



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** 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: Career Ambassadors Program
Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis
Title: Public Relations Specialist
Department: Public Relations
Telephone: 804-501-4933 Website: www.henrico.us
Email: dav127@henrico.us

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Brandon Hinton
Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration
Signature: 

Program Overview

Career Ambassadors are Henrico County Public Schools high school students who share their career and technical education experiences and exploration with prospective students and community stakeholders throughout the school year. These students attend elementary and middle school career fairs, conduct elementary classroom lessons, meet and greet prospective technical education students, families and special guests, and assist in community relations when needed. They serve as role models to their peers and demonstrate leadership, academic achievement and technical skills. The purpose of the Career Ambassadors program is to promote career and technical education programming throughout the school division while developing leadership skills and preparing these high school seniors for the world of work.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Members of the Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) Department of Workforce and Career Development recognized a lack of knowledge and understanding about the various programs offered at the Advanced Career Education (ACE) Centers. The Career Ambassadors program was created to help spread the word while educating younger students about the 31 career and technical education programs that offer licenses and certifications at the school division's specialty ACE Centers. We recognize the importance of career exploration in elementary schools. Children as young as 6 to 9 years old begin to associate jobs with gender roles and social status, prompting them to start identifying some careers as unacceptable or unmaintainable. Therefore, it is important that students are exposed to the various career opportunities available to them, so they can reach their full potential rather than feeling they do not have an available career pathway.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

With more than 10 million job openings in the U.S. workforce today, fostering career exploration at a younger age is more important than ever. In our office, we often say, "you don't know what you don't know," highlighting the importance of exposing younger students to the many career and technical education opportunities we offer here in Henrico County, through experiential learning, certifications and dual enrollment. The Career Ambassadors program encourages career exploration for students across the division in grades K-8, planting "career seeds" for our younger students to consider when thinking about their own future.

In addition to exploration for our elementary and middle school students, the ambassadors receive valuable skills and resources to prepare them for their future careers. Career Ambassadors gain opportunities to build their communication and leadership skills, and develop professional skills, knowledge and experience that will be useful in college and/or careers. They also accrue volunteer hours and network with professionals and peers, building lasting relationships. As one of our senior Career Ambassadors shared during a debriefing about the 2021-22 school year, the program “makes me feel good and gives me a chance to be a leader.”

How Program Was Carried Out

Henrico County Public Schools’ career and technical education program ensures that all HCPS students graduate either “enrolled, enlisted and/or employed.” The school division recognizes the need for this journey to begin in elementary school through the K-12 Career Experience program, which includes building career awareness (grades K-5), providing career exploration (grades 6-8) and supporting career preparation (grades 9-12).

The Career Ambassadors program was created in 2020 during the pandemic and continues to grow. Students in the ACE Center courses apply to be ambassadors in their junior year. They are carefully selected based on knowledge, character, communication skills and enthusiasm. Career Ambassadors must maintain good grades, attendance and behavior throughout the academic year. Once selected, they receive training in social and emotional learning, classroom management, leadership and communication skills to prepare them to provide classroom activities to elementary students. During quarterly meetings in their senior year, they receive information on topics such as resume writing, social media and networking and interview skills, to help them develop professionally. Students are also taught classroom management techniques as they prepare presentations to be shared with elementary and middle school students, and practice these presentations at our quarterly meetings.

When first created, the Career Ambassadors provided virtual tours of their programs for elementary students, showcasing what they were learning in the classroom and explaining how being in a career and technical education program prepares them for their future careers. Over the years, Career Ambassadors has become a multilayered program. Through collaboration with the school counselors in Henrico County’s elementary and middle schools, we have identified

various ways for Career Ambassadors to support the career development of younger students while promoting the ACE Center programs.

Within HCPS elementary schools, school counselors have various opportunities for Career Ambassadors to interact with younger students. One option is to have several ambassadors conduct a classroom lesson together to talk about their program, the potential career pathways, their goals and to provide a classroom career activity. Career Ambassadors can also provide a career-fair style opportunity, with individual displays to share with elementary students. The third presentation option is for fifth-grade students to rotate through stations with ambassadors for 10-minute presentations from several ambassadors representing different career and technical education programs.

In addition to sharing information about their program and future goals, the ambassadors also talk with middle school students about the application process for becoming an ACE Center student and what it is like being in the programs. These interactions in elementary and middle schools enable younger students to hear about the programs available to them from a student perspective, which allows them to relate more closely and see themselves in the same position.

The Career Ambassadors program also gives opportunities to speak in front of others, one to one, or in a group setting. The ambassadors also presented to the Henrico County Business Advisory Council, offered tours to guests and even assisted in our state audit interviews this year. The adults have been blown away with students' knowledge and poise each time. In several instances, ambassadors have had their resumes requested on the spot! These high school seniors provide opportunities for younger students and the greater community to learn about how Henrico County Public Schools prepares students for career possibilities, while affording the ambassadors a chance for professional growth and career opportunities. Thus, student ambassadors enrich their own journeys.

Financing and Staffing

The cost of this program is minimal. The total cost for the year is less than \$2,500, which includes materials (binders, markers, etc.), ambassador's shirts and lunch for quarterly meetings. The ambassadors also are given medallions provided by Henrico County Public Schools at their senior honors assemblies, which they wear as part of their graduation regalia.

Program Results

The Career Ambassadors do a remarkable job promoting career options, HCPS ACE Center courses and themselves. They have given countless tours and presentations to Henrico County officials, guests and industry leaders. At one such event, the ambassadors were “rushed” afterward and asked for their resumes.

For the 2022-23 school year, 33 students serve as Career Ambassadors, representing 18 of the 31 ACE Center courses. The ambassadors have continued to gain confidence in their presentation skills and are approachable with stakeholder groups. They will visit about a third of Henrico County’s elementary and middle schools this school year. As this is the first year of in-person classroom visits, we see much growth potential in this unique program.

Brief Summary

The Career Ambassadors program has been an incredible asset both to the career and technical education efforts within Henrico County Public Schools and the students who are part of them. The primary goal of the ACE Centers is to be able to provide a pathway to careers for any students who wish to pursue that route out of high school, and its success hinges on students understanding what resources are available to them. As students at the ACE Centers, Career Ambassadors are able to showcase and explain the number of possibilities for career and workforce development HCPS has for younger students who could benefit from these programs. For the 33 Career Ambassadors themselves, they are able to develop their skills of communication and leadership, and they are recognized for their excellent work and outreach, which could further propel them in a positive direction upon graduation. The ACE Centers also feel the impact of the Career Ambassadors’ dedication as the next wave of students become interested in career and technical education paths.

Career Ambassadors Supplemental Material





