



Greater Peoria CareerSpark FAQs

Q: What is GP CareerSpark?

A: GP CareerSpark is a hands-on career expo for all 8th Graders from Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Mason, and Logan Counties, held on October 23rd and 24th at the Peoria Civic Center.

Q: Who can participate?

A: All 8th Graders from Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Mason, and Logan County schools are invited to participate in GP CareerSpark.

Q: Who is planning and leading this event?

A: A coalition of Greater Peoria educators, organizations and representatives from over 100 companies working in partnership on the Greater Peoria Pathways initiative, led by the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council. These companies have currently committed approximately 2,000 volunteers to engage with students throughout the day.

Q: How much does it cost?

A: There is no fee for schools to participate. All materials, including hands-on curriculum, GP CareerSpark string bags for students and lanyards for teachers, industry-provided materials and a keepsake program guide, will be provided.

Q: Which businesses will be represented at GP CareerSpark?

A: Over 100 businesses have committed resources, volunteers and industry experts. The Greater Peoria region has a vested interest in impacting academic and career success for students in Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Mason, and Logan County. See Industry Section for a list of GP CareerSpark companies.

Q: What industries will be represented?

A: Industries with high-demand jobs and careers are represented and divided into eight industry clusters: Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics; Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Architecture, Engineering and Construction; Business and Finance; Government, Law and Public Safety; Health and Life Sciences; Hospitality and Tourism; Technology

Q: Is GP CareerSpark a job fair?

A: No. Students will have quality interactions with skilled and professional workers who work directly in these jobs and will have a number of hands-on opportunities to utilize equipment and participate in interactions that actually occur within the industries.

Q: What if my school needs transportation to the event?

A: Most schools will use their own transportation to get to and from GP CareerSpark. If a participating school requires assistance with transportation, please let us know and we will work with you to provide assistance. We do not want transportation issues to impact your participation.

Q: What is the schedule for the day?

A: GP CareerSpark will run for two days. Schools will attend on one day only during a designated time slot for your school. Schools may break up their days to bring different classes on each day. Students will interact with a host of skilled and professional workers for a total of a 2 hour hands-on experience. These adults will receive prior training, and be prepared to engage students in planning for their futures.

Q: I am bringing a large group. Will there be volunteers assigned to my group during the event?

A: Yes! There will be hundreds of trained volunteers from Greater Peoria businesses and schools. Volunteers will meet you at your bus, guide students through the zones, engage students in activities and career-related discussions and assist with exiting them back to the bus.

Q: With a variety of college and career readiness activities out there, how is GP CareerSpark different?

A: GP CareerSpark is modeled after similar hands-on career expos that have been successfully implemented in several other U.S. cities, including Indianapolis, IN, Mobile, AL, Nashville, TN and Portland, OR. Over a period of a few years, best practices have been determined, metrics have been captured and a proven track record of success has been established. GP CareerSpark is the first of its kind in Illinois. Participation is expected to reduce drop-out rates, increase graduation rates, and increase students' ability to plan for a successful future.

Q: What can my students expect to get out of attending GP CareerSpark?

A: GP CareerSpark is meant to "spark" an interest in students. Through participation in GP CareerSpark, students will learn about themselves – their skills, interests and values for workplace readiness and will learn about industries and occupations in demand. Students will have a better understanding of the courses to take in high school, a track for post-secondary and a clear career pathway identified.

Q: How will students prepare to attend GP CareerSpark?

A: The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council, with the help of Junior Achievement of Central Illinois, makes it easy! Teachers will receive online training and materials will be provided. Students will participate in 3-5 sessions delivered by their classroom teacher. As a part of the curriculum, students will take a career interest assessment and utilize their results to guide them through the industry clusters at the event. After students attend GP CareerSpark, teachers will deliver one 30 minute session to recap and follow up from the event.

Q: How long will students spend in each GP CareerSpark zone?

A: Students will spend 30 minutes in each of the 4 zones. During this time they will actively participate or observe hands-on activities to demonstrate real jobs within the industry.

Q: How does GP CareerSpark live on past the event?

A: There will be opportunities for students to continue to engage with GP CareerSpark businesses, including future job shadow and/or internship opportunities. It is encouraged that teachers share career related resources and GP CareerSpark information with parents. Contact Kate Cundiff at the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council for more information. Her email is kcundiff@greaterpeoriaedc.org, and her office phone number is 309-495-5959.