



MV CONNECT

Your Connecting Activities Newsletter - September 2020

Linking schools to college and careers!

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Whittier Regional Vocational Technical

Mass Connecting Activities
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/connect/>

Fall Planning: We're Here!

We're here for you! *Connecting Activities* continues to be committed to carrying out our mission to link classroom learning to the world of work. Our youth counselors are available to collaborate with you in designing rich opportunities for virtual career awareness and exploration.

These are challenging times and the rise of virtual only services is one of the changes we are all learning and adapting to as we plan for meaningful school to career services.

Helping students make informed career and college decisions in an environment of uncertainty and shifting norms is more critical than ever. As we navigate our new normal, we will continue to provide your students with mutually-agreed upon Career Development Education (CDE) experiences that align with your priorities.

See the chart below for a list of career development workshops available online now. In addition to online workshops, we are able to meet individually with students via Zoom, organize virtual industry specific panels and arrange informational interviews virtually. Contact your youth counselor today to discuss how we can support you in your workforce readiness initiatives.

Career Development Workshops for Virtual Learning		
 AWARENESS	 EXPLORATION	 IMMERSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Communication • Discovering Interests, Skills, Strengths • Identify Work Values • Financial Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Interest Profile • Career Goals & Pathways • Interviewing Skills • Planning Your Future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing Your Career Pathway • College Exploration

YouthWorks Summer: Finishing Strong

It's been a busy summer. Even though the number of work-site opportunities were reduced, Commonwealth Corporation did an amazing job of retooling and re-positioning to provide YouthWorksStrong (YW) participants a summer rich with learning, career growth and support.



Statewide:

- **4,405** youth were placed
- 2,452 were enrolled in projects



Over **170 area youth** experienced a summer of learning, career growth, and in-person job placement. This year's program provided youth the opportunity to learn or enhance their career readiness and employability skills, experience career-focused project-based learning in the areas of Health and Wellness, Podcast, and Social Media. And 15 youth successfully completed an IT career pathway training.

We were able to offer this summer of learning and work thanks to the support and partnership with the school districts, community-based youth organizations, and local employers. The funding received from the Commonwealth Corporation made it possible for our area youth to have a meaningful and rewarding YouthWorks Summer experience.

Learning with You: Our Summer Experience on Zoom



As we've all been learning how to provide quality educational and work opportunities for youth, we asked a couple of the YouthWorks facilitators what they learned from their experience. Though virtual teaching was difficult it also provided a learning opportunities for everyone as

counselors and educators, and a new level of respect for the work you do everyday.

What would you add to this list of the facilitators' lessons?

- Create a shared calendar, and edit frequently with specifics and updates, to organize and structure the time together. Review the schedule at the start-of-day and end-of-day.
- Develop routines for youth to manage the flow of their days.
- Design activities with flexibility based on the attention of the group - interested, focused, and involved or overloaded. Give youth a choice of activities to be done now, later or tomorrow.
- Provide specific, step by step guidance in both oral and written instructions. Review the day's work before closing out a session.
- Keep sessions structured and interactive with a variety of different ways to participate and talk to different people.
- Take quick breaks to grab a snack and move around to change focus and body position.
- Keep lists (Excel spreadsheets) containing the youth's names, emails and phone numbers, and notes on attendance and various activities.
- Keep your virtual door open. Feeling connected and cared about is more important than ever. Build in time to let students speak and time for you to speak to them in small groups and one-on-one.

"I am a high school teacher and I will be teaching remotely this fall... the YW program helped me to see that I am ready to go this fall! Teachers, we got this!"

A Look Inside Project-Based Learning

One way of enhancing learning and career readiness is designing project-based learning that closely replicates the work experience. The YW program gave Tina, a local high school teacher, business owner and YW facilitator, the chance to try out project-based learning. Her school has been taking a hard look at grading and is about to launch a new system focused on final products and demonstrated learning. The YW program provided a perfect example of how students can be completely motivated by the end goal and create incredible projects that require them to manage their time, work in teams, think creatively and inventively, and perform professionally.

Project Based Learning: Social Media Design for Small Businesses and Nonprofits

The five-week program began with learning about social media and some of the basics of social media design while also working on team building and group work skills. Guest speakers, who use social media to promote their brands, came to give advice and answer questions.

After some pre-work, participants were split into groups based on interest and the work they had done on team building. The groups assigned roles of Project Manager, Brand Manager, Facebook Manager, and Instagram Manager and had specific tasks based on those roles. Each group picked two clients, a local business and a local nonprofit.

The groups met with their clients three times - an initial consult to get to know the organization and find out what they wanted to do to improve their social media, a second meeting to show what work the groups had done to get feedback and to verify if on the right track; and a final meeting for a formal presentation of with suggested steps with mock-posts for the organizations to improve their social media presence.

In the process of doing the work, youth learned about teamwork, adapting a project to meet the needs of a client, networking, designing goals, researching competition, and simple graphic design and social media strategies. [The end results were incredible! To see for yourself, view the [Zoom Meeting Presentations](#) (toggle through to the 1 hour mark).]

Innovation Pathways Updates

The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) is continuing to partner with DESE to provide coaching and technical support to Innovation Pathways designees in the 2020-21 school year.

The Innovation Pathways toolkit, released in May, has already been updated based on your feedback. The updates include:

1. A new, comprehensive FAQ Guide.
2. A [self-assessment tool](#) for all existing or new programs organized around the 5 guiding principles.
3. A new [Career Development Education Guide](#), released by DESE, provides guidance to more effectively understand, develop, implement, and optimize career development education programs and practices in MA.
4. Additional resources and tools to support external partnerships, work-based learning, advising and mentorship.



Upcoming Dates

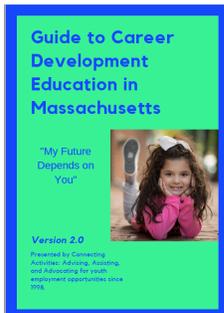
For **new** Innovation Pathways program applicants seeking designation in Spring 2021:

- Part A Application: due October 30.
- Last online [drop-in office hours](#): September 22, 9-11:30am. If planning on dropping in, please [register](#).
- Innovation Pathways Design Institute: October 1.

For **existing** Innovation Pathways designees, a series of PLCs will launch in October. Groups will meet throughout the school year to support ongoing implementation challenges and support learning across the Innovation Pathways Community of Practice.

Quick links

[Innovation Pathways](#)
[DESE Innovation Pathways](#)



Now Available: Career Development Education Guide (CDE), v.2

The [updated CDE guide](#), version 2.0, provides fresh examples and perspectives drawing from the work of the *Connecting Activities* network statewide. The guide looks at a continuum of career development experiences, from **career awareness** to **career exploration** to **career immersion**, providing clarity on key terminology and ideas to improve programmatic delivery and design. The guide is divided into five sections: 1) describing what CDE is, 2) the importance of CDE, 3) Massachusetts specific initiatives and tools, 4) elements of a strong CDE including stakeholder support, and 5) creating a vision for building a workforce ready for tomorrow's jobs.

We're Ready

Even with all the uncertainty –
we're ready to provide you with in-person or virtual *Connecting Activities*.

A New Office and Role for Susan

After 10 years and bringing thousands of dollars into the region in support of youth, Susan Almono, former Deputy Director of the MMVWB, has moved on. She is now the Coordinator of Grants, Workforce Development & After School/Evening CTE Programs for the Greater Lawrence Technical School.

We are delighted we haven't lost her expertise and support in the region. She promises to remain involved with everything workforce in the Merrimack Valley and looks forward to continued collaboration.

We are grateful for Susan's time with the MMVWB and wish her the best in her new role!

Career Development Education (CDE) = Awareness + Exploration + Immersion

MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board
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