

# The **TIGER**PATH Initiative

*Discovering Talent, Developing Skills, Building Careers*

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## ***A National Model for Individualized Education and Skilled Workforce Development***

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### **Background**

Visits with Hutchinson manufacturers have revealed a significant and growing shortage of skilled workers. The jobs are there, but no qualified individuals are available to fill them.

Hutchinson is not alone in this: research indicates that more than 12,000 skilled jobs in Minnesota are going unfilled right now owing to a lack of qualified workers. Nationwide that figure is over 600,000. According to an analysis done by Deloitte, between now and 2025 more than 2 million manufacturing jobs will go unfilled. The same situation exists in both the building trades and health care fields. Between now and 2029, the nation's skilled workforce shortage will worsen significantly as the remaining baby-boomer generation hits retirement age.

Currently about 58% of graduating high school seniors are going to a University to pursue a bachelor's degree, while only 33% of all jobs in the U.S. economy actually require that level of education. The reality is that *two-thirds of all jobs in the economy require 2 years or less of education*. This education / job market mismatch has resulted in escalating college costs, growing student debt, rising underemployment of college graduates and a growing shortage of the skilled workers our economy needs. Systemic change is needed.

The solution to all of these challenges can be found in our high schools. It rests with shifting away from the prevailing “college for all” paradigm and helping young people (and their parents) recognize that thousands of high-paying, high-demand career opportunities exist (and can be obtained with a 2-year degree or less) in the technical fields.

### **Hutchinson’s TigerPath Skilled Workforce Initiative**

To address the situation, 28 partners from manufacturing, local government and education have developed the TigerPath Skilled Workforce Initiative. Comprised of six overlapping and mutually supporting strategies, TigerPath takes a comprehensive approach to providing students with the skills they need to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and changing the attitudes that led to the existing “college for all” mentality.

The six strategies that make up the TigerPath Initiative are:

**STRATEGY 1: Realign high school education** by implementing the TigerPath Academies – a career academy model of education designed to help students discover their talents, develop their skills and build rewarding careers based on their own interests and aptitudes.

**STRATEGY 2: Build seamless educational pathways** between high school and college so that students can earn free college credit and industry-recognized credentials.

**STRATEGY 3: Change outdated stereotypes about manufacturing, education & career choices, and gender in the workforce** through tours of local precision high-tech manufacturers, job shadowing, a dedicated website and other marketing activities.

**STRATEGY 4: Build school-employer relationships** by implementing an internship program for high school students with local manufacturers and other employers, along with other initiatives such as “adopt a classroom.”

**STRATEGY 5: Dramatically upgrade technical education facilities & equipment** at the high school to change the stereotype students & parents have of manufacturing, get students inspired and excited about technical education & careers and provide first-class, real-world equipment for students to train on.



**Hutchinson High School’s Center for Technical Excellence is the best equipped, most advanced high school technical education facility in Minnesota.**

**STRATEGY 6: Launch Tiger Manufacturing** – an authentic manufacturing business based in the high school, run by students, designing and manufacturing real products for real customers. Tiger Manufacturing will add relevance to coursework, provide a realistic work experience, build teamwork & soft skills, foster critical-thinking & problem-solving skills and teach entrepreneurship & business operations.

**Results Obtained Thus Far**

The TigerPath Academies began over four years ago at Hutchinson High School with the recognition that the educational outcomes being achieved did not match the real world needs of our students. Starting with the adoption of an academy model of education at the high school, TigerPath has grown to become a community-wide effort to better prepare students for their future. Achievements thus far:

- The **TigerPath Academies** have been implemented at Hutchinson High School.
- All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students now go through an **extensive mid-year counseling** & registration process that (a) culminates in their selection of a TigerPath Academy beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and (b) results in the development of an *individualized* four-year academic plan.
- A total of **\$1.56 million has been raised** from 28 partners to advance the TigerPath Initiative.
- The **Center for Technical Excellence** has been established at Hutchinson High School with over \$1 million of new equipment, making possible state-of-the-art skills training for students.
- **Enrollments** have **dramatically increased** in first year “pathway” classes such as Welding I, Drafting Projections and Woods I – in many cases with more than 100 students enrolling in such courses each year. For example, last year we had seven sections of welding.
- A new **Physical Science: Engineering class** is being offered starting November, 2018. Thus far 120 students have enrolled (including 45 girls!) necessitating five sections of this class.



- **Free college credit** is available to students for work being done in high school via “articulation agreements” offered through the MnSCU system. More college credit articulations are being negotiated with Ridgewater College.
- Students can earn a variety of **industry recognized certifications** while in high school.
- **Community-based advisory committees** have been established for each Academy to monitor progress and develop action plans to expand community partnerships.
- The **TigerPath Steering Committee** has been established to oversee grant funding, serve as a clearinghouse for information among the partners and to establish & expand local partnerships.
- A dedicated website designed to promote the TigerPath Academies has been launched: [www.HutchTigerPath.com](http://www.HutchTigerPath.com)



The new TigerPath website dramatically raises the profile of Hutchinson’s skilled workforce initiative: [www.HutchTigerPath.com](http://www.HutchTigerPath.com)

- A new **TigerPath Coordinator has been hired** by the school district to implement a student internship program with local employers, act as a liaison between employers and the high school, coordinate with Ridgewater College and be an advocate for TigerPath in the community.

- TigerPath has become a multi-award winning initiative: The Hutchinson public school district won a **2017 Local Government Innovation Award** from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and the City of Hutchinson won the **2017 City of Excellence Award** from the League of Minnesota Cities and the **2018 Annual Economic Development Award** from the Mid-America Economic Development Council.

### Anticipated Outcomes

Successful implementation of the TigerPath Initiative will result in the following outcomes:

1. Students utilizing their interests and aptitudes to guide their educational and career choices.
2. Changing the college decision-making process from “*Where do I want to go?*” to “*What do I want to be?*”
3. Students acquiring marketable skills first, then pursuing higher levels of education.
4. Reduced student debt and under-employment.
5. Students pursue careers that match high-demand, high paying jobs.
6. The existing mismatch between student educational choices & the job market is corrected.
7. The skilled workforce shortage is meaningfully addressed.

The TigerPath Initiative has attracted considerable (and growing!) interest from around Minnesota. Staff from the Hutchinson School District & Hutchinson Economic Development Authority have made numerous presentations to groups from other communities including Redwood Falls, Red Wing, St. Cloud, Lakeville, Mora, St. Paul, Buffalo, New Ulm, Mankato, Brainerd and North Branch, along with the Economic Development Association of Minnesota (at their summer conference) and the Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers. The response has been overwhelmingly positive and many communities are taking steps to implement their own version of the TigerPath Initiative.



Hutchinson’s TigerPath Academies.

We feel TigerPath has the potential to become a new national model for better preparing students for their future while meaningfully addressing America’s skilled workforce needs.

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