meaningful contributions to their host organizations. In addition to their coursework, they receive work readiness training and ongoing coaching from an Internship Coordinator.
CareerLaunch staff assists business partners with internship planning and intern selection and provides case management services for students. Internships are offered in Fall, Spring and Summer, providing students with multiple opportunities to participate and to work in fields that are of interest to them.

This past school year, more than 400 students participated in CareerLaunch Internships. Students from the first cohort of CareerLaunch more than doubled their odds of on-time graduation or completion.

**Success Story**

A student at Florence Crittenton High School shares some thoughts about her internship:

“This internship relates to my future career by showing me that in order to get things done, sometimes you need to help people out, even if it’s not in your job description. ‘Today for you, tomorrow for me,’ is a saying I always remember when I see people from different areas working together to get things done. There is such a family atmosphere in this clinic that it lifts your spirits up! I believe this is setting a good example for me of what it is working as a team, and I think that is a great quality to have. This internship also relates to my future career in the way that it shows me what it is to work in a clinic, since I want to work in the medical field one day.”

**Community Impact**

The Youth CareerConnect dollars invested in Denver have stimulated opportunities that were previously only available to a few students each year, but which are now available to many. Out of the investment provided by the Department of Labor and supported by more than three million dollars in matching funds from the Denver Community, the Denver Public School District developed course sequences aligned to high-opportunity industries in all STEM Fields. Visitors from within the state and all over the country continue to seek opportunities to visit and learn more about the DPS CareerConnect Programming.

The parameters established by the Youth CareerConnect Grant, while challenging in some respects, provided the foundation for implementing programs based on best practices and research-proven methods. Many of these practices will continue – and will continue to benefit our students – long after the grant is over.

**Denver Public Schools CareerConnect**

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