

OVER 20,000 ENROLLMENT

Building a Seaworthy Partnership

Newport News Public Schools, Newport News, Va.



A member of the Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding Apprentice School works with a Huntington Middle School student during one of the regular Career Readiness Skills workshops.

PROGRAM NAME

Shipyards Builds Student Success

DISTRICT DILEMMA

The mission of Newport News Public Schools (NNPS) is to educate all students for college, career, and citizen readiness. Key to fulfilling this mission is the Career Pathways initiative, which includes, among other goals, career exploration in middle school. School leaders knew that connecting middle school students to people doing specific jobs in the community would have the most impact. With the largest shipbuilder in the nation, Northrop Grumman, located just blocks from the school, leaders saw an opportunity to help students explore high-demand careers. At the same time, the shipyard was looking for a way to help meet a huge future demand for qualified employees.

SOLUTION

The shipyard immediately began building relationships with the students and staff by attending back-to-school nights, open houses, and other school events. Shipyard staff created a Shipbuilders Club, established a mentoring program, and helped to develop a Career Readiness

Skills curriculum taught in grades six to eight. Students have become familiar with many professions and trades and have learned that they have the ability to join this industry. This all-out effort to become part of the school has led to significant motivation on the part of students to participate in the Career Pathways initiative and has encouraged students to master the essential skills emphasized in the Northrop Grumman Career Readiness Skills curriculum.

THE BOARD'S INVOLVEMENT

The board strongly supports the goal of helping all students become college, career, and citizen ready, and authorized resources for the Career Pathways initiative. Board members participated in meetings and conferences designed to attract major business partners and encouraged them to take a leap of faith to transform the lives of students in NNPS. Part of the board's effort involved a Business-Education Summit held in October 2009 that drew hundreds of business leaders and made career readiness a major topic of discussion in Newport News. The board also authorized funding for a Career Pathways staff position to build partnerships such as the one between Huntington Middle School and Northrop Grumman.

RESULTS

Students received, through interaction with many professionals, hands-on experiences that triggered their strengths, passion, and curiosity about potential careers. They learned the key components of a successful interview and how to fill out job applications. They had an opportunity to learn a multitude of cognitive and life skills from a dedicated group of professionals—and to just enjoy their company during school dances, basketball games, school rallies, lunch periods, and field trips. Through the Shipbuilders Club, students entered the LEGO competition sponsored by the Virginia Ship Repair Association. Their work won second place in a ship design competition sponsored by the Nauticus museum in Norfolk, Va.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Patrick Finneran, director of corporate and government relations, at patrick.finneran@nn.k12.va.us. The district's website is at www.nnschools.org.



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