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iChallengeU Program Overview

iChallengeU is a two-week educational opportunity for high school students to work with area teachers, corporate, civic, and community leaders to develop solutions to real problems posed by the corporate, civic, or community partners. Teachers trained in project based learning will work with the partners to identify “driving questions or challenges” that reflect real issues or problems in the participating companies and organizations.

Student teams will have two weeks, through their own research and evaluation processes and by working with assigned teachers and corporate, civic, or community partner coaches, to propose solutions to the real life questions or challenges.

At the end of the two weeks, the corporate, civic, and community leaders will judge the teams. The leaders will identify standout presentations that demonstrate deep understanding and thorough analysis of the driving questions and provide creative, comprehensive solutions.

All student team members will be eligible to earn college credit. Top performers will earn college scholarships.

Michigan Works! Southeast, corporate, civic, and community partners, and area intermediate and local school districts will provide funding. The fee for corporate, civic, and community partners will be \$3,500.00. Costs will include: teacher training and stipends, college credit, college scholarships, transportation and meal costs for participants, costs associated with the presentations event, recruitment and general administration of the program.

Project Examples

A hospital wished to increase the number of women who got their annual mammograms. Students were asked to examine the current community involvement and develop recommendations that would increase participation.

A community agency believed that there was enough food in the county to feed the entire population. Students were asked to examine the community make-up and to develop strategies to collect and disseminate food throughout the county.

The world headquarters for a major manufacturer asked students to develop a plan to attract and retain innovative talent for its workforce.

What is Project Based Learning?

- **Organized around and open-ended driving question or challenge.** These focus students’ work and deepen their learning by centering on significant issues, debates, questions and/or problems.
- **Creates a need to know essential content and skills.** Typical projects begin by presenting students with knowledge and concepts and then, once learned, give them the opportunity to apply them. PBL begins with an end product or presentation, which requires learning specific knowledge and concepts, thus creating a context and reason to learn and understand the information and concepts.

- **Requires inquiry to learn and/or create something new.** The inquiry should lead students to construct something new – an idea, an interpretation, and a new way of displaying what they have learned.
- **Requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, creativity and various form of communication.** Students must use higher-order thinking skills to learn to work as a team and contribute to the group effort. They must listen to others and make their own ideas clear when speaking, be able to read a variety of material, write or otherwise express themselves in various modes, and make effective presentations.
- **Allows some degree of student voice and choice.** Students learn to work independently and take responsibility when they are asked to make choices.
- **Incorporates feedback and revision.** Students use peer critique to improve their work to create higher quality products.
- **Results in a publically presented product or performance.** What you know is demonstrated by what you do and what you do must be open to public scrutiny.

Program Objectives

- Introduce students to and engage students in project based learning using real world/ real work driving questions/challenges
- Introduce students to career opportunities in area businesses and civic organizations
- Engage students in meaningful acquisition and application of 21st century skills
- Develop student leadership skills
- Develop skills and habits that aid in future life and career pursuits
- Develop skills for working cooperatively with others
- Create a positive and meaningful community event focused on student learning and high level achievement