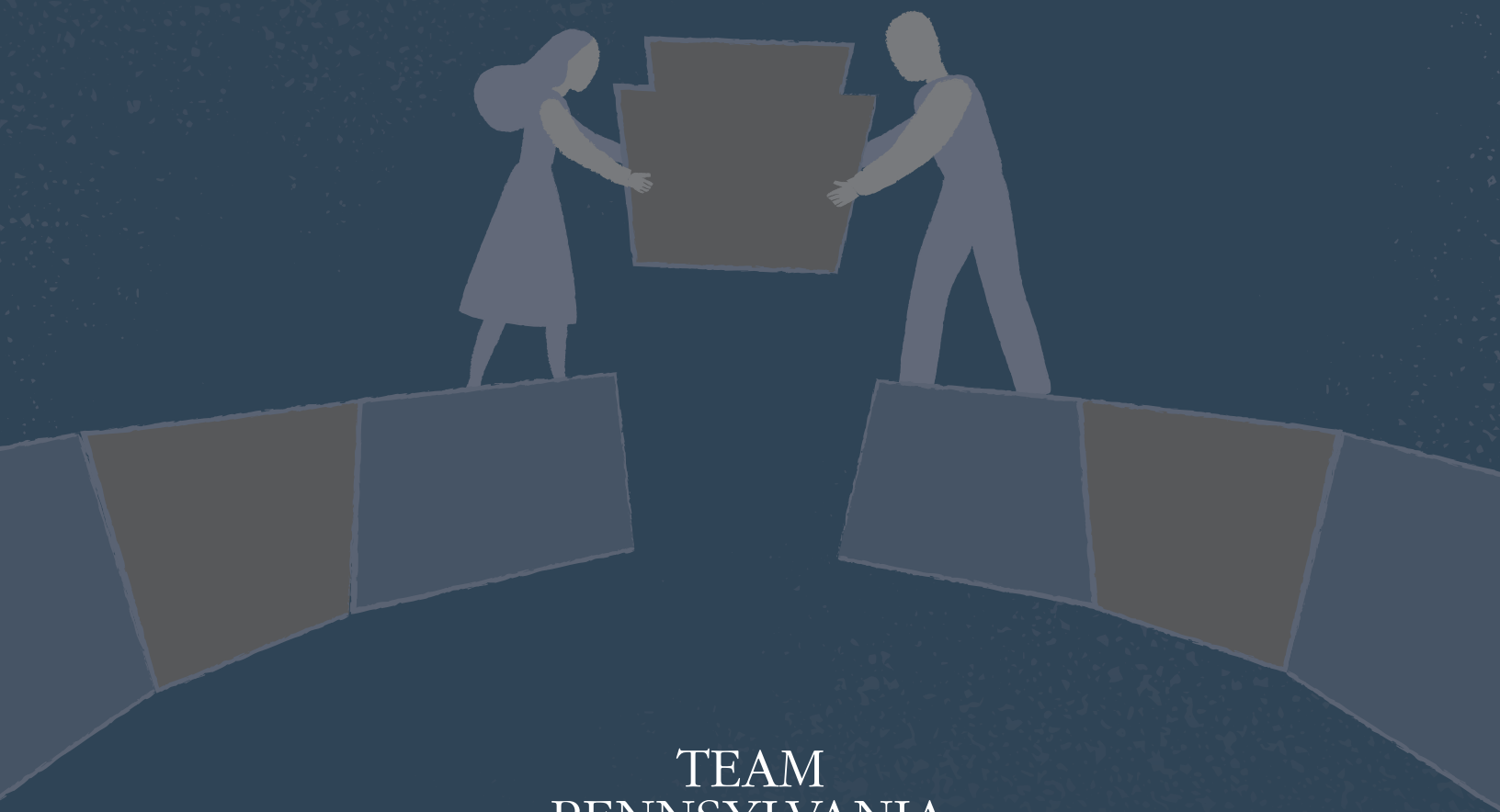


DEEPENING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN EDUCATION & THE WORLD OF WORK

2017 - 2018 CAREER READINESS MINI-GRANT PROJECT

FINAL REPORT



TEAM
PENNSYLVANIA

The skills gap conversations taking place across Pennsylvania are echoed in every other state in America: our current system is not producing students with the skills that businesses need. And yet, it is widely known that a healthy economic future depends on a skilled, well-educated workforce.

In an effort to produce graduates who are ready, willing, and able to take on the careers of tomorrow, Pennsylvania's education system is going beyond teaching traditional academic skills. Schools across the commonwealth are implementing Pennsylvania's Career Education & Work Standards as required by regulation.¹ These standards describe what students should know and be able to do at four grade levels (3rd, 5th, 8th, and 11th grades) in four areas: Career Awareness & Preparation; Career Acquisition (Getting a Job); Career Retention & Advancement; and Entrepreneurship.

What did we know about Career Readiness in PA?

In January 2017, Pennsylvania school districts completed a comprehensive survey about their career readiness activities, the 2017 Career Readiness Inventory.² With a 30% response rate from districts that serve almost 50% of the commonwealth's students across the state, the findings serve as a good representation of Pennsylvania's baseline levels of career readiness activities.

This work has been underway for years - decades in some areas - which should not be discounted, but in traditional school districts, **career readiness activities lack dedicated federal, state, regional, or local funding sources.**³

Further, as evidenced by the comprehensive survey, **there are ample gaps in Pennsylvania's education system when it comes to career preparedness, especially around resources, partnerships, and data.**

THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Access to career readiness opportunities vary widely, especially by region and grade level.

High school students, for example, have significantly more programs available to them than elementary school students.

Availability and awareness of resources to implement Pennsylvania's Career Education & Work Standards is limited across the state.

Responses ranged from needing more dedicated time and funding, to needing greater access to professional development and business partnerships.

Labor market information does not inform current career readiness activities,

with only a handful of school districts noting that they use this data to plan their work.

RATHER THAN ARGUE whether the businesses need to do a better job investing in the talent they seek to hire, or criticizing that our already burdened schools need to adjust their curricula and instruction, Team Pennsylvania is focused on creating the right conditions for our systems to thrive so they better meet the needs of our communities and economy.

➔ ENTER: THE CAREER READINESS MINI-GRANT PROJECT

To address some of the critical gaps that the inventory uncovered, Team Pennsylvania applied for and received a \$312,000 Strategic Innovation Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry in June 2017. The grant proposed a Career Readiness Mini-Grant Project to provide direct, flexible funding to school districts for their career readiness activities with the hope of scaling, sharing, and replicating best practices in career readiness across Pennsylvania.

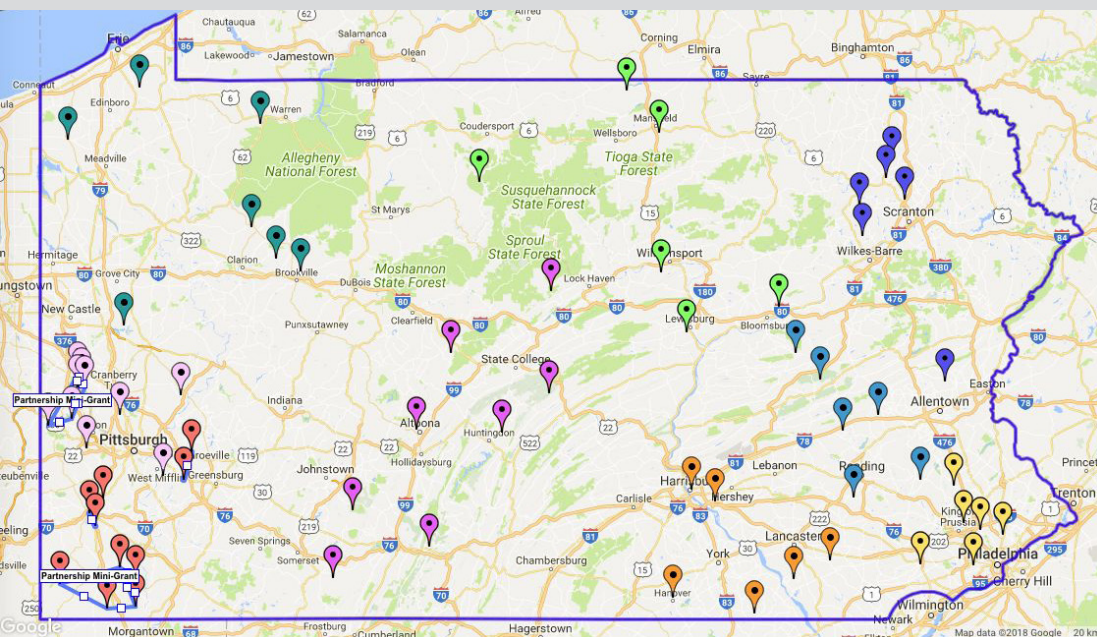
Modeled on a successful project through Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3⁴, Team Pennsylvania partnered with the Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units (PAIU) and Intermediate Units across the commonwealth to review applications and

select grantees, awarding \$30,000 in each of Pennsylvania's nine regions. Districts applied for up to \$5,000 to fund career readiness activities. In addition, they were given the option to collaborate with other local districts to implement a partnership project for up to \$10,000. In total, 65 school districts - nine of which were partnerships projects - received awards.

Districts only had two major requirements:

- **ground their projects in Labor Market Information (LMI); and**
- **partner with their Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB).**

MAP OF THE PENNSYLVANIA CAREER READINESS MINI-GRANTS



Source: <http://j.mp/2jsUuc5>

THE AWARDS

\$30,000

was awarded to each of
PA's nine regions

65 school districts
received Career
Readiness Mini-Grants

MINI-GRANTS PROJECT BY THE NUMBERS

With 51 out of the 54 projects reporting on student participation

at least

45,948 students participated
in a career readiness mini-grant project across the state

*This translates to
an investment of just*

\$6.79 per student

*In addition,
39 out of the 65
school districts that
received mini-grants
have Title 1 schools.⁵*

60%

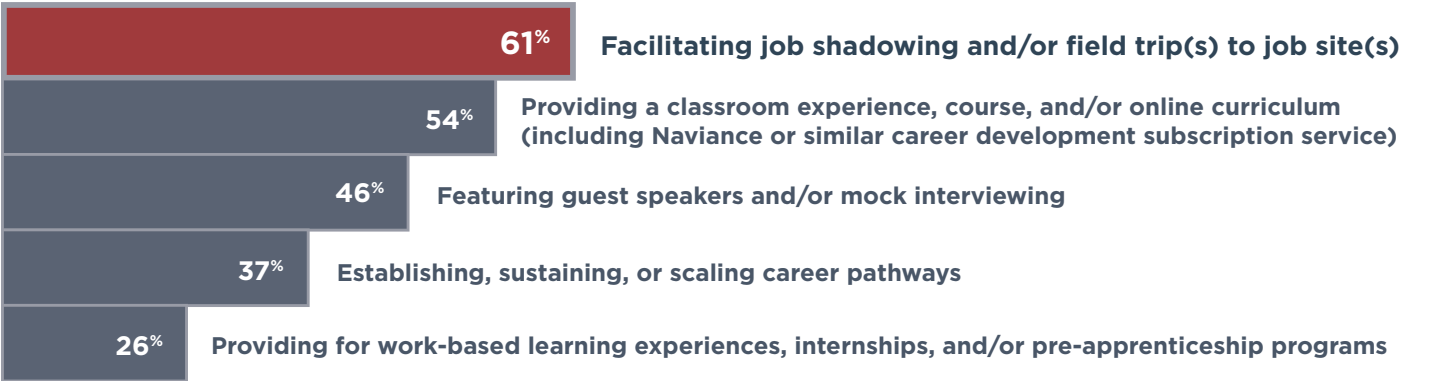


This program was intended to foster and expand current career readiness work at the school district level, allowing space for innovation, opportunities for connection, and resources to think about and begin to address current and anticipated future workforce gaps at the local level. **With an average grant of just \$5,000, school district personnel seem genuinely appreciative of this relatively small infusion of funding and the flexibility to use those funds as needed.** As one school district noted, districts have many ideas for career readiness programming but lack the support to implement those ideas.

The support provided through these mini-grants is just one small way to help bring those ideas to fruition, while at the same time creating and deepening regional partnerships that will be crucial to sustaining the work and addressing critical workforce needs going forward.

HOW DID SCHOOL DISTRICTS USE THE FUNDING?

TOP MINI-GRANT ACTIVITIES



MIDDLETOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The career readiness mini-grant project enabled Middletown Area High School (MAHS) to add two new certification areas to their already successful Pathways Program: Certified Production Technician (CPT) and Certified Logistics Technician (CLT).

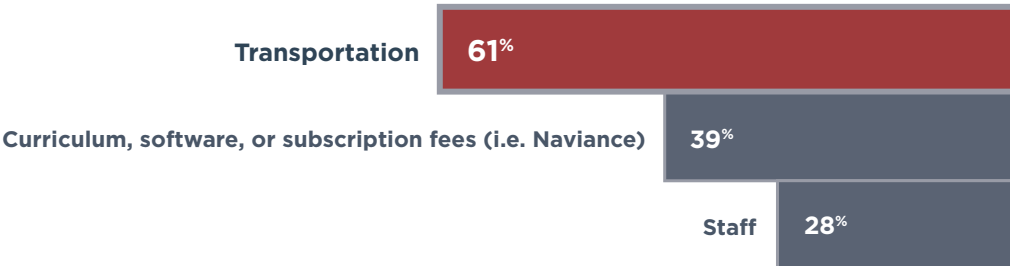
With funding from the mini-grant, MAHS fostered a new relationship with the Manufacturer’s Association, which provided the two certification programs through the Manufacturer’s Skills Standard Council (MSSC).

“The grant allowed non-traditional students the opportunity to experience online learning outside of the classroom setting while working at their own pace. Student confidence grew as they worked through the modules and successfully passed the quizzes and tests. The CPT and CLT programs opened the students’ eyes to different careers, since some of the students did not have a specific plan upon graduation.”

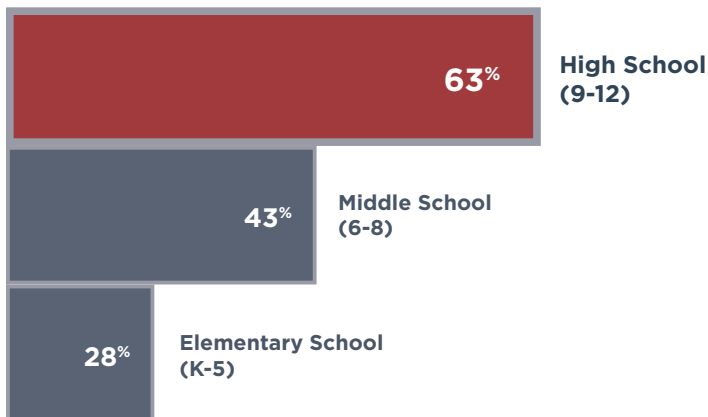
Michele R. Myers,
Career Coordinator for Middleton Area High School

School districts were given ample latitude to apply the mini-grant funding as they saw fit, and many divided the funding across multiple activities.

TOP USES OF MINI-GRANT FUNDING



PARTICIPATION BY GRADE LEVEL



Note: some school district projects span more than one grade level category, as reflected in the data breakdown.

TRACKING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

62% of school districts tracked individual student participation

64% maintained physical files and/or individual student portfolios

LEWISBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

Lewisburg Area School District (LASD) utilized their mini-grant to organize a career day, providing over 160 eighth grade students authentic, hands on learning experiences in technical education. The initiative was made possible by a joint effort with the district's technical school, SUN ATI, and the LWDB, Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce. The Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce provided regional labor market information which influenced the design of the program.

Students completed career interest inventories and were matched to one or more of SUN ATI's 18 programs. Throughout the day, students attended workshops, actively participated in project-based learning, and received information about high-priority occupations and regional job markets

"I loved getting out of class to explore new things. It was nice to learn more about the different jobs in the world. I was not interested in attending SUN ATI, but now I'm considering it."

Eighth grade student from Lewisburg Area School District

associated with each program of study. Students explored high-priority occupations in a safe, non-industrial setting, which will better prepare them to make informed choices that coincide with their awareness of SUN ATI programs and the regional economy.

MOUNTAINVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT

Mountain View School District (MVSD) began a new family and consumer science course for 11th graders with their mini-grant. For the first time, students were able to job shadow occupations in high-growth industries. In addition, students participated in mock interviews where they were able to receive feedback directly from local industry members. Students also created an online, easily accessible career readiness portfolio that will follow them until they graduate.

“After analyzing high-priority occupations, our students realized the Northern Tier will grow for those with trade skills. Carpentry, Welding, and Mechanics will be in high demand with the Natural Gas Industry. With this information, more students inquired about attending the local Career Technology Center. One student remarked, ‘I will have to leave this area if I want to be a physical therapist.’ Those students who are currently attending the local CTC remarked with pride, ‘Boy, I am glad I will have a skill I can use here.’”

Dr. Christopher Lake
Elementary Principal and Director of Curriculum and
Instruction for Mountain View School District

USING LABOR MARKET INFORMATION TO GUIDE PROGRAMMING

94% of school districts indicated that labor market information (LMI) was central to or tied to their projects

DATA SOURCES

High-Priority Occupations (HPO) lists

issued by the Pennsylvania Department of
Labor & Industry (L&I)

PA Career Guide

High-Growth Industry Data

Top 50 lists

such as top 50 employers, jobs, and skills

DATA APPLICATION

- ➔ Identifying and creating new career pathways
- ➔ Implementing student research activities around regional labor trends
- ➔ Meeting with businesses in high-growth industries to determine specific skills and jobs where there is a current or anticipated worker shortage ⁶
- ➔ Inviting local speakers who work in high-growth industries to share their experiences
- ➔ Visiting local businesses in high-growth industries so students and educators could experience regional needs first-hand

PARTNERING WITH LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS

School districts were required to partner with their Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) in some capacity when they applied for the mini-grant. Many districts indicated that this project prompted them to initiate conversations with their LWDBs for the first time, and local boards were eager to work with them, align programming, and coordinate activities. In some cases though, LWDBs were a mere touch point when they recommended a business to participate in a career fair or sent over relevant labor market information.

For school districts that described LWDBs as absolutely integral

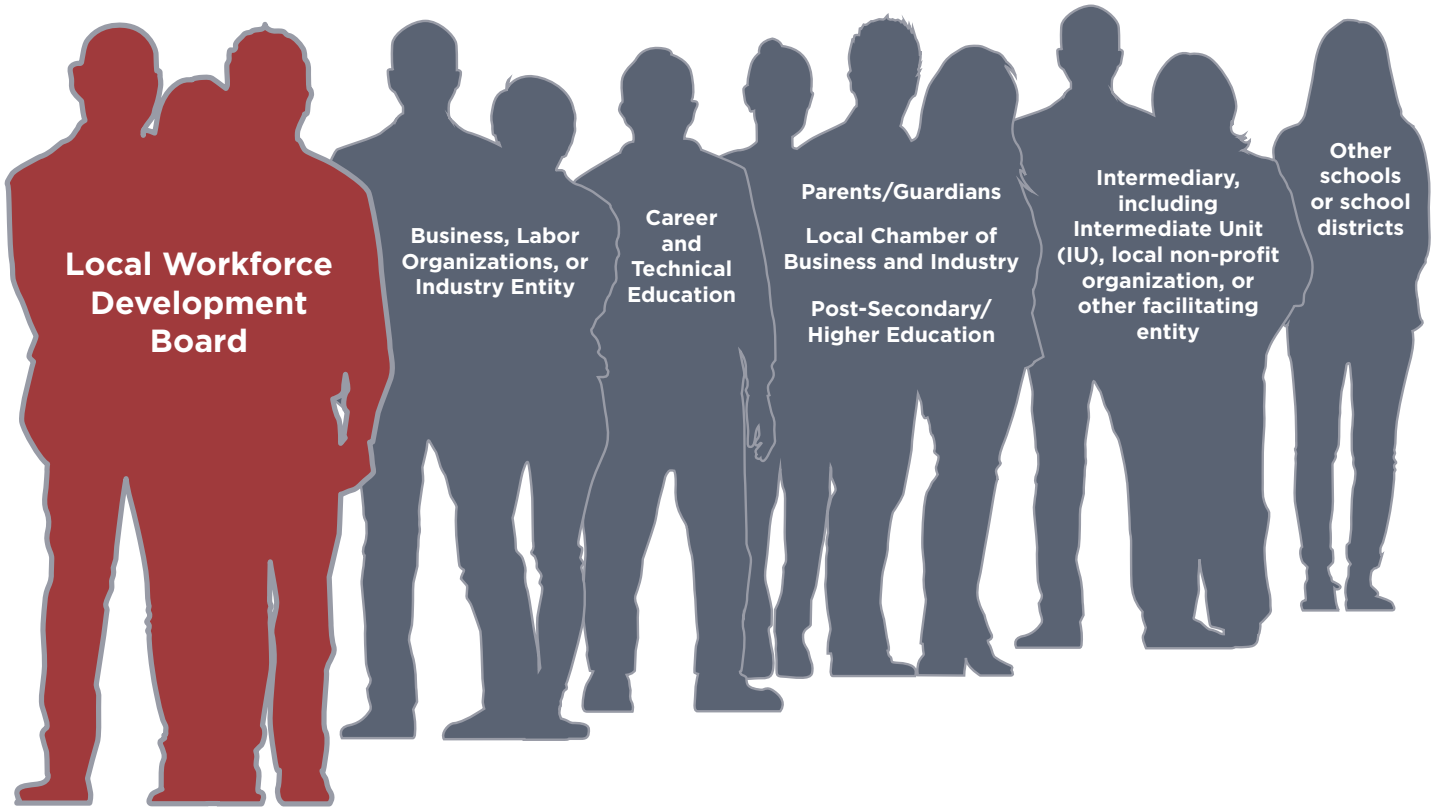
to their mini-grant projects, local workforce boards participated in such ways as:

- Acting as central hubs for resources and connections to businesses in particular industries, speakers for school districts, and data about regional labor needs;
- Serving as representatives on school district career advisory councils; and
- Providing professional development to educators about regional LMI.

Post-secondary entities assisted districts by providing dual enrollment and pre-apprenticeship programs, soft skills trainings, campus tours, and resources for career days.

Multiple school districts noted that the relationship between the district and their local career and technical support improved.

WITH WHAT ENTITIES DID SCHOOL DISTRICTS PARTNER?



HARRISBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

In the last three years, Harrisburg School District (HSD) developed The ROAR College and Career Academy to increase post-secondary opportunities for students by “linking traditional education with career-oriented courses and experiences.”

Through ROAR’s four distinct career academies, students can explore a variety of post-secondary opportunities through career days, job shadowing, dual enrollment programs, and internships.

With the support of the mini-grant, HSD strengthened partnerships with many regional organizations, including FedEx, DHL, UPS, Volvo, Amazon, and UPMC Pinnacle, to establish the Supply Chain and Warehousing Career Readiness Project. Representatives from these organizations and South Central Workforce Investment Board served on an advisory council

to develop and execute project activities. Students visited FedEx, DHL, and Volvo, gaining first-hand experience of local high-priority occupations within transportation, distribution, and logistics. In addition, Norfolk Southern Railway visited HSD to educate students about local jobs in transportation.

“Industry partners appreciated that a high school program was being developed that could help expand their workforce pipeline. They were enthusiastic to get involved and open their business sites to the students. This demonstrated that education and industry work together toward providing students career readiness opportunities.”

Ross Berger,
College and Career Academy Program Coordinator
at Harrisburg School District

“We strengthened partnerships with Range Resources, Precision Marshall, and Presbyterian SeniorCare Network, providing students with work-to-hire possibilities and job shadowing opportunities. We also strengthened our partnership with the Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board. This has enabled us to look more broadly at career-to-work options for students, which will keep us busy for years to come.”

Eric Lauver, Assistant Principal for Trinity Area School District

NOTES

¹ Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2018) Academic Standards for Career Education and Work. Retrieved from <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/PACareerStandards/Pages/default.aspx>

² This comprehensive survey was conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in partnership with Team Pennsylvania under the New Skills For Youth planning grant.

³ Career and Technical schools receive funding from State and Federal sources.

⁴ Behrman, E. (2016, Sept. 28). Western Pa. schools' \$20K STEAM grant creations put on display. Trib Live. Retrieved from <https://triblive.com/news/alleggheny/11220271-74/students-steam-learning>

⁵ Title I is the federal designation for at least 40% of students in the school building living in poverty.

⁶ For at least one school district, that business feedback shifted the course of their career readiness mini-grant project.

**Team Pennsylvania thanks the following
organizations for making this program possible:**



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TEAM
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