



# **Nurturing Future Talent:** School and Nonprofit Collaboration to Provide Work-Based Learning Opportunities for High School Students

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## Presented by:

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Chicago**

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Citywide Program Manager, Chicago Public Schools**

# Chicago Public Schools

# Who is Chicago Public Schools?

Chicago Public Schools provides a wide range of high-quality educational programs and engaging learning environments that meet the individual needs of all students and prepare them for success in college, career and civic life.

We serve over 320,000 students in Chicago within 514 schools.

Of those schools, 91 are high schools serving grades 9-12 and represent over 100,000 students.

# Learn. Plan. Succeed.

CPS has established the Learn. Plan. Succeed. initiative to help guide all CPS students in reaching postsecondary success.

Goal: All CPS graduating seniors will have a formal postsecondary plan that aligns with one of six pathways

- College
- Employment
- Military
- Gap Year
- Job Training Programs
- Apprenticeships

# Career and Technical Education

In order to support Learn. Plan. Succeed. and expose students to various career fields, CPS has established career-focused experiential learning programs, sometimes called Career and Technical Education (CTE), provide students with opportunities to explore careers and gain marketable skills while still in high school.

- Agricultural Sciences
- Architecture and Construction
- Business
- Culinary and Hospitality
- Education and Training
- Health Science
- Information Technology
- Law and Public Safety
- Manufacturing and Pre-Engineering
- Media and Communication Arts
- Personal Care Services
- Transportation

# Why partner with other organizations?

Historically, a number of CPS high schools have developed and implemented their own CTE programs.

Due to challenges with school capacity and in an effort to create more equitable opportunities for all CPS students, we decided to partner with nonprofit organizations who provide work-based learning opportunities and internships.

# Genesys Works-Chicago



# Our Mission & Objective

Our mission is to provide pathways to career success for high school students in underserved communities through skills training, meaningful work experiences, and impactful relationships.

**Objective-** To **empower** Young Professionals with the knowledge and skills to **achieve:**

- Career success
- Upward mobility
- Economic self-sufficiency

**GENESYS  
WORKS.**



# Our Impact

## Who we serve:

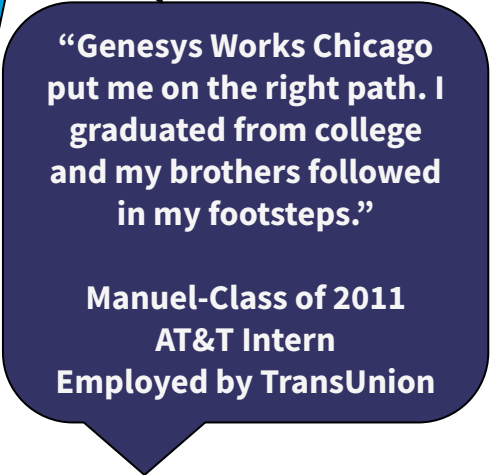
- Current High School Junior
- On track to graduate
- Eligible to work in the U.S.
- 93% Identify as a Person of Color
- 53% First-Generation College Student
- 73% Qualify for free/reduced lunch

## Outcomes:

- 100% Graduate from high school on time
- 100% Apply and are accepted into a post-secondary program
- 93% Enroll in College
- 53% Complete a BA/BS in 6-years or less
- 62% Earn the same or more than one parent/guardian by 25
- 22% Earn the same or more than two parents/guardian by 25
- \$60,000 Median income for alumni



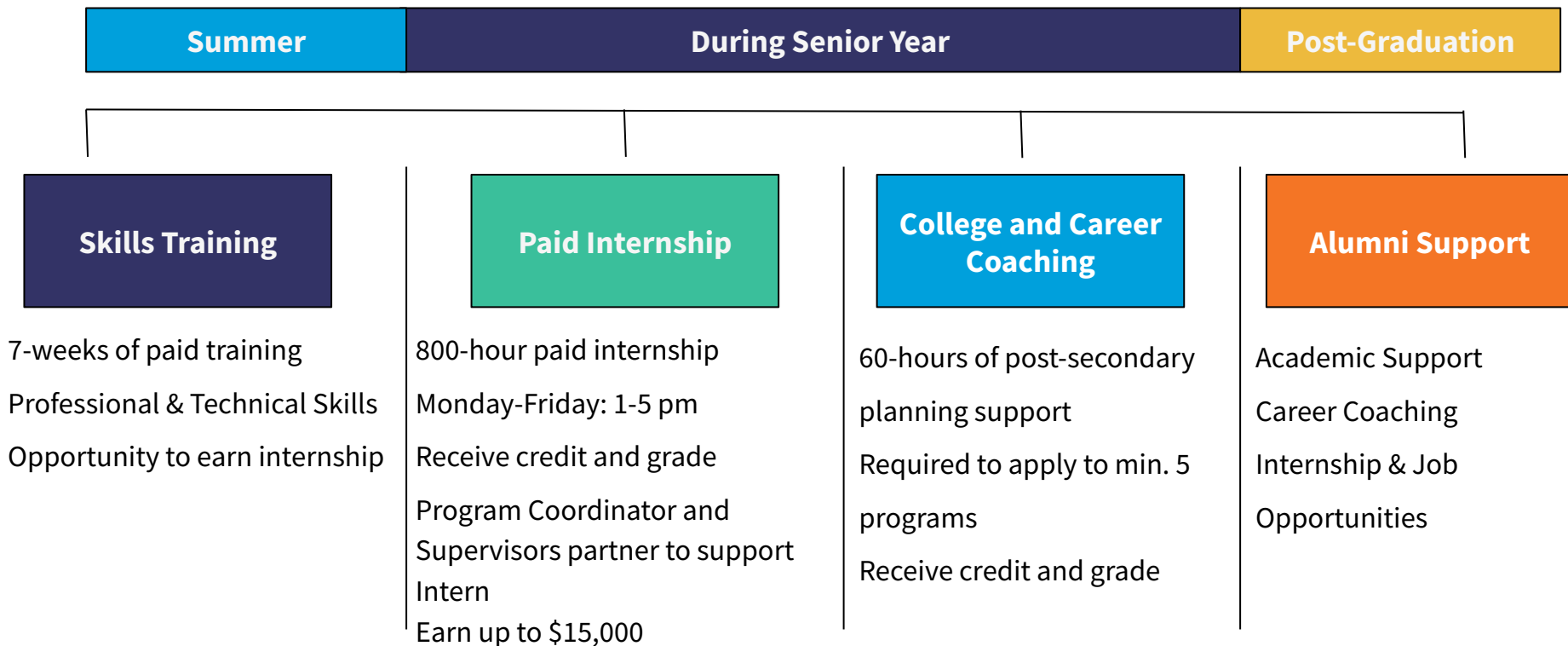
**1,300+ Students Served**  
**80+ School Partners**  
**50+ Corporate Partners**



**“Genesys Works Chicago  
put me on the right path. I  
graduated from college  
and my brothers followed  
in my footsteps.”**

**Manuel-Class of 2011  
AT&T Intern  
Employed by TransUnion**

# Our Program Model



# Lessons Learned & Best Practices

- Clear & Consistent communication is VERY important
- Always consider the insights of your school partners
- Learn and understand the needs of each school partner and their students
- Involve parents and school champions in student performance
- Create a strong onboarding and training process for supervisors
- Remember that soft skills are the most important to cultivate in students- technical skills can follow!





## Presented by:

### Junior Achievement of Central IL

- Angie Houck, Program Director
- Mary Pille, President

### Tazewell-Mason Counties Special Education Association

- Meghan Brake, Youth Services Coordinator

### Special Education Association of Peoria County

- Jodie Vanderheydt, Transition Specialist & STEP Vocational Coordinator



- Overview
- Background
- Objectives
- PaCE Framework Correlations
- School Partner Spotlight
- Measurable Outcomes
- Best Practices
- Q & A

# Overview

- **What is CareerSpark?**

- Classroom & event-based learning experience to introduce 8th grade students to career clusters & high school students to apprenticeships, jobs, and internships
- Virtual and/or in-person

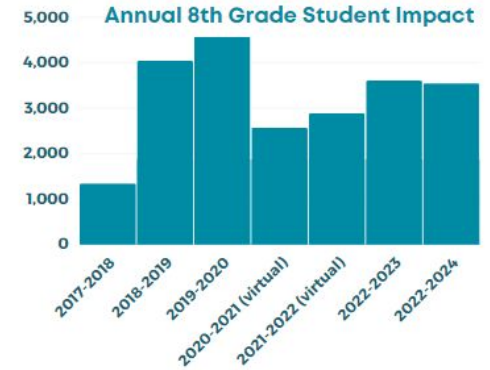
- **What is JA Inspire?**

- Learning experience designed to wrap around a career expo
- Helps make a career expo more than a field trip – ensures students are prepared ahead of time and have action steps afterwards



# Background

- Partner organization: Greater Peoria Economic Development Council
- Student Impact & Growth
  - First year of implementation: Fall 2017
    - **1,342** 8th grade students & **16** Schools
  - Fall 2023
    - **3,548** 8th grade students & **65** Schools
    - **10** counties & **36** cities/towns
  - Expansion to serve high schools
    - 2023-2024 Goal = **3,600** high school students
    - **77%** to goal as of today = **2,760**
    - **21** high schools & organizations







# Objectives & PaCE Framework

# Objectives

- Help prepare 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students for successful futures
- Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Help schools meet PaCE Framework objectives for grades 8-12 despite school budget & transportation barriers
- Help employers promote high growth, high demand careers in the region
- Obtain student impact-centered measurable outcomes
- Long term goal: potential longitudinal study



# PaCE Framework Correlations

Session Descriptions	Social Studies Standards	Work Readiness Standards	English Language Arts
<p><b>Session One: Career Interests and Your Path</b></p> <p>Students understand the importance of career planning and complete a Career Interest Inventory to assess their own values, skills, and interests in the context of career paths.</p> <p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider their values, skills, and interests.</li> <li>Take a Career Interest Inventory.</li> <li>Relate their values, skills, interests, and Career Interest Inventory to future career opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p>SS.EC.FL.1.9-12. Analyze the costs and benefits of various strategies to increase income.</p>	<p><b>Illinois PaCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a career cluster survey</li> <li>Complete a career interest survey</li> </ul> <p><b>Essential Skills</b></p> <p><b>3. Communication Skills</b></p> <p><b>b. Clear Communication</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows directions</li> <li>Is open to correction</li> <li>Comprehends written material</li> <li>Effectively explains a process or problem verbally and/or in writing</li> </ol>	<p>Reading for Information</p> <p>RI.1 RI.3 RI.4 RI.5</p> <p>Language</p> <p>L.1 L.3 L.4 L.5 L.6</p>
<p><b>Session Two: Career Planning and Your Path</b></p> <p>Students learn to recognize career clusters and focus on those tied to the results of their Career Interest Inventory. They explore the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for their careers of interest, as well as the outlook for openings in those fields.</p> <p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn why career planning is important.</li> <li>Recognize career clusters.</li> <li>Identify career clusters that match their skills and interests.</li> <li>Identify requirements to obtain jobs in fields of interest.</li> </ul>	<p>SS.IS.4.9-12 Gather and evaluate information from multiple sources while considering the origin, credibility, point of view, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources.</p>	<p><b>Illinois PaCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a career cluster survey</li> <li>Complete a career interest survey</li> <li>Discover educational requirements, cost, expected entry level, and midpoint salary for occupations in selected CP</li> </ul>	<p>Reading for Information</p> <p>RI.1 RI.3 RI.4 RI.5</p> <p>Writing</p> <p>W.4 W.5 W.6</p> <p>Language</p> <p>L.1 L.2 L.3 L.4 L.6</p>

## CareerSpark & JA Inspire align with PaCE Objectives

- Career Exploration & Development
- Financial Literacy
- Post-Secondary Education Exploration, Preparation, and Selection

# School Partner Spotlight & Measurable Outcomes



# School Partner Spotlight

- Career Summit for Peoria area special education high school students with mild disabilities
- Approximately 150-250 students annually
- Career cluster-focused breakout sessions with guest speakers
- Career Toolkit sessions
  - Job Readiness Skills & Preparing for an Interview
  - CareerSpark - You're Hired!
  - Dress for Success and First Impressions
  - Social Media and Its Impact on finding a job
- Mock Interviews
- College & Career Fair



## High School Partners

**Meghan Brake**

*Youth Services Coordinator*

Tazewell-Mason Counties Special  
Education Association

**Jodie Vanderheydt**

*Transition Specialist &*

*STEP Vocational Coordinator*

Special Education Association of  
Peoria County

# Measurable Outcomes

- Student, educator, & volunteer surveys done annually
- Student pre/post program surveys with unique non-identifiable information matched (pre to post) for data analysis
- Expanded to partner with area special education associations for annual Career Summit beginning Spring 2023
- First geographic expansion: Springfield CareerSpark STEAM Expo, April 25, 2024

**After participating in CareerSpark & JA Inspire, I feel I am better prepared to make an informed decision about my high school plans.**  
Favorable (Agree - Strongly Agree) = 74.8%

## EDUCATOR OUTCOMES

**77%**

agreed the program had enough hands-on activities

**81%**

agreed the program connects learning to industry needs

**77%**

agreed the program introduces students to critical skills

**52%**

of students are considering careers for their future they hadn't thought of before because of CareerSpark experiences

## What was the coolest thing students learned from CareerSpark/JA Inspire?

"It helped get a much better understanding of what I want and don't want for a job."

"I like that it was kind of realistic, and I liked learning about the new jobs I never knew about."

**"The coolest thing I learned from CareerSpark was that successful people aren't successful on accident."**

(8th grade student responses)

## High School Student Outcomes:

I plan to pursue one or more of the following opportunities at companies I learned about in CareerSpark - You're Hired! & JA Inspire (Select all that apply):

- Apprenticeship: 24%
- Internship: 15%
- Job: 30%
- Job Shadow: 31%

# Best Practices



# Best Practices

- Make friends with your Regional Office of Education (ROE).
- Listen to educators – they know what they need & know their students best.
- Don't forget about students with disabilities!
- Plan with Accessibility in mind – do an Accessibility check on all flyers, websites, videos, etc. (e.g.: closed captioning, alt text, large print, wheelchair accessibility).
- When planning virtual student participation, expect to have much fewer students than registered.
- Don't underestimate the power of paper – sometimes 'old school' printed paper workbooks, worksheets are most effective & help reduce barriers of the digital divide.
- For in person career expos – focus on experiential, hands-on activities – not tables w/ brochures.



# Upcoming Webinars

## Supporting and Scaling Postsecondary Readiness through Stakeholder Engagement and Continuous Improvement

April 23, 10–11 a.m.

[Register](#)

## The AI-Ready Workforce

April 29, 1–2:15 pm.

[Register](#)