



Career Academies

Greater Twin Cities United Way

Bridging the Skills Gap through High Quality Work Experiences

One of the issues we often hear about when discussing career pathways within the community is the “skills gap”. The skills gap poses that there is a disconnect between the skills employers require for a job and the skills of job seekers. To solve this issue, the education system and employers must work collaboratively to co-design curriculum and work experiences that equip young people with proper knowledge and skills demanded by the current job market. Purpose Driven Paychecks (PDP) was created for this purpose, to catalyze school-business partnerships to fill these gaps that exist in our educational system towards students accessing paid high-quality work experiences.

These work experiences are incredibly important in terms of helping students align their interests, skills and passion. Not only are students exposed to real work scenarios, but they also have access to mentors in the workplace who help them to navigate the challenging dynamics of the workforce. Students can gain many valuable lessons – including what they don’t like, which is equally important. For example, one of our partners reported that some students enrolled in a nursing/healthcare career pathway quickly learned that they did not like to be exposed to blood or emergency settings during the hands-on experience.

We also recognize the importance of non-traditional and culturally relevant strategies that can help to drive interest for students furthest from justice. One of our partners, Native Skywatchers, spearheaded by Annette S. Lee, leverages indigenous ways to promote STEM related careers with MN Conservation. This approach empowers indigenous students to reconnect with science in a way that is culturally relevant, taking students on a transformative journey leading to a future career path. Career Academies at Greater Twin Cities United Way continue to support career pathways paired with high-quality work experiences because we know that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills they need.

With the right education and coaching, the education system and employers have proven through Purpose Driven Paychecks that the skills gap can be mitigated when collaboration is high. To date, the Purpose Driven Paychecks partnership has served 979 youth through ensuring high quality work experiences including collectively creating 360 new work experiences. This work includes building and strengthening the educational and employment pillars of our communities to ensure sustainable efforts in prioritizing equitable career pathways starting with K-12 education.

Career Academies has invested in 30 partnerships with a diverse range of organizations, including schools, nonprofits, and higher education institutions. This demonstrates the impact of Career Academies and the shifting of priorities in our overall communities. What started as a local initiative has now grown into a movement that spans the entire state.

Check out the Career Academies [website](#) and sign up for the newsletter to stay current.

See the list of our partners over the past three years (below):

- Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services
- Chinese American Chamber of Commerce
- City of Fridley
- City of Hopkins
- Genesys Works
- Goodhue County Education District
- GPS Education Partners
- Herzing University LTD
- ISD 6070 Itasca Areas Schools Collaborative
- Ka Joog
- Minneapolis Public Schools
- Native Skywatchers
- New Vision Foundation
- Peace In Practice/Homegrown Lacrosse
- Project for Pride in Living
- Reve Academy
- Saint Paul Public School
- St. Louis Park High School
- Springboard for the Arts
- unCommon Construction

Thank you for your partnership over the years!