



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: CTE Career Rodeo
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

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Program Overview

Henrico County Public Schools endeavors to prepare students to be successful, contributing citizens. With that commitment in mind, the school division's Department of Workforce and Career Development designed a program where employers could observe our Career and Technical Education (CTE) students from the Advanced Career Education (ACE) Centers in action.

The CTE Career Rodeo was born in February 2020, and helped students showcase their skills for potential employers and other stakeholders. Students solved work-based challenges and demonstrated their hands-on skill sets. Employers were able to watch students and chat with them. Students had assigned numbers displayed on their backs like rodeo participants. Employers could pick up student resumes or interview the student at the event. We also invited ninth- and 10th-graders interested in CTE courses to observe. All of the Virginia Department of Education's 17 career clusters were represented at the event, as well as all 30 of our ACE Center programs.

The CTE Career Rodeo enabled students and employers to interact and interview. The event showcased students' soft skills and hands-on skill sets, potentially leading to full-time employment. Through events like this, with work-based learning experiences and building of essential soft skills, our students can learn to be life-ready.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Henrico County Public Schools offers a College and Career Night each year, as well as our NACo award-winning CTE Life-Ready Expo. The Life-Ready Expo in fall 2019 gave students and families the opportunity to talk with more than 150 business and community partners about various careers and companies at one event. Yet, we were missing the opportunity for the business community to see our students in action, demonstrating the skills they have acquired

from their courses in the ACE Center. While a few businesses do come into classrooms throughout the school year, how could we maximize the effort and bring in more local businesses to observe students and talk with them about their skills and future aspirations? How could we provide students with an opportunity to begin developing relationships and connections with potential employees before they graduate? Where could we provide a centrally located venue for resume gathering and on-site interviews for employers wishing to hire summer interns, provide shadowing experiences, and hire full-time employees? The challenge, as we saw it was to create an easy and accessible forum where businesses would find value in seeing students' abilities in relation to career pathways and be willing to take the time out of their busy work days to attend.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The Career Rodeo provided a place for students to demonstrate the skills learned in their ACE Center courses to potential employers. Employers were given the opportunity to see students' abilities as they would relate to career pathways. The event provided a hands-on interview process for those employers wishing to hire summer interns, provide job shadowing experience and hire full-time employees. These are significant and highly desirable benefits for both our students and employers and represent the strong collaborative partnership between the HCPS Department of Workforce and Career Development and local, state and national business partners.

The feedback we received has been phenomenal. The event worked to build relationships and connections between students and potential employers before they graduate. Furthermore, underclassmen were able to attend and witness firsthand the career possibilities available to them through our ACE Center programs. The Career Rodeo highlighted the cornucopia of possibilities that Henrico County Public Schools provides through its career and technical education to all students for their future success.

How Program Was Carried Out

HCPS' Department of Workforce and Career Development has designed a career and technical education "trifecta for career success" by first offering students an opportunity for students to learn about businesses and career pathways through employers at our Life-Ready Expo in the fall. During the Expo, students are given the opportunity to ask questions directly to possible employers and show off their soft skills. The CTE Career Rodeo is the second event of the three, giving students a venue to show off their hard skills honed through their ACE Center programs.

The primary objective of the CTE Career Rodeo was to provide a forum for students to demonstrate the skills learned during their ACE Center courses and for employers to witness first-hand how students' abilities could relate to careers in their industry. Not only did the event provide an opportunity for employers to begin to develop relationships and build connections with potential employees before they graduate, it also offered onsite interview opportunities. The event gave businesses the opportunity to connect with students from many different backgrounds to find future employees. In turn, students had an opportunity to make connections with potential employers they may never have thought of before. All students submitted their resumes before the event and were available for onsite and future interviews.

The first order of business was to find a central site that could house hundreds of students and their needed equipment, plus 100 businesses and community partners. The Richmond Raceway Complex generously donated the use of its facilities, and we were able to send out invitations to the business community and promote the event. We asked our CTE teachers to prepare skills-based demonstrations to be performed during the rodeo. Much logistical planning went into the CTE Career Rodeo. For our timeline, we used a shared Google Doc with a checklist and assigned tasks. Throughout the event, the Workforce and Career Development Specialist worked closely

with our ACE Center principals and teachers to ensure that the event ran smoothly. Everyone from our department volunteered their time and talents for the day as well.

Before the event, students were assigned a designated number for the day, printed on patches that looked like those worn by rodeo participants. This worked well for student privacy and ensured that potential employers could quickly see which student they were interested in engaging in the hiring process. It also allowed businesses and community partners present to quickly share feedback on any student, and that feedback was passed on through the teachers. Each HCPS ACE Center was responsible for transportation, setting up the skills demonstrations, and bringing copies of student resumes to the event. Once students arrived, they were given their number to wear and directions to their rodeo ring, where preparations were underway for their skills challenges. We invited businesses to join us from noon to 2 p.m., staying mindful not to keep them too long from their work.

At the registration table, businesses signed in and were given information and a map of the event space. They were also given cards where they could write down numbers assigned to students they were interested in talking to, plus a space to share feedback. Since the Career Rodeo was during lunchtime, we decided to offer bag lunches (hot dogs, chips, a cookie and water) for all attendees and participants. After the skills challenge demonstrations were over, all students were given a certificate of participation, and medals were distributed. The CTE students were enthusiastic as they, too, got to watch their fellow students in action. It was a day when everyone felt valued and held their head a little higher as they identified possible career outcomes.

Through the opportunities of our CTE Career Rodeo, employers and industry partners had a chance to speak with and observe students in action before the final “trifecta for career success” event, our nationally acclaimed “CTE Letter of Intent Signing Day.” A previous NACo award winner, the CTE Letter of Intent Signing Day, recognized high school students who had completed

ACE programs and were entering the world of work upon graduation. With connections made through the Career Rodeo, 150 interviews were scheduled. The CTE Career Rodeo played a valuable role in showcasing our students and shining a spotlight on the value of career training through Henrico County Public Schools' CTE programs.

Financing and Staffing

There were minimal costs associated with the CTE Career Rodeo. The Richmond Raceway complex donated the space needed to hold the 500+ attendees and participants. HCPS covered transportation of students from the ACE Centers. A budget of \$450 covered promotional items, communication flyers, posters, and rodeo-themed decorations. Our CTE students prepared the bag lunches for all attendees at the cost of \$600.

Program Results

The results of the CTE Career Rodeo exceeded all expectations. Our goal was to bring students and employers together by providing a place for students to demonstrate the skills learned in their ACE Center programs to potential employers. We had 426 CTE students participate in the event from all ACE Center programs. In talking with students and teachers, they were eager to have the opportunity to showcase their skills and presentation abilities in front of other students, members of the public, and especially potential employers. The 100 employers and industry partners who attended were blown away by the skills and poise of our students, as well as the many CTE opportunities we have in Henrico County Public Schools. Several students were interviewed and hired on the spot.

Further, employers requested more than 300 resumes at the Career Rodeo. Within a few weeks, 150 interviews were set up but unfortunately, were canceled due to the pandemic. Instead, we followed up with virtual interview events in May and June 2020 to support students and employers.

Brief Summary

While offering several opportunities for career and technical education students to connect with employers, the CTE staff felt that we were missing the opportunity for the business community to see our students in action, demonstrating the skills they have acquired from their courses in the ACE Center. The challenge was to create an easy and accessible forum where businesses would find value in seeing students' abilities in relation to career pathways. Building on this idea, the CTE Career Rodeo was created in February 2020.

Potential employers were invited and enthusiastically responded with 100 in attendance. At the rodeo, 426 students solved work-based challenges and demonstrated their hands-on skill sets. Employers were able to watch students and chat with them. All of the Virginia Department of Education's 17 career clusters were represented at the event, as well as all 30 of our ACE Center programs.

The CTE Career Rodeo enabled students and employers to interact and interview and the event was quite successful. Feedback from employers and students was positive. Three hundred resumes were requested by employers and 150 interviews were set up. The CTE Career Rodeo played a valuable role in showcasing our students, increasing their skills and confidence in interacting with potential employers and shining a spotlight on the value of career training through Henrico County Public Schools' CTE programs.

**CTE Career Rodeo
Supplemental Material**



