



MAKING AN

# IMPACT

*Annual Year in Review -* **FY2025**

Stark Education Partnership (SEP) provides a much-needed support system to local workforce and education entities by operating as a **CATALYST** for implementing innovative programs, acts as a **CONNECTOR** of people and organizations, and is a trusted **CORNERSTONE** organization throughout Stark County.

The 36-year nonprofit organization continues to implement its vision to build generations of successful individuals who fulfill their career potential and grow roots in Stark County by strengthening relationships between Stark County's workforce and education entities. Its vision is that of the community, having met with and listened to over 100 business and education representatives. Through focused efforts, SEP is seeing its vision come to life as we continue **TAKING IDEAS TO IMPLEMENTATION – WHILE DOING SO IN A MANNER THAT ENSURES IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS AND OUR LOCAL ECONOMY.**

We enthusiastically report on the progress of that impact!

**STARK** Education  
Partnership<sup>inc.</sup>

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# Leadership

Stark Education Partnership (SEP) is impactful because of an effective board of directors – representing philanthropic foundations, businesses, and educational institutions – and is led by John Richard (President) and Christine Taylor (Vice President of Programs and Partnerships). Additionally, SEP's outstanding team members are responsible for implementation of the strategies, both with internal operations and direct career-connected learning at school sites.

# Mission, Vision & Values



**Mission:** Stark Education Partnership is a catalyst, engaging and collaborating with education, business, civic and community stakeholders to drive sustainable improvement and innovation to provide all students with education and career success.



**Vision:** To build generations of successful individuals who fulfill their career potential and grow roots in Stark County.



**Values:** Our success is wholly dependent upon the success of partner organizations and the students we serve. SEP leverages six values to advance this goal: respect, expertise, catalyst, engagement, responsibility, and focus.

# Strategies

SEP delivers on fulfilling its mission and vision to individuals and the community through three significant, interrelated strategies:

**Strategy 1:** Create pathways to in-demand jobs through talent development – SEP's primary focus; **Strategy 2:** Foster best practices, innovation, and technology in education; **Strategy 3:** Enable strategic action through communication, data, and research

# SEP is Unique

There is no other organization in Stark County doing what SEP does! The Partnership assesses each student's career interests and aptitudes using a tool called YouScience, a foundational component of SEP's approach to career connected learning.

Through embedded "career champions" in each partner high school, students become aware of specific career-related opportunities, both in school and at worksites, aligned with their career interests and aptitudes. This exposure to Stark County's businesses helps students further explore career options, while showcasing the vast array of job opportunities locally and influencing students to grow their roots right here! Various career pathways may include education beyond high school, so SEP also exposes students to Stark County's wealth of higher education options.

Summarizing, SEP helps individuals discover their best-fit careers and aligned pathways to get there, while positively impacting our local economy.



# Demonstrating Impact: Goals, Targets & Metrics Summary

SEP is committed to impact. This includes using data to monitor progress, adjust course, and celebrate success. The career connected learning data below demonstrates SEP's progress through FY2025 (*FY23 was the pilot year*).

**Middle & High  
School Partners**  
ACROSS 9 DISTRICTS

22  
FALL 2024

28

**Business Partners**  
PROVIDING STUDENTS WORK-BASED,  
CAREER CONNECTED OPPORTUNITIES

69  
FALL 2024

84

**Students Who Have Taken  
YouScience Assessment**  
12,482 INVITED

4,207  
FALL 2024

8,516

**Career Videos  
Professionally Produced**  
HIGHLIGHTING LOCAL COMPANIES

2 CURRENTLY  
IN PRODUCTION

7,340  
# OF VIEWS

13

**In-School  
Career Connected  
Activities**

109  
FALL 2024

231

**Worksite-Based  
Career Connected  
Activities**

129  
FALL 2024

332

**Students Engaged  
IN-SCHOOL AND WORKSITE-BASED  
CAREER CONNECTED EXPERIENCES**

2,390  
FALL 2024

3,557





## PRIMARY FOCUS

# Strategy 1 – Career Pathways

SEP's primary strategy is about creating and strengthening connections between employers and education through Career-Connected Learning (CCL). Many milestones have been reached over the past year, including those listed here:

- Implemented **YouScience** Aptitude and Career Discovery instrument in partner middle and high schools to determine students' career interests and aptitudes, and in turn to connect them with local career opportunities.
- Three **Career Champions** continue to work directly with students in partner schools implementing the YouScience tool, reviewing results from YouScience with students, and matching students with CCL opportunities – both at school and at worksites.
- Increased the number of **workforce partners** to 84 and **school partners** to 28, providing numerous opportunities for students.
- **Worksite CCL** events include field trips, job shadows, externships (multi-visit shadows), internships, and other activities that take place at a worksite. During the 2024-25 school year, 203 work-based experiences occurred with 745 students participating.
- **Schoolsite CCL** activities include workforce speakers, career fairs, videos and other activities that have a career focus and occur in a school building. During the 2024-25 school year, partner schools hosted 122 such events, impacting 2,812 students.
- Completed three new **company videos** – 13 in total now – with two more in production. Each professionally produced video highlights various job opportunities at a specific company. Each video posted on SEP'S website is made available for all Stark County schools to use in their career programming efforts.
- **AmeriCorps College & Career Guides** continue to help students discover their passions and purposes. This year's three Guides – located in Alliance, Canton, and Massillon high schools – served 1,559 students.



- **Stark Tank** encourages innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. SEP coordinated the college-level event, with local business owners/CEOs acting as “sharks” (judges) who awarded a total of \$15,000 to college students for this year's winning pitches.
- Continued a partnership with the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce to facilitate their monthly **Education Committee** meetings.

## Strategy 2– Best Practices

SEP's second strategy is about supporting and challenging the local education system in evidence-based practices that enhance its primary strategy. Our Director of Data and Research investigates programs to motivate and improve our own practices and those of our school partners.

- **Best Practices** – Two examples of best practices from which SEP is drawing inspiration include: *The Iowa Department of Education* which connects students to local internship opportunities and coordinates pre-internship instruction to prepare students with relevant employability skills. Another example comes from *Project Lead The Way* which has produced high school and middle school level curriculum that implements real world learning and transferable industry relevant skills.
- **Free Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA)** – The main goal of this program is to help students/families understand the importance of FAFSA completion. SEP tracks completion and communicates to participating districts twice monthly, sharing strategies and relevant articles. The result is that FAFSA completions in Stark County continue to outperform the national average.
- **Great Start for Great Futures Coalition** (GSGF) – The GSGF Coalition began in December 2016 and is comprised of early education providers, agencies, advocates, businesses, and community leaders collaborating to improve the outcomes of prenatal to kindergarten children. SEP is an active member in a support role, recognizing that the return on investment of building a strong workforce and community begins at birth.





# Strategy 3– Communication & Data

SEP's third strategy supports the other strategies with data, research, and communications. The following section provides a summary of SEP's impact data.

## Communications Statistics

- Electronically **sent 10 monthly *Issues*** newsletters covering topics from YouScience and workforce development, to student's career connected learning experiences and SEP's Career Champions.
- Maintained a **48.1% open rate** (was 45% last year) for our *Issues* newsletter. In comparison, the average open rate for nonprofit organizations is 29%.
- Continued to focus on SEP's **social media presence** with weekly posts on both LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Added 82 **LinkedIn** followers and reached 6,233 members in the past year.
- Added 70 new **Facebook** followers and had a total reach of 8,644.
- **SEP's website** had 8% more unique visitors than in FY24. Our video web page – containing the popular Stark Career Pathway Explorer Series videos – continued to receive the most page views with the videos having been watched 7,345 times.

## Two Deeper Research Questions

SEP continues to track survey data aligned to our vision. The lagging indicator research questions are:

- 1) *Question:* Are SEP's efforts resulting in **students fulfilling their potential** by having a specific, informed career plan in place by their high-school senior year?

*Answer:* In 2023 and 2024, we found that 52% of students graduated with a meaningful career plan. In 2025, that percentage rose to 57% – our goal is 100%!

- 2) *Question:* Are SEP's efforts **influencing students to remain in Stark County** for post-secondary education and career opportunities?

*Answer:* In 2023 and 2024, we found that 62% and 50% respectively indicated planning to remain in Stark County (our goal is to increase this to 65% by 2027). In 2025, that percentage is now at 61%.



# Financial Stewardship

SEP depends on the generous contributions of community foundations, businesses, and individuals who choose to invest in our mission and vision. SEP’s Board of Directors, President, and team are grateful for the generosity of so many and are responsible stewards of the financial resources in their care.

# Funding Diversification

SEP continues to diversify its revenue sources through an annual fundraising campaign. The following is a summary of the FY2025 Campaign.

- **20 businesses/organizations** contributed a total of \$132,100
- **17 individuals** contributed a total of \$58,075
- **\$140,000 in pledges** not yet received
- **\$330,175 total** received & pledged in the FY2025 Campaign (pledged funds will be received in FY2026)
- **“Summit Champions”**  
(Donors giving over \$50,00) included:  
Deuble Foundation, Employers Health, Hoover Foundation, Stark Community Foundation, Timken Foundation of Canton, and an anonymous donor
- **“Backpack Icons”**  
(Donations of \$25,000-\$49,999) included:  
Henry & Louise Timken Foundation, Marathon Petroleum Corporation, Paul & Carol David Foundation, and Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton

# FY25 Financial Summary

<b>Revenue</b>	
Endowment	\$ 279,803
Foundations	197,325
Corporate & Individual Donations	202,442
Government Grants	225,000
Program Support	124,400
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,028,970</b>

<b>Expenses</b>	
Salary & Benefits	\$ 981,879
Program Expenses	204,618
Back office	99,038
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 1,285,535</b>

Note: Summary is as of 5/31/2025.

Note: SEP receives some donations in full at the beginning of each 3-year campaign. This results in a larger cash-on-hand balance that helps offset the years when expenses exceed revenue.


### Immediate Investment Opportunity

Should you or someone you know, want to invest in Stark Education Partnership’s mission and vision, please reach out to:

John Richard, President  
(330) 452-0829  
[john.richard@edpartner.org](mailto:john.richard@edpartner.org)

### Not yet an SEP donor?

Use the QR code to donate online with PayPal, debit card, or credit card.



SCAN ME!

## SEP's Team

**Krista L. Allison**  
*Program Support Strategist*

**Dr. Tom Botzman**  
*Post Secondary Strategist*

**Chris Campbell**  
*Director of Data & Research*

**Susan Hayes**  
*Career Champion*

**Jaecey Hudson**  
*Career Champion*

**Sarah Leyda**  
*Career Champion*

**Jay Moody**  
*Director of  
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**Dr. John Richard**  
*President*

**Kim Santoro**  
*Director of Operations*

**Christine Taylor**  
*Vice President of  
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## SEP's Future

- SEP continues to add both school and business partners to fulfill its vision for Stark County's students and economy.
- Minimally, 12 school districts (28 schools) and 85+ workforce partners will be working together to provide career experiences for students.
- SEP's aspiration is to see all 17 Stark County school districts involved in intentional career-connected learning for all students by the 2027 school year.
- With the addition of school partners, comes the need for additional team members, especially that of Career Champions.
- For longer-term school partners, there is a need for career-connected learning to become part of the DNA of each school through widespread classroom integration. This deeper integration will require guidance, counsel, and support from SEP.



To the Supporters & Partners of SEP's Vision –  
Foundations, Businesses, Individuals, Schools –

# WE THANK YOU!