



Work.Learn.Connect.

Connecting Today's Students To Tomorrow's Careers

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Workplace Learning Connection

Why we do what we do

We believe in a vibrant community with a workforce ready for a changing world, and we support the next generation as they navigate and connect to our shared future.

What we do

We are connecting today's students to tomorrow's careers through high quality, age-appropriate work-based learning opportunities.



Work



Workplace Learning Connection is growing thanks to our regional business support and collaboration with area economic development groups. Economic development groups are bringing awareness to the business community about the value and importance of investing in the future through new and continued partnerships in providing work-based learning for regional students.

In March, Marion Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) launched a new initiative, Community Promise. According to Emily Russ, MEDCO Business Engagement Specialist, Community Promise is a community wide strategy aimed at redefining how area businesses invest in the local talent pipeline. The four pillars to the Community Promise commitment:

- Equip 70% of our graduating seniors with education and training beyond a traditional high school experience
- Invest \$750,000 in our own talent by 2022
- Create an environment that builds community loyalty
- Be a national leader in creating an insulated talent pipeline that is a competitive advantage for our community.

"The business response to our Community Promise initiative has been great. At the luncheon we asked businesses to fill out an interest form. We had 120 interest forms turned in that day. Since that time we have had numerous follow up calls, and the interest from both businesses and the community is continuing to grow. Business have been looking for something like this. They are aware of their current positions and potential pipeline gaps. Providing students these opportunities not only makes them aware of opportunities in their community but it connects business with potential employees," says Russ. One way Community Promise is striving to achieve these goals is through collaboration with programs like WLC. "WLC brings established work-based programming, processes and procedures. Partnering with programs like WLC is allowing us to identify programming gaps and to focus on those additional needs."

What will success look like for Community Promise? "I think success will be reached when we begin making meaningful connections we know will lead to a bright future for both our students and business community," says Russ.

To learn more about Community Promise click [here](#). Interested in learning more about WLC partnership opportunities? Check out our WLC [partnership](#) opportunities!

Learn

Workplace Learning Connection's 2017 Financial Literacy Fair is in full swing. Fairs in Iowa, Washington, and Johnson Counties have already been completed serving over 2,000 8th grade students from these counties. Fairs in Linn County will run May 8th- 19th and are expected to serve in excess of 3,200 students.

WLC's Financial Literacy Fair is a unique program as it is the culmination event of career exploration and financial study by regional students and educators. Students learn about basic financial decisions needed in life and connect it with their desired occupation and related income, all captured on a monthly budget sheet.

Volunteers guide students with decisions on how to spend their virtual money on life expenses such as education expenses, transportation, housing, insurance, food and "extras", and counselors coach them through the budgeting process.



For students, the event is educational and impactful!
Check out what students are sharing!

- "Being able to get a reality check on how financially difficult it can be if you don't use your money well, and how important it is to spend it correctly." -student from Southeast Junior High
- "Seeing what my parents go through every month" -student from Solon Middle School
- "Getting to see how I will really have to work things out in real

life when it comes time for me to get a job. Being able to budget and see how much things actually cost puts something into better perspective for kids." -student from Tipton Middle School

- "I think the best part was going around and seeing how much you spending a month on things you wouldn't even think about and finding out all of your monthly costs for what you need when you're older." -student from Vinton-Shellsburg Middle School
- "The best part of the Financial Literacy fair was talking to people who know a lot about spending and saving money. It really helped me get an idea on what I will need to spend my money on in the future, and how to spend it wisely." -student from Oak Ridge Middle School
- "My favorite part was talking with the financial counselor. It felt like she really cared about my life decisions and made me feel really good. She gave me awesome advice and I really think it will help me in years to come. -student from LaSalle Middle School

Thank you to the 520 Financial Literacy Fair volunteers for once again making a difference!

Want to get involved in the Spring 2018 Financial Literacy Fair? Check out the WLC [Partnership](#) page!

Connect

Information Technology (I.T.) is one of the fastest growing and fastest changing industries. Such rapid growth and change have corridor I.T. professionals working together to promote I.T. career awareness through initiatives such as the I.T. Sector Board. "The I.T. sector board is a gathering of industry partners to promote and improve the future of I.T. in the region," says Gary Vogt, Career Development Specialist Business and Information Technology at Kirkwood.

One of the I.T. Sector Board's primary goals is to promote I.T. awareness and according to Vogt the more avenues for I.T. awareness the better. "Collaborating with WLC is one of the avenues we are able to bring awareness and educate students at a younger age. We work to really find ways to collaborate. We are stronger working together than working side by side," says Vogt. "Ultimately people don't think about the corridor as I.T. area. How many people know the main I.T. provider for a major rating company is in our community? Another company does all the streaming content for CBS. People often don't think of Iowa as an I.T. hub, however, the I.T. industry loves Iowa. They see Iowa as disaster-proof. We generally have a good employment base, property rates are lower, and we are centrally located. Google, Facebook, and Microsoft all have a major presence in Iowa. The more individuals are aware of the opportunities, the stronger the employee pipeline becomes."

Vogt adds the I.T. Sector Board has a number of "awareness" projects completed and in the works to aid in the education of students. "We have a [YouTube](#) channel, we actively working on an "I AM IT" website and an I.T. outreach tool that any I.T. professional or educator



can utilize in educating students." Vogt offers this advice for students considering I.T. careers. "I.T. careers don't necessarily require a 4 year degree. We have plenty of success stories for students coming out of 2 year programs. I.T. comes in a lot of non-traditional forms, and an asset that is very valuable to employers is having lots of different backgrounds. We had a major sport recruiting company looking for someone to program their website. They found a student who had a

passion for sports and understood the sport. Another major scientific company has I.T. professionals who also have biology degrees. We don't commonly think about the little things. It is an exciting industry and every day is something new!"

The summer session is a great time to host future I.T. professionals! Want to provide work-based learning at your business in the I.T. pathway?

Engage now at [WLC Partnership!](#)

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Check out our daily post of community partnerships helping our future workforce!

Workplace Learning Connection was founded in 1998 as a not-for-profit partnership of Grant Wood AEA and Kirkwood Community College. Today, Workplace Learning Connection exists as a partially self-funded department of Kirkwood Community College under The Kirkwood Community College Foundation and as a partner of area 10 schools and businesses promoting and connecting career and future workforce development.