

P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DuPage Regional Office of Education Announces New Work-Based Learning Program for Students

Wheaton, IL, September 30, 2021— The DuPage County Regional Office of Education (ROE), in partnership with College of DuPage Hire-Ed and GPS Education Partners (GPSEd), is proud to announce the rollout of a hands-on work opportunity and career exploration experience for high school students in DuPage County.

The DuPage Work-Based Learning and Youth Apprenticeship Collaboration, which was first piloted during the 2020-2021 school year with eight DuPage high schools, is designed to help students ages 16 and older access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. Students enrolled in this program are paid student apprentices with local business partners. As student apprentices, they work towards 450 hours of work-based learning during the year-long course.

During the 2020-2021 school year, eleven students participated in the pilot version of the program, and three of those students are continuing as apprentices with the College of DuPage Hire-Ed program. Program coordinators say several additional high schools will be participating in the program during the current school year—as well as many more students.

Dr. Darlene Ruscitti, Regional Superintendent of DuPage County Schools, says the overarching goal of the program is to serve DuPage County. “We hope to give students the tools they need to have positive workplace experiences pre-graduation so they can experience successful careers post-graduation. This, in turn, will strengthen the DuPage County workforce with skilled workers both now and in the years to come,” Ruscitti explains.

With many businesses experiencing worker shortages, the Work-Based Learning Collaborative helps the community by matching employers with student workers who are serious about contributing to the success of their respective industries.



During the 2020-2021 school year, eight DuPage High Schools and eleven students participated in the pilot version of the program. Many more are expected to join the program in the coming year.

Last spring, the ROE, in collaboration with WorkNet DuPage, hosted an event for business leaders to showcase the program, and the response was enthusiastic. More than one hundred people attended the event.

Greg Carrico, the human resources director at Camcraft, Inc., a components manufacturer in Hanover Park, commented, “We didn’t know how to get started on getting young folks in our business. It was really refreshing to get some help with that.”

High-demand sectors such as manufacturing, cybersecurity, information technology, health services, and logistics are just some of the career pathways that will be available to students. Students in the program are also given the opportunity to tour workplaces, job shadow, intern, and participate in paid pre-apprenticeships.

Ruscitti hopes more schools and students will take advantage of the program. “We have received really positive feedback from participants. One of the biggest benefits for students is that they are able to earn high school credits *and* earn a paycheck to begin their pathway to financial independence. In addition, they can explore college and career options while developing valuable workplace skills and technical competencies—all before graduating from high school,” said Ruscitti.

The DuPage ROE is seeking additional funding for this program. They have secured one funding source that contributes to a limited student demographic, but they are hopeful additional funding will serve all participating students. In the meantime, the ROE is working alongside Project Hire-Ed (College of DuPage), WorkNet DuPage, and GPS Education Partners, to develop marketing tools and a website where students, parents, schools, and businesses can get more information on the program.

For more information on this exciting new program and how to get involved, visit the [Work-Based Learning & Youth Apprenticeship Collaborative](#) website.

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About the DuPage Regional Office of Education

The DuPage Regional Office of Education is a service organization whose role is to provide high quality service and support to all stakeholders and collectively expend every effort to prepare DuPage County children for the world they will face. In addition to the myriad of services provided directly to educators and schools, the office also provides services and support to community members, private schools, parents, children, business leaders, and others. For more information, visit DupageROE.org.

About Project Hire-Ed (College of DuPage)

Project Hire-Ed is an apprenticeship program providing a bridge between hiring and education to help employers find the right talent for their organizations and teach students the skills employers are looking for. They’ve been in existence for two years and currently offer apprenticeships in the manufacturing and horticulture industries. In 2022 they will be offering opportunities in the information technology fields. For more information, visit [Project Hire-Ed](#).

About GPS Education Partners

GPS Education Partners (GPSEd) is a nonprofit that has been leading the work-based learning revolution in Wisconsin for over 20 years. GPSEd now serves as an intermediary partner to schools, businesses and communities—across the Midwest and beyond—to provide scalable, quality work-based learning solutions that impact educational systems, talent pipeline needs and unite and lift local economies through the development of technical talent and young leaders. For more information, visit [GPS Education Partners](#).