



For Immediate Release

January 18, 2024

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North Ed Career Tech Earns 2 Statewide Honors

MDE's Excellence in Practice Awards Focus on Developing Student Skills, Support for Career Readiness

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech is the recipient of two 2024 [Excellence in Practice](#) awards from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for its work on evidence-based reporting and supporting the regional Jobs for Michigan's Graduates program.

The Excellence in Practice awards are coordinated through MDE's Office of Career and Technical Education and recognize educational institutions that have implemented successful, exemplary career and technical education programs and practices that focus on student outcomes and employment success.

Evidence-Based Reporting Award

North Ed Career Tech is the first tech center in the state to fully transition to evidence-based reporting, and train other teachers, schools and centers on those practices.

Evidence-based reporting is designed to promote a student's deeper understanding and mastery of specific skills through progressive, demonstrated learning, rather than the more traditional approach of grading based on how well a student performs on periodic assessments.

Evidence-based reporting is recognized among educators as a strong approach to developing students. As proof, administrators point to the direct credit and scholarship programs Career Tech students can access with higher educational institutions like Michigan Technological University, Grand Valley State University, Ferris State University and Northwestern Michigan College.

“The ultimate goal at Career Tech is to prepare students for life after graduation, whether they choose to pursue a college degree or immediate entry into the workforce,” said Pat Lamb, assistant superintendent of Career and Technical Education at North Ed. “Rather than trying to just memorize the correct answer on a test, evidence-based reporting allows students to prove their learning and demonstrate their skills. Employers and colleges recognize that, and they can see that the students coming out of our programs have literally practiced and refined their skills, and they're ready for the next stage of life.”

Career Tech staff had been transitioning the school's grading system toward evidence-based reporting over the past several years, with all [22 programs](#) now using the approach. The model has been adopted by schools across the state due to its impact on student success.

Regional Jobs for Michigan's Graduates

Regionally, the [Jobs for Michigan's Graduates](#) (JMG) program is administered through a partnership among North Ed Career Tech, Wexford-Missaukee Career Technical Center and Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District, with support from Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works. JMG is the Michigan affiliate of the national [Jobs for America's Graduates](#), one of the largest and most successful student-centered programs that help young people achieve their fullest potential in education and employment.

Once enrolled in a JMG program, students are assigned a JMG specialist to assist them with customized services and support designed to meet a student's individual needs. That could include connecting a student to community resources, transportation assistance such as gas cards, supplying work clothing and more.

"The JMG program is about helping students overcome barriers so they can find a career pathway that leads to success," said Lisa Baldyga, the JMG specialist at North Ed. "In addition to supporting students with individual needs, we help them develop the skills every employer looks for in an employee, like communication and leadership skills, financial management, developing goal-setting behaviors and learning how to collaborate with others."

At the high school level, the program includes competencies in career development, job attainment, job survival, leadership and self-development, personal skills, life survival skills, and workplace and economic empowerment. Through JMG programs, students are taught how to develop relationships with peers, school staff, and business and industry representatives, in addition to gaining project-based learning experiences through which they address real-world challenges and problems. Students can also get connected to job-shadowing opportunities and paid work experiences with local employers and industry professionals.

Last year, 346 students participated in the JMG program regionally, with 99% graduating from high school. Of those, 82% pursued employment, the military or college after high school. Of those entering the workforce, 81% found full-time employment.

For more information about North Ed Career Tech, visit www.NorthwestEd.org/Career-Tech/

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