



arizona business & education coalition

# ABEC MIDDLE SCHOOL CAREER EXPLORATION PROJECT (AMSCEP) 2012-2018 SIX YEARS IN REVIEW

## MISSION STATEMENT

Facilitating business & education partnerships that guide middle school students to discovery and nurturing of career aspirations, and connecting success in school to success in the workforce.

**Prepared by: Debra Raeder, Project Director**

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Exploring  
Career  
Interests

## AMSCEP 2012-2018 SIX YEARS IN REVIEW



ABEC, as one of its strategic goals, advocates for effective public policy and sound accountability that increases student performance for every student and closes the achievement gap. ABEC wants all Arizona high school graduates to be prepared for either postsecondary education or the workforce, and so recognizes that there must be a focus on the “forgotten middle” – those middle school years when our youth start to make informed or uninformed decisions about their futures.

The **ABEC Middle School Career Exploration Project (AMSCEP)** formally began in 2012, supported by a NAU GEARUP grant, and has been implemented in three school districts in Maricopa County and one school district in Pinal County. The AMSCEP was designed to assist 7th and 8th graders in the transition to high school by bridging the gap between rigorous academics and its relevancy to real working environments. By creating meaningful business and education partnerships, the AMSCEP provides a framework for middle school students to experience activities, presentations and mentoring from experts in key occupations that lead to discovery and nurturing of career aspirations and connection of education to the real world of work.

The AMSCEP is inspiring students and helping them to become their own best advocate as they transition into high school, to identify and select appropriate and rigorous coursework, and to put them on the path to success. Business partners are eager and excited to participate in the AMSCEP primarily because it provides a meaningful role for shaping career modules and providing classroom presentations and hands-on activities that support students in recognizing and pursuing career pathways that will help meet future economic and workforce demands.

ABEC understands that school resources are limited, and that the time businesses have to participate is valuable, and therefore committed to developing and implementing a project that is low-cost, flexible, organized, transparent, and sustainable and excites middle school students about their education and future world of work. ABEC assists schools in developing AMSCEPs that provide:

- **Collaboration with Business Partners** to leverage expertise and resources for providing career exploration activities that align current and future workforce needs with the AMSCEP design.
- **Career Exploration Activities**, opportunities, curriculum, and field trips customized to meet the needs of each school and the students they serve, driven by local economic engines and participating business partners and community leaders.
- **Professional Development** that prepares teachers in implementing career exploration software and/or curriculum and activities.
- **Parent Engagement** including parent meetings, surveys, and information and activities related to the AMSCEP.

## **TARGET POPULATION & CHALLENGES**

The AMSCEP specifically targets schools that do not have the capacity to implement career exploration activities on a large scale. Notably all schools currently implementing an AMSCEP are in Title I, non-unified school districts. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (last updated May, 2018), *“Prior research found that the risk factors of ... living in poverty are associated with poor educational outcomes, including low achievement scores, having to repeat a grade, and dropping out of high school.”* The goal continues to specifically target students who may have limited opportunity and access to career exploration activities.

In addition to these statistics, most middle school students have only a rudimentary understanding of how school relates to work. In a 2015 report by America’s Promise Alliance, 20.3% of high school drop outs surveyed indicated it was because *“school was not relevant to their life”*. The AMSCEP is providing students with an understanding of how school coursework translates into success in the workplace and achieving career goals.

Middle school is also the time when student begin to disengage. According to a **2012 Gallup Poll**, student engagement tends to drop the longer students are in school—in elementary school, about eight in ten students are engaged in school, that drops to six in ten in middle school. The AMSCEP models not only provide opportunities that connect what students are learning in school to the real world of work, but helps students to connect to school, teachers, peers, and workforce mentors.

### **AMSCEP Models**

Over the past six years, AMSCEPs were developed and implemented in the following schools/districts:

**Casa Grande Elementary School District** (Casa Grande Middle School, Cactus Middle School and Villago Middle School)

**Osborn Elementary School District** (Osborn Middle School)

**Glendale Elementary School District** (Glendale Landmark School, Sunset Vista School)

**Phoenix Elementary School District** (Lowell School)

According to a recent middle school career exploration research project by the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education, the AMSCEP is the only model of its kind. While there does exist a variety of approaches to career exploration, too frequently these programs consist of a single, brief unit or activities delivered on a one time basis e.g. career fairs, a classroom presentations or a singular field trip to a business site. The AMSCEP provides a framework for schools and business partners to choose/modify/design the “delivery model” that best fits their needs and schedules while providing students with 32-to-90 hours of direct career exploration activities, depending on the model implemented. Over the past six-years, three different models have emerged and demonstrated success:

- **Week-long Summer Career Camps** – A four- or five-day summer camp with 32 to 40 hours of career exploration activities provided for each student.
- **Monthly Career Day** – One day a month for three-hours during the entire academic year resulting in approximately 27 hours of career exploration activities provide for each student.
- **Career Academies** – One day a week for three hours during the entire academic year providing approximately 90 hours of career exploration activities for each student.

*“Middle school students need to start connecting to their own personal vision for what career or work they like and want to do and connect that vision with their education. Our business partners are helping to make these connections possible. The AMSCEP is a successful and meaningful model for business-education partnerships that is positively impacting the lives of students.”* Gina Schmitz, Landmark School Principal, GESD.

Over six years, the AMSCEP has delivered close to a 1,000 hours of direct career exploration activities, through 90 unique career modules, to over 2,400 middle school students. It is estimated that 200+ business and community partners have participated in the AMSCEP through financial and/or in-kind support, classroom presentations and field trip opportunities. The financial and in-kind support from participating business partners exceeds \$250,000. (See attached Exhibit 1.)

While there is currently only anecdotal data to support the success and effectiveness of the AMSCEP, there is simply no doubt of the positive impact the project has on students. There is a definite role for the AMSCEP in filling the current void of middle school career exploration programs while providing engaging and exciting hands-on activities and projects through a successful framework for business/school partnerships.

### **ARTICLES, AWARDS, RECOGNITION & COMPETITIONS**

It can be argued that one way to measure success is whether the project can garner news media interest; win local, state or national awards or recognition; or that students in the project are also participating in or winning local, regional, state or national competitions. Proudly, the AMSCEP can boast success in all of these areas as the project has grown and expanded over the past six years. Additionally, most, if not all of the AMSCEPs continue to be recognized and promoted on school/district websites, through school newsletters and informational materials to parents, and through various video presentations, some of which are currently featured on YouTube. Various business and community partners have also featured the AMSCEPs in their own promotional materials. A few key recognitions include:

- The Arizona Chapter of the Associated General Contractors Young Constructors Forum received the 2017 Associated General Contractors' Community Special Recognition Award for work with and support of the Landmark Construction Module.
- An article on the AMSCEP was published in the AZEDNews in August 2017 – <http://azednews.com/schools-raise-funds-partner-community-ensure-student-activities-continue/>.
- The Landmark Fire CERT Module received a 2017 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness (ICP) Awards Honorable Mention. The winners and honorable mentions were announced through a national multimedia news release in September 2017 and shared at <https://www.ready.gov/awards>.
- Landmark School was awarded first runner-up for the prestigious WestMarc Best of the West, Educational Program Award in November 2017.
- ABEC received the ACPE 2017 Pathways Award for the AMSCEP at the ACPE Higher Education 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in December 2017.
- In 2016 and 2017, two Landmark teams, as part of the IT Modules, participated in the First Lego League Robotics regional competition. In 2017, Sunset Vista also had two teams from the IT Module participate in a regional competition.
- In 2016 and 2017, the Landmark Health Module partnered with the Moon Valley High School student health care club, AzHOSA, and students competed both years at the state convention winning top awards and the opportunity for students to compete each year at the national competition in Florida and Texas respectively.



## **THE FUTURE OF THE AMSCEP**

It is understood that career development is a lifelong process and it is imperative that students begin to understand, plan and prepare for career interests no later than the middle school years if they are to successfully enter into and transverse secondary and post-secondary education and training. To ensure this exposure occurs, ABEC, with continued support from the NAU GEARUP Grant, is now engaging in a planning year for the purpose of expanding the AMSCEP statewide, particularly in more rural counties. “Many rural schools and districts face vastly inequitable funding and simply cannot provide the opportunities that many suburban and urban schools do”, said Robert Mahaffey (the executive director of the Rural School and Community Trust, based in Washington, D.C.) in a report by AZEDNEWS in June 2017. These are the schools/counties that will be targeted to implement an AMSCEP during this second six-year phase. Current goals for this planning year include:

- 1. Forming an ABEC AMSCEP Leadership Team to support and develop the expansion of the AMSCEP statewide.**
  - Plan a business roundtable of education and business partners whose goal will be to specifically identify the means and methods to develop the growth of the AMSCEP statewide including regionalizing sites for career exploration activities.
- 2. Identifying additional schools/districts to participate in the AMSCEP.**
  - Providing support to (a) establish local leadership teams in at least three counties; and (b) begin the process for identifying or developing a delivery model with the goal of implementing AMSCEPs in each county no later than the 2019-2020 school year.
- 3. Pursuing and securing funding streams to support a statewide AMSCEP.**
  - Expansion of the AMSCEP will necessitate maintaining current grant funding and identifying and securing additional grants/sources of funding.
- 4. Identifying potential partners interested in collaborating on development of a plan (and budget) to evaluate the effectiveness of the AMSPEP in conjunction with its expansion, including collection of data appropriate to answering questions relevant to assessing effectiveness.**

The interest in and need for programs like the AMSCEP continues to grow not only in Arizona but across the nation. The AMSCEP is a project that has been developed, matured and tested over the past six years with demonstrated success in building a viable, successful, meaningful and sustainable framework for education and business to partner. ABEC is now prepared to link hands with other local, state and national partners working on middle school career exploration efforts to grow and expand the AMSCEP statewide.

The AMSCEP is a proven model for business and education to develop sustainable partnerships through locally driven career modules that guide middle school students to discovery and nurturing of career aspirations, connects success in school to success in the workforce, and provides another link for meeting future economic and workforce demands.



**Exhibit 1**

<b>AMSCEPS IMPLEMENTED AND STUDENTS SERVED YEAR (OF GRANT)</b>	<b>PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS</b> <i>*Operating without ABEC direct support</i>	<b># OF CAREER CAMPS/ ACADEMIES</b>	<b># OF STUDENTS SERVED</b>	<b># OF HOURS PER STUDENT</b>
2012-2013 (YEAR 1)	Casa Grande Elementary School District	1	25	36
	Phoenix Elementary School District	2	25	32
2013-2014 (YEAR 2)	Casa Grande Elementary School District	2	148	36
	Phoenix Elementary School District	2	50	32
2014-2015 (YEAR 3)	Casa Grande Elementary School District	5	163	36
	Osborn School District	5	134	32
	Phoenix Elementary School District	3	51	32
2015-2016 (YEAR 4)	Casa Grande Elementary School District*	7	210	36
	Osborn School District	5	125	32
	Glendale Elementary School District	9	200	32/90
	Phoenix Elementary School District*	2	22	32
2016-2017 (YEAR 5)	Casa Grande Elementary School District*	7	222	36
	Osborn School District	7	125	32
	Glendale Elementary School District	12	360	32/90
	Phoenix Elementary School District	3	170	48
2017-2018 (YEAR 6)	Casa Grande Elementary School District*	8	160	32
	Osborn School District*	3 projected	75 projected	36
	Glendale Elementary School District	6	200	32/90
	Phoenix Elementary School District	1	20	32
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>2,485</b>	<b>927</b>