
Cooperative Education

RATIONALE

Cooperative Career Education (CCE) should play a vital role in the total offerings of a comprehensive secondary education curriculum. The concept of learning by doing has proven to be a strong approach for career preparation since cooperative education was first included in public education during the early part of the 20th century. CCE provides students the opportunity to learn knowledge and skills in the classroom and to apply and test that learning in the workplace. Students develop transferable employability skills and occupational competence which will serve them throughout their continuing education and career. The cooperative nature of the program insures that these competencies are based on industry standards. In addition to occupational competence, CCE programs foster self-directed learning, strengthen the development of core academic skills through application in authentic situations students to explore career options, enhance skills such as communication, leadership and problem solving, and contribute to community economic development. CCE expands opportunities for all students and exposes them to a broad array of career opportunities, work philosophies, and work environments. CCE enhances the school's ability to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Cooperative Career Education is a career and technical education program based on the cooperative education method of instruction. The program should serve students with a wide variety of career interests, including careers not traditionally considered "vocational". Academic study is combined with paid, supervised employment in a career area of interest. The employment is planned and supervised by the school in cooperation with a business or industry. A formalized agreement between all cooperating parties specifies the role each is to play as part of the program. A written plan of instruction details the knowledge and skills to be mastered. The teacher-coordinator responsible for the program conducts periodic visits to the student's workplace in order to better correlate classroom instruction with employment skills, and to complete evaluations of the student's performance which are supplemented by employer evaluations. Credit is awarded for the classroom instruction and for the on-the-job experience in compliance with established policies. The program is open to high school juniors and seniors as a practical arts elective. Cooperative Career Education programs may also utilize work based learning experiences in addition to cooperative education such as job shadowing, short term internships, career exploration activities and school based enterprises.

The following factors are considered to be components of quality Cooperative Career Education Programs:

Cooperative Education

1. Quality coop placements in which the student is allowed to perform work that both provides opportunities to develop new competencies and contributes to the productivity of the organization.
2. Teacher/coordinators with appropriate occupational experience as well as professional preparation for operating a school-supervised work education program.
3. Close supervision at the worksite by a training supervisor, as well as a mechanism by which the supervisor can share his own professional expertise with the coop student.
4. At the onset, an accurate and realistic description of the job for the student as well as accurate expectations by the employer of the skills the student brings to it.
5. Strong links between job training and related instruction, which includes an individualized, written training plan that is correlated to the students' in-school curriculum.
6. Frequent and specific informal and formal evaluations of the students' progress by the teacher/coordinator, with feedback and follow-up to improve performance.
7. Involvement of parents or guardians.
8. Placement of graduates in full-time positions, or referrals for additional instruction, and follow-up of graduates after three and five years.
9. Strong administrative support for the program.

GENERAL PROGRAM GOALS

The following are goals for the Cooperative Career Education program.

1. Development of occupational competence.
2. Development of higher level, transferable knowledge and skills related to careers.
3. Development of core academic skills through application in the workplace.
4. Development of career knowledge and awareness.

Specific program standards and performance measures can be found in "Program Standards for Marketing and Cooperative Education Programs", DESE Division of Career Education, and Missouri School Improvement Program Standards and Indicators Manual.

Cooperative Education

PROGRAM DESIGN

Cooperative Career Education has two essential elements: classroom instruction and work based learning opportunities. These elements are linked by a planned program of activities which provides the student with an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom in a real world setting, and to acquire new skills at the work site. A qualified teacher-coordinator who serves in the roles of teacher, supervisor, program administrator, counselor, student organization advisor, and public relations expert has responsibility for operating the program.

The traditional program design is a one-year program for seniors composed of a class and one or two hours of the student's schedule assigned for the cooperative education experience at the workplace. Students earn two or three units of credit upon successful completion of the program. This is a program design well known by educators and potential employers throughout the state. One year programs have been the predominant program design through the years.

Schools must consider options to the traditional program design if Cooperative Career Education is to continue to serve the education and career preparation needs of students. Changes in the structure of secondary education such as increased graduation requirements and block scheduling, along with funding priorities, competing elective courses, and changes in the goals and curriculum for Cooperative Career Education programs provide the opportunity to consider program design options for delivering the benefits of cooperative education.

It should be noted that as programs are redesigned, some basic Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requirements exist concerning instructional time, time spent in on-the-job training, and how applicable hours of credit are awarded. Other guidelines exist for programs operated off-campus. Teachers and administrators who are redesigning programs should be aware of these guidelines. Requests for pilot programs which vary from these guidelines should be submitted to the Division of Career Education, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The following elements should be reviewed when considering program redesign. They are presented here to provide options and inspire new thinking on the design of Cooperative Career Education programs, but are by no means the only elements which could be considered.

Shorter Programs: A program of one semester length which focuses on career exploration and employability skills with concurrent cooperative education placement.

Cooperative Education

Longer Programs: A program spanning two years with classroom experiences the first year supported by short term work based activities such as job shadowing and internship leading to more in depth occupational preparation and cooperative education the second year.

Seminar Programs: Rather than a scheduled class which meets on the regular class schedule, the related classroom instruction is provided on an individualized basis with scheduled seminar meetings occurring during study or advisement time, before, or after the school day. The teacher-coordinator plans and leads the seminar and supervises the students' cooperative education experience.

Summer School: The option of operating the program during summer school provides the opportunity to bridge the gap between class and the cooperative education experience for two year programs, or as a pre-employment workshop and early placement for students enrolled in a one year program.

Specialized Programs: Develop specialized courses where career interests in one occupational area are sufficient to support enrollment. For example, if most students enrolled in the Cooperative Career Education program have career interests in Marketing and are placed in marketing related occupations, then offering a Marketing Education program with related occupationally specific curriculum can best serve the needs of students.

Coop Other Career Programs: The teacher-coordinator can provide cooperative education for students enrolled in other career education programs through close collaboration with the classroom teacher and the workplace.

Coop as a Capstone Experience: Cooperative Career Education can provide a capstone experience for students in a wide variety of career areas, especially those areas not traditionally served by career education programs. A semester or year long cooperative education placement for a student interested in an engineering career for example, supported by instruction on workplace readiness skills, can be a valuable career exploration and preparation experience.

Participation Criteria: Students enroll in Cooperative Career Education with various levels of preparation. Some may require additional preparation in seeking employment, employability skills, or workplace competencies before participating in cooperative education. Selecting students for the cooperative education component of the program who are prepared to participate and benefit from the program while providing assistance for those not adequately prepared adds value to the program.

Other Work Based Experiences: Many of the benefits of Cooperative Career Education can be derived from experiences which are less of a time commitment for students than cooperative education. A program which utilizes a variety of work based experiences in addition to cooperative education could serve more

Cooperative Education

students. Job shadowing, short term internships, simulations, collaborative projects involving the business community, and school based enterprises can all support parts of the Cooperative Career Education curriculum.

Designing a program which can deliver the many benefits of cooperative education will require new thinking, imagination, and a commitment to try new ideas if Cooperative Career Education is to realize its potential in the secondary schools of the future.