



A Union of Professionals
AFT Innovation Fund



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

PEORIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS. LOCAL 780





PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

PROGRAM GOALS

- To closely align career pathways for high school students with local job opportunities by creating a searchable online platform (Career Cruising) to connect industry partners with students for internships and other opportunities.
- To launch Greater Peoria Works career centers to better identify and match internship candidates with potential employers
- To expand early college credit opportunities with Illinois Central College by collaborating on a pathways framework that provides course sequencing for each of the 16 career clusters for high school students.
- To expand partnerships between the Peoria Public Schools system and businesses to a regional model.

Summary

As part of the AFT's 2015 Promising Pathways initiative to expand career and technical education programs, the Peoria Federation of Teachers received a grant from the AFT Innovation Fund to collaborate with the Peoria Public Schools, the mayor's office, the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council and a host of other regional business and education partners to closely align career pathways for high school students with local job opportunities.

Together, the PFT and its partners have created a campaign called Greater Peoria Works, which features a searchable online platform called Career Cruising that connects industry partners with high school students looking for internships and other job-related opportunities. In the 2016-17 school year alone, using the Career Cruising platform, the partners placed 70 students in internships. To date, more than 100 industry partners have signed on, offering more than 400 opportunities for Peoria students in fields ranging from health services, to manufacturing, to arts and entertainment, to city government.

In addition to providing the link between the school district and local industries, the PFT and its partners are giving students a leg up to connect to these job-related opportunities. Greater Peoria Works career centers—places where students can go to learn about how to build a resume, prepare for an interview and use the online platform—have been established in three traditional public high schools: Peoria High School, Manual Academy and Richwoods High School. PFT counselors have been instrumental in providing this support, as well as recent high school graduates who have been hired to go back into their schools and help students through the internship search and preparation process.

Going forward, the PFT is working on expanding its Career Cruising platform and the Greater Peoria Works campaign regionally, and will be investing in regional internship development and building a more robust support system for students and teachers in Peoria through counseling services.

Program Leaders

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President, Peoria Federation of Teachers
- **BRENT BAKER**
Peoria Pathways coordinator,
Greater Peoria Economic Development Council
- **PAULA DAVIS**
Board member, Illinois Central College

Community, Industry, Postsecondary and District Partners

- **PATHWAYS STAKEHOLDERS**
Peoria Federation of Teachers
City of Peoria
Peoria Public Schools
Illinois Central College
Midstate College
Greater Peoria Economic Development Council
Peoria Regional Office of Education
Peoria Educational Region for
Employment and Career Training
Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce
CEO Council
Illinois Student Assistance Commission

• STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROVIDERS

Advanced Technology Services
Alliance Benefit Group
Apostolic Christian Home—Timber Ridge
Beachlers Vehicle Care & Repair
Bradley University
Caterpillar Inc.
City of Peoria
CSE Software
Easterseals
Excel Foundry and Machine
Gifts in the Moment Foundation
Greater Peoria Sanitary District
Hy-Vee
Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission
O'Brien Steel
OSF HealthCare and
OSF Saint Francis Medical Center
Peoria Civic Center
Peoria Public Schools
UnityPoint Health—Methodist and Proctor

Program Contacts

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“By working with the community, businesses, educators and elected leaders, the Peoria Federation of Teachers and Peoria Public Schools are opening doors for their students and exposing them to good-paying, high-demand jobs. They are creating that essential link between school and work by placing so many students in meaningful internships in Peoria. And they have been so successful, the effort is expanding regionally to the five surrounding counties. Peoria is an exceptional example of how career and technical education should be modeled throughout the country.”

—Randi Weingarten, AFT President

PFT PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

Over the last two years, the AFT Innovation Fund has provided the critical support in building a robust local partnership between several diverse stakeholders, connecting local union leadership with school and city administration and industry leaders to work toward more-intentionally connecting students to career opportunities. This work has underlined the importance of a local approach to building strong, equitable educational systems in the overall wellness of our community.

During the first year of our grant, we encountered challenges in creating internships for students, efficiently preparing students for internship opportunities and guiding students toward careers. Over the last year, however, we have addressed these challenges, successfully placing 70 interns at 18 local employers, by leveraging the mayor's office to recruit local employers, piloting our Greater Peoria Works career centers in our public high schools to assist students in connecting with internships, and establishing a working group of Peoria public school counselors and Illinois Central College staff to sequence

16 intentional career pathways in Peoria public high schools. Last year, 350 high school students earned early college credits through Illinois Central College in their home high schools.

This foundational work and union support has provided a proof of concept that has garnered regional interest. Now, with a third year of AFT funding, we are not only continuing our work in the Peoria Public Schools, but also working more closely with our partners at Illinois Central College to begin building a regional career development framework that engages public school districts from the surrounding five counties in building career pathways and connecting students to careers at local employers. The support of the AFT Innovation Fund has initiated a paradigm shift in public education in Greater Peoria.

JEFF ADKINS-DUTRO
PFT President



The AFT Innovation Fund was established in 2009 to identify, nurture and bring to scale union- and educator-led innovations in public education. As an initiative of the AFT, the fund's reach is nationwide. To date, the fund has made more than 45 investments. These investments position the AFT and its affiliates, in collaboration with school districts and the communities in which they work, as leaders and engaged partners in improving outcomes for our members and the people they serve.

OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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