

## ENCOURAGING DEEPER LEARNING FOR DES MOINES STUDENTS

*"We greatly appreciate the continued partnership between educators and the business community as we work together to help Iowa's schools meet the challenges and needs of our students and community."*

*—Dr. Tom Narak, Director of Government Relations for the School Administrators of Iowa*

### Closing the skills gap through Deeper Learning.

Building a strong, educated workforce in Des Moines is one of the main goals of the regional Chambers of Commerce and more than 5,000 business members that form the Greater Des Moines Partnership. Recognizing that students will more deeply engage with their coursework when they understand how it ties to their interests, the real world and future careers, the Partnership is bringing Deeper Learning opportunities to the students of Des Moines that will build the core knowledge and skills they need for their futures. The Partnership is also creating a supportive environment for Deeper Learning by bringing the business and education communities together to form a united voice for education reform.

**Focusing on the Whole Employee.** A major aspect of Deeper Learning is developing students' communication, collaboration and creative thinking skills. The Greater Des Moines Partnership is helping students acquire these skills and understand why these skills are equally as important to employers as the lessons students learn from their textbooks.

- **Career Preparation Academy:** The Partnership has created a career preparation academy that helps students link their learning to future careers. The academy works with students to develop skills for landing the job, such as resume building and interview prep. In addition, the academy helps students learn how to be attractive candidates by showing them how to use social media appropriately and build a personal brand – skills that often aren't taught in school.
- **Youth Leadership Initiative:** Funded by the partnership, this initiative provides no-cost leadership and mentoring experiences that connect students to their community.

### Quick Facts: Des Moines

- In 2011, only 31% of students in Iowa were ready for college-level course work. (Source: [Alliance for Excellent Education](#))
- 81% of jobs in Iowa required middle/high skill levels (i.e. some postsecondary education and/or training). However, only 40% of Iowa's adults have some level of postsecondary education. (Source: [Achieve](#))

**The Greater Des Moines Partnership focuses on closing the skills gap among individuals joining the workforce by:**

- Teaching students and adults how to be communicative and confident employees
- Developing the right tools to unite businesses with parents, teachers and students
- Uniting the business community to call for transformative education reform

All programs are chamber-funded with small additional sponsorship from local higher education institutions. They are run by chamber staff with occasional consulting support. The Chamber Board has approved funding for increased investment in workforce development over the next five years.

Through a series of classes focused on topics such as community development, government, financial literacy and more, students gain important life skills and forge a stronger connection with the Greater Des Moines area.

**Making Links, Filling Gaps.** For more than a decade, the Greater Des Moines Partnership and local businesses had been identifying a growing skills gap among individuals entering the workforce. To address this discrepancy, the Partnership has been working to connect students of all ages to the range of careers available and to the skills, coursework, degrees and funding they will need to pursue the careers that match their interests and strengths.

- **Connect 2 Business:** Working with an Iowa-based tech company, the Partnership's Workforce Development Board developed Connect 2 Business (C2B), a tool that allows students and career-transitioning adults to explore their interests with local businesses. Students or adults take a C2B assessment and then businesses within 50 miles can then engage with them based on the interests they have chosen. Interested in healthcare? If a hospital within the radius is hosting a health job fair, the appropriate students and adults will be invited to attend. Internships and job shadows are also available. In addition, the service also helps chart a path to secure those jobs by highlighting options for post-secondary education. C2B is promoted through parent outreach campaigns so that parents can get their children involved and use it themselves.
- **EDGE—Education Drives our Growth Economy:** To measure results, the Partnership is currently developing EDGE. EDGE will be the Chamber's signature regional education initiative, focused on early childhood education, K-12 life, post-secondary programs and lifelong learning. Where C2B measured success by monitoring how many businesses provided mentoring or how many students attended workshops, EDGE aims to assess high school graduation rates, post-secondary engagement and completion and remediation needs. EDGE is a truly business and education initiative, in that the Steering Committee is equally comprised of business and education leaders.
- **Adjusting to the Economy:** In recent years, Iowa's economy has experienced a surge in building and construction. In order to prepare interested students for emerging jobs, the Partnership developed a career exploration rodeo to showcase careers and jobs in these fields. In its first year, 150 students participated. By year three, 600 students were participating and learning about opportunities in emerging Iowan industries.

## Working Together For Effective Education

The Greater Des Moines Partnership understands that a unified voice has a greater impact than individual ones.

To call for meaningful education reform and to share the successes that business coalitions can achieve in education, the Partnership has joined with the Iowa Chamber Alliance, the Iowa Association of Business and Industry and the Iowa Business Council to host a series of [Business Summits for Education Excellence](#).

Each Summit has brought together leading voices from the business community, the K-12 school system, higher education and local government.



**Deeper Learning** uses interactive techniques such as project-based learning and real-world application to engage students in core academics and build the skills they need for success in college and career.

Your Chamber can prepare the future workforce for success in a globally competitive economy by building partnerships across sectors that help students become innovative, collaborative and flexible employees.

Visit [www.desmoinesmetro.com/en/talent\\_development/education](http://www.desmoinesmetro.com/en/talent_development/education) to learn more.