



Denver Public Schools (DPS) CareerConnect Apprenticeship Program

Denver Public Schools, Denver, CO

Superintendent:
Susana Cordova

District Enrollment:
93,815

VIDEO LINK



AASA Denver Youth Apprenticeships



The Denver Public Schools CareerConnect (DPSCC) Apprenticeship Program is designed as an immersive three-year experience in which students work for a company while attending school, gaining hands-on experience as an employee of that company. While maintaining the support structures of their high school, apprentices take both high school and college classes during the week while getting paid to work for one of the district’s participating business partners. As apprentices progress each year of their three-year apprenticeship experience, they take on more hours at their work site and more classes on their selected college campus.

Benefits for Students

- ▶ Students participating in the apprenticeship program can derive the following benefits:
- ▶ Earning a training wage while working in a field that interests them
- ▶ Having opportunities to earn an industry certificate and debt-free college credits
- ▶ Gaining skills in the workplace that are completely transferable to a variety of professional settings and pathways
- ▶ Experiencing a smoother transition from high school to both college and career options
- ▶ Customized training that meets industry standards, tailored to the specific needs of businesses results in highly skilled employees.
- ▶ Employer needs and demands are addressed.
- ▶ There is a positive return-on-investment on the value of apprentices’ work.

The Apprenticeship Ecosystem

The DPSCC program represents the overall ecosystem in which Denver’s youth apprenticeship programs operate. CareerWise Colorado works with school districts, businesses, and colleges statewide and incorporates the following elements of the ecosystem into its design:

- ▶ A template for design of the program so that the experience represents an alignment between students’ academic experience and industry workforce needs.
- ▶ learning pathways, skills, and competencies that are clear, coherent, and validated by the school district, high schools and colleges, and participating partners.
- ▶ highly skilled personnel, including a coordinator, guidance counselor, and a principal and administrative staff responsible for ensuring implementation.
- ▶ meaningful on-the-job learning designed to orient students to the organizational/ industry culture, mentor them and reinforce their mastery of skills.

DPSCC is designed to give students early exposure to thousands of career options as they learn more about their own passions and interests. This ecosystem encourages students to take the skills they’ve learned in the classroom and apply them on the job through shadowing, internships, and formal paid apprenticeships.

Benefits for Education and Industry

- ▶ Applied learning and hands-on experience enhances graduation rates.
- ▶ Communities and families are supportive and highly engaged.
- ▶ The needs of current and emerging career pathways and related requirements is fostered.

- ▶ involvement of key partners – corporate partners, college and university partners, parents, and students.
- ▶ and range of other supports including educator awareness and commitment, effective recruitment and orientation practices, and industry-recognized credentialing.

Programs

The district’s goal is to “Help students identify their passions, explore what they love doing, and consider making a career out of it.” At this writing students can explore nine career fields:

- ▶ **Business**
- ▶ **Creative fields (including visual and performing arts)**
- ▶ **Education**
- ▶ **Engineering**
- ▶ **Hospitality**
- ▶ **Maker space options**
- ▶ **Medicine and health**
- ▶ **Public safety**
- ▶ **Technology**

In collaboration with their counselors, staff, and parents, students can determine how far they wish to explore their chosen “Connect” field, from exploratory STEM courses

in grades K-8 to foundational industry coursework in grade 9 to specialized industry courses (grades 10-12), which may include college coursework, industry credentials, and portfolio development.

Leadership

Susana Cordova, Superintendent

We are really fortunate to have an entire community-based approach to supporting youth apprenticeships, starting with our governor, who has been incredibly supportive of work-based opportunities for students. Youth apprenticeships is one of those programs that you could call a ‘no-brainer.’ When our kids participate in youth apprenticeships, they are 2.7 times more likely to graduate on time. Who can argue with that? – particularly when it’s creating the workforce that our employers here regionally need.

Gabe Willis, Reata Engineering & Machine Works, Inc.

My company appreciates the young talent we see through the youth apprenticeship partnership with DPS. We are able to grow them and develop the skills that the company needs. We mold them into the employees that we want, rather than getting somebody who thinks they’ve already done it and may do things differently than we do.

Bernard McCune, DPS Senior Executive Director for the Office of Career and College Success

The race, ethnicity and socio-economic make up of our students in youth apprenticeships is closely aligned to the make-up of the students within our district. And as we continue to grow youth apprenticeships, we see that becoming even more in line. Youth apprenticeships are for every student. We have gone from four high schools who were doing youth apprenticeships just two years ago to twenty high schools.

“We are really fortunate to have an entire community-based approach to supporting youth apprenticeships, starting with our governor, who has been incredibly supportive of work-based opportunities for students.”

SUSANNA CORDOVA
DENVER SUPERINTENDENT