



MAKING AN

IMPACT

Annual Year in Review - **FY2024**

Stark Education Partnership (SEP) provides a much needed support system to local workforce and education entities by operating as a **CATALYST** for implementing new programs, acts as a **CONNECTOR** of people and organizations, and is a trusted **CORNERSTONE** throughout Stark County.

The 35-year nonprofit organization continues to implement its vision to build generations of successful individuals who fulfill their potential and grow roots in Stark County by strengthening relationships between Stark County's workforce and education entities. Through focused efforts, SEP is seeing its vision come to life as we continue **TAKING IDEAS TO IMPLEMENTATION – WHILE DOING SO IN A MANNER THAT ENSURES IMPACT.**

We enthusiastically report on the progress of that impact!

STARK Education
Partnership inc.

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Mission & Vision



Mission: Stark Education Partnership is a catalyst, engaging and collaborating with education, business, civic and community stakeholders to drive sustainable improvement and innovation to provide all students with education and career success.



Vision: To build generations of successful individuals who fulfill their potential and grow roots in Stark County.



Values: Our success is wholly dependent upon the success of partner organizations and the students we serve. SEP leverages six values to advance this goal: respect, expertise, catalyst, engagement, responsibility, and focus.



Strategic Plan

SEP's strategic plan – in place since May 2022 – reflects the needs and desires of the Stark County community and is designed to work synergistically with other community organizations. The plan focuses on three significant, interrelated strategies that work together to accomplish SEP's vision.

- **Strategy 1:** Create pathways to in-demand jobs through talent development – SEP's primary focus.
- **Strategy 2:** Foster best practices, innovation, and technology in education
- **Strategy 3** – Enable strategic action through communication, data, and research

Working at the Intersection

Underlying all of SEP's work is a belief that individuals thrive, as does the community they are part of, when we create opportunities for an individual's interests and abilities to find their alignment with local career opportunities.

SEP's strategies work at the intersection of each student's interests, abilities, and opportunities. SEP looks to make an impact by ensuring individuals have a greater opportunity to identify their interests, develop in-demand skills, and connect to local job opportunities.



PRIMARY FOCUS

Strategy 1 – Career Pathways

SEP's primary strategy is about creating and strengthening connections between employers and education through career-connected learning (CCL). Many milestones have been reached over the past year, including those listed here:

- Implemented **YouScience** Aptitude and Career Discovery assessments in partner middle and high schools to determine students' career interests and aptitudes, and in turn to connect them with local career opportunities.
- Hired two **Career Champions** to work directly with students in partner schools implementing YouScience exploration and using the results to match students with CCL opportunities.
- Increased the number of **workforce partners** to 69 and **school partners** to 22, providing numerous opportunities for students.
- **Worksite-Based CCL** events include field trips, job shadows, micro-internships, internships, and other events that take place at a worksite. During the 2023-24 school year, 129 work-based touchpoints occurred with 916 students participating.
- **School-Based CCL** activities include workforce speakers, career fairs, videos and other activities that have a career focus and occur in a school building. During the 2023-24 school year, partner schools hosted 109 such events, impacting 2,915 students.
- Completed five new **company videos** – ten in total now – with two more in production. Each professionally produced video highlights various job opportunities at a specific company. All of the videos are posted on SEP'S website and are made available for every Stark County school to use in their career programming efforts.
- **AmeriCorps College & Career Guides** help students discover their passions and purposes. This year's three Guides – located in Alliance, Canton, and Massillon high schools – served more than 1,400 students.



- **Stark Tank** encourages innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. With SEP coordinating the college-level event, local business owners/CEOs acted as “sharks” (judges) and awarded a total of \$25,000 to college students for this year's winning pitches.
- Entered into a three-year agreement with the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce to facilitate their monthly **Education Committee** meetings.

Additional Strategy 1 Efforts: Actively Engaged Higher Education Leaders

Dr. Tom Botzman, SEP's Post-Secondary Strategist, connects SEP with local colleges and universities. This post-secondary work includes the following:



- 1) SEP **hosts roundtables** with the local presidents and campus leaders to inform the activities of SEP related to college students. The presidents have identified areas of focus, such as recruitment and retention, transfer students, and sharing information about veteran programming.
- 2) SEP acted as a connector to join regional higher education institutions together to **create reverse transfer protocols**. These protocols create pathways for students to transition from a two-year to a four-year program and receive the appropriate earned degrees.
- 3) Higher education faculty/staff welcomed high school students to **campus events, classes, and special programs**. Based on aptitudes and interests from YouScience assessments, local students were introduced to programs including neuroscience, health sciences, and/or engineering technology.

Strategy 2– Best Practices

SEP's second strategy is about supporting and challenging the local education system in evidence-based practices that enhance its primary strategy. Our Director of Data and Research investigates programs to motivate and improve our own practices and those of our school partners.

- **Best Practices** – Two examples of best practices from which SEP is drawing inspiration include: *Jobs for Maine's Graduates* – a best practice that offers specialized for-credit courses aimed at improving high school graduation, putting students on a path of college or career. Another is *Central Arizona Valley Institute of Technology* – a partnership among seventeen high schools, offering nineteen career-focused programs that include industry-recognized credentials and/or college credit plus options.
- **Free Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA)** – The main goal of this program is to help students/families understand the importance of FAFSA and completing the form. SEP tracks completion and communicates to participating districts twice monthly, sharing strategies and relevant articles. The result is that FAFSA completions in Stark County have outpaced the national average.
- **Great Start for Great Futures Coalition (GSGF)** – The GSGF Coalition began in December 2016 and is comprised of early education providers, agencies, advocates, businesses, and community leaders collaborating to improve the outcomes of prenatal to kindergarten children. Recognizing that the return of investment to building a strong community and workforce begins at birth, SEP continues to support advancing early childhood readiness as a cornerstone member of GSGF.
- SEP focused on engaging and creating interest-based exploratory options for **vulnerable students** who face challenges in educational stability by providing strategies to strengthen their career pathways and opportunities.

Strategy 3– Communication & Data

SEP's third strategy supports the other strategies with data, research, and communications. The following section provides a summary of SEP's impact data.

Two Deeper Research Questions

SEP works directly with partner schools to track survey data longitudinally that helps answer two deeper research questions (lagging indicators):

1) Question: Are SEP's efforts **resulting in students fulfilling their potential** by having a specific, informed career plan in place by their high-school senior year?

Answer: In 2023, 52% of students graduated with a meaningful career plan, and in 2024, the percentage remained the same. Our goal is 100%!

2) Question: Are SEP's efforts **influencing students to remain in Stark County** for post-secondary education and career opportunities?

Answer: In 2023, 62% of students responded that they plan to remain in Stark County, and in 2024, the percentage was 50%. Our current goal is to increase this to 65% by 2027.

Looking Ahead

We anticipate seeing an increase in these percentages over time as career-connected learning gains traction in Stark County.

Communications Statistics

- Electronically **sent out 19 Issues** newsletters covering topics from YouScience and Stark Tank, to student's career-connected learning experiences and SEP's Career Champions.
- Increased **SEP's mailing list** 11% – from 641 recipients in FY23 to the current total of 712.
- Maintained a 45% open rate for our **Issues newsletter** while continuing to grow the mailing list. In comparison, the average open rate for nonprofit organizations is 29%.
- Significantly increased our **social media presence** with weekly posts on both LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Added over 315 new **Facebook** followers and 111 **LinkedIn** followers.
- **SEP's website** had 27% more unique visitors than in FY23. Our video webpage – containing the popular Stark Career Pathway Explorer Series videos – continues to receive the most page views.



Demonstrating Impact: Goals, Targets & Metrics Summary

SEP is committed to impact. This includes using data to monitor progress, adjust course, and celebrate success. The career-connected learning data below demonstrates SEP's progress in FY2024 (FY23 was the pilot year).

Middle & High School Partners
ACROSS 9 DISTRICTS



Business Partners
PROVIDING STUDENTS WORK-BASED,
CAREER-CONNECTED OPPORTUNITIES



Students Who Have Taken YouScience Assessment
4,817 INVITED



Career Videos Professionally Produced
HIGHLIGHTING LOCAL COMPANIES



In-School Career-Connected Activities



Worksite-Based Career-Connected Activities



Students Engaged
IN-SCHOOL AND WORKSITE-BASED
CAREER-CONNECTED EXPERIENCES



SEP's Budget: FY2024 Summary

REVENUE

General Operating

Beginning Balance	\$ 565,052
Endowment	272,333
Foundations	949,850
Corporations	2,353
Individual Pledges	1,668

Grants

357,790

TOTAL REVENUE

\$ 2,149,046

EXPENSES

Staff Salary & Benefits

\$ 860,991

Back Office

88,106

Strategies & Grants

Strategy 1 – Career Pathways 168,837

Strategy 2 – Best Practices / Innovation / Technology 30,562

Strategy 3 – Communication / Data / Research 15,000

TOTAL EXPENSES

\$ 1,163,496

ENDING BALANCE

\$ 985,550

Diversification of Funding Efforts

In FY2024, SEP conducted a targeted fundraising campaign that secured **financial contributions from various sources**, including grants, workforce partners, corporate sponsors, individuals, as well as area foundations:

- **13 businesses/organizations** contributed a total of \$71,600
- **22 individuals** contributed \$37,299
- A total of \$231,500 was secured from **two new grants**
- **“Summit Champions”** (Donations of \$25,000+) included: Deuble Foundation, Employers Health, Hoover Foundation, Marathon Petroleum Corporation, Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton, Stark Community Foundation, Timken Foundation of Canton, and an anonymous donor
- **“Backpack Icons”** (Donations of \$15,000-\$24,999) included: Aultman Foundation, and the Paul & Carol David Foundation



**Not yet an
SEP donor?**

Use the QR code to donate online with PayPal, debit card, or credit card.



**SCAN
ME!**

Focus & Future

- SEP, through its strategic priorities, maintains a **narrow focus** on one primary strategy and two supporting strategies.
- SEP sets **priorities for each quarter** aligned to mission, vision, and strategies to maintain focus.
- SEP's **team meets on a weekly basis** to review progress being made against quarterly priorities and the completion of related tasks.
- As SEP completes its second year of implementation and begins to observe traction occurring, we continue to add school and business partners for the 2024-25 school year. A total of **10+ school districts (26 schools) and 70+ workforce partners** will be working together to provide career touchpoints for students.
- **SEP's aspiration** is to see all 17 Stark County school districts involved in intentional career-connected learning for ALL students by the 2025-26 school year.

SEP's Team

Krista Allison
Program Support Strategist

Dr. Tom Botzman
Post Secondary Strategist

Chris Campbell
Director of Data & Research

Susan Hayes
Career Champion

Jaecey Hudson
Career Champion

Jay Moody
Director of School Relations

Dr. John Richard
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THANK YOU

to the Supporters & Partners of SEP's Vision – Foundations, Businesses, Individuals, Schools!

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