PELLA COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PREPARING EVERYONE TO
LEARN | LEAD | ACHIEVE

Pella Community Schools
Career Linked Learning Guide

Vision:

The vision of the Pella Community School District is for every student to graduate with a plan for their future and the skills, abilities and relationships it will take to make that plan a reality. This will allow them to navigate a world where they will need to continually learn, lead, and achieve to pursue their goals.

Mission:

To accomplish the vision, we will need to equip our students with the ability to build caring relationships, develop their potential, and pursue their personal version of excellence.

Executive Summary:

The Pella Community Schools strive to link all learning under an umbrella that helps students see the relevance of their educational experiences. We are working to build a system that purposefully asks and answers questions about when students are going to use what they learn in school. It is designed to help students build the relationship and academic skills that it will take for them to set goals and create a path where they are equipped to successfully pursue those goals.

The district combines multiple elements to create experiences where this takes place for every student. This system includes conquering the private victory of being proactive, starting with the end in mind and prioritizing. This is done through a system of career awareness that helps students know what is possible at a very early age. We combine classroom connections with our Partnership for Excellent Educational Resources for STEM. This program offers face to face and virtual experiences with local professionals in K-9 classrooms. Modules have been prepared to connect with the classroom curriculum to show students different careers that utilize the skills they are learning. Knowing what is possible is the first step

toward setting a plan to get to a goal. Having career awareness creates a context to understand what it will take to work hard to reach those goals.

The second phase of our plan involves a systematic plan for career exploration. We define this as frequent contact and interaction with those who do the work. We have built a 7-12 life experience curriculum which allows for students to be with industry professionals three to four times per year from grades 7-12 to plan for their individual futures with those who have experience with industries that may be of interest to them. Learning how to interact and network with these individuals are some of the first steps to winning the public victory. By working with their peers and the professionals, students will learn how to listen to understand, how to see the world outside of themselves as a win-win proposition, and how to work together to synergize and become something bigger than themselves. These experiences help them sort through all of the options available to them. It helps them see the deeper aspects of careers and how each one may or may not match their skills, abilities, and interests.

The third phase of our career linked learning system involves work based experiences. These can range from classroom simulations, to real world problem solving, to internships and registered apprenticeships. Having experience in one or more of these lanes continues the development of the public victory and opens the door for students to do the actual work of the careers they are considering. It is important for these to be structured experiences that go beyond an experience where student's only see someone doing the work. The design should include students executing the tasks and receiving feedback from mentors and supervisors.

Our last stage includes...
-   making the post high school decision,
-   having a plan to implement the decision and
-   accountability to executing the decision.

These steps allow the student to not only have purpose and direction; it propels them to employment and professional growth. These stages develop purpose and direction for students. They create relevance for learning and a reason to pursue goals. We strive for every student to have the experience of developing their potential and pursuing excellence.

Delivery Model:

This section is designed to show what takes place in our system in each phase of the model. The phases of the model are as follows:

1. _Career Awareness_ - This phase occurs throughout the curriculum but additional purposeful events begin in kindergarten with our Partnership for Excellent Educational Resources for STEM. In this program teachers are able to sign up for events in their classroom by simply going to this website. These events can take place in person or virtually with local businesses to expose students to careers in the area.

   Our most recent addition includes implementing problem-solution challenges to all of our K-3 students. These events are with virtual pen pals from businesses who send a cell phone video to the class of a problem they are trying to solve. The students then generate solutions to the problem and send them back to the business representatives for feedback. This allows the students to begin to understand careers and the process of problem solving at an early age.

2. _Career Exploration_ - This phase is marked by a 7-12 curriculum that we have developed called the "Life Skills Curriculum". You can find it at this link. These experiences are delivered in classrooms by business and industry professionals in groups of approximately 20 students at a time. The continuum that exists in this curriculum is designed to walk a student through the process of identifying interests, aligning them with abilities, and learning the skills necessary to be successful in their careers. This curriculum is supported by lessons from the Leader in Me in between visits from our community. Our intent is to keep the thought process of career development alive and connect it continuously to the classroom curriculum.

3. _Work-based Learning Options_ - Work based learning is defined for us in four forms. The specific programs are outlined on the WorkSMART Connector site at this link.
   a. _Classroom simulations and visits_ - These are developed in cooperation with businesses to allow students to do real work that would parallel tasks in various careers. These

opportunities are integrated across our K-12 curriculum to align with a wide variety of disciplines.

   b. *Certificate programs* - Students are on site in paid experiences connected to course work at DMACC or Central College and achieve a certificate of program completion in information technologies.
   c. *Certification programs* - Students are in paid internships in early childhood education which lead to a certification in child development associate or CDA.
   d. *Registered apprenticeship programs* - These programs are all based on achieving specific competencies and are recognized by the United States Department of Labor. Completing these programs takes 2,000-3,000 hours in addition to the completion of the competencies. A description can be found at [this link](#) but the apprenticeship programs include the following:
      i. Hospitality/Culinary Arts
      ii. Engineering Assistant
      iii. Welding
      iv. Nursing/Patient Care
      v. Construction Trades

4. *Postsecondary decision and plan execution* - The final stage is for each student to leave high school with a designed plan to be executed. This plan will include an identified career field or occupation, the training or work experience plan to pursue that area, a personal budget for that execution, and an application for the next stage of the plan. We are still working on a one and five year follow-up to see how many students complete their plans.

Our system is also linked to the five essential components of the *ICAP* plan. The overview identifies where each step fits into these components.
   1. Self-understanding
   2. Career information
   3. Career exploration experiences
   4. Postsecondary exploration
   5. Career and postsecondary decision

This will all be implemented under the umbrella of our *Leader in Me* system that we have implemented K-12. This system includes teaching of the seven habits of highly effective people. It leads to each student

understanding how to build trusting relationships with others, how to set goals, and the four disciplines of execution it takes to reach those goals.

The connections between all of these elements is shown in a grade level overview that may be found at [this link](#).

Perkins Alignment and Community Assets:

The comprehensive local needs assessment of the Perkins V program asks schools to look at the elements of how we prepare students for transition into the workplace. In addition, it also takes a deeper look at how the careers we expose students to align with the needs of our local community. This process has led us to several advisory groups in our area that lead our efforts on a regional level.

These efforts begin with an advisory board for WorkSMART Connector that convenes every quarter to look at programming and examine results. The board is made up of senior leaders from companies that are participating in our efforts. We have continued to ask for their support and need to respond by showing them that our efforts are heading toward the results that they need to remain as viable employers in our communities.

The second group is the school connections committee. This group looks at PEERS and other work based learning programs to seek opportunities for growth and to do the work it takes to make this happen. This group meets bi-monthly.

Our third group is the Career Technical Education or CTE advisory group. This group meets twice a year to look at the progress of our CTE programs in the school. It offers advice on skills to add to those programs and ways they can contribute to that skill development. They are a nice complement to completing the community input on our system.

Perkins and Equity:

The Perkins V legislation has an emphasis on equity and equal access to all of our programs of career development. This attention causes us to look at how we expose non-traditional careers to all students regardless of gender and race. Our recruitment events have led to this exposure with assistance from our businesses. We are always looking to show students examples of people who fill roles that they may not have seen before. This has led to some success in our apprenticeship programs but we continue to seek additional ways to build on this.

Professional Development:

It is essential that teachers, school counselors, administrators, and parents understand this system. We have been working on this through the Leader in Me program to help everyone see that we have a role in helping students learn to lead their own lives. Our goal is to move students from being dependent, to independent, and finally helping them operate in a world that needs to be interdependent. There are many aspects that we have discovered are necessary to allow this to happen.

1. Knowledge - All of these groups need to understand the system that exists to make this happen. We have spent two years preparing for this and will continue bi-weekly sessions on this for the next two years at a minimum
2. Scheduling - The delivery of this thinking needs space in the day. Every level of the system has identified designated time for this to occur.
3. Leadership - We have designated teacher leaders who are leading this effort. These are extra duty stipend positions in charge of professional development and leading a team of staff members who facilitate action teams in each building.

Staffing:

We have found it extremely important to have two positions in our system that have dedicated time for this work.

Director of Work-based Learning - This is a position that has been funded by a combination of private business contributions, school contributions, and grants. The director works with the businesses to create connections, work with regional schools, and facilitate the advisory components.

Apprenticeship Coordinator - This position works directly with students as well as workplace mentors. She is responsible for tracking of competencies and certification with the US Department of Labor.

Costs and Funding:

Most costs have been associated with staffing the positions and start up equipment necessary to begin specific training programs. We have combined three sources to meet these needs.

1. Grant funding - We have relied heavily on STEM BEST, Iowa Workforce Development, and Iowa Economic Development grants for start up costs of our different programs.
2. Company support - We have asked for continued contributions from local businesses who benefit from our work based learning programs.
3. School support - The schools have provided in-kind support of time as well as some additional funding to support the two positions. In the future, we intend to pursue operational sharing to cover the school cost of this effort.

Challenges and Barriers:

This is rewarding work but it does not come without some unique challenges. Here are a few things to be aware of that we have learned through our work.

- Every company needs a designated point of contact - While people are very supportive of this work, it can crumble under its complexity if someone at the company does not own the responsibility to lead the effort.
- You still have a school to run - This can feel like additional work and many times it is. It is important to have clear roles defined so that it does not all fall to one person.
- Delayed results - When working with business partners, we need to explain that working with a new kindergarten student does not pay off for decades. We need to all be in this for the long haul.
- The economy has cycles - This work is always important for our students but can be more cyclical for our businesses. Everyone needs to see this as connected to the economy but yet important regardless of conditions. This message is best sent when business is strong.
- Funding is needed - While much of this can be integrated into our curriculum, extras are needed. Be sure to have a plan for how to fund those extra items that make the system work.