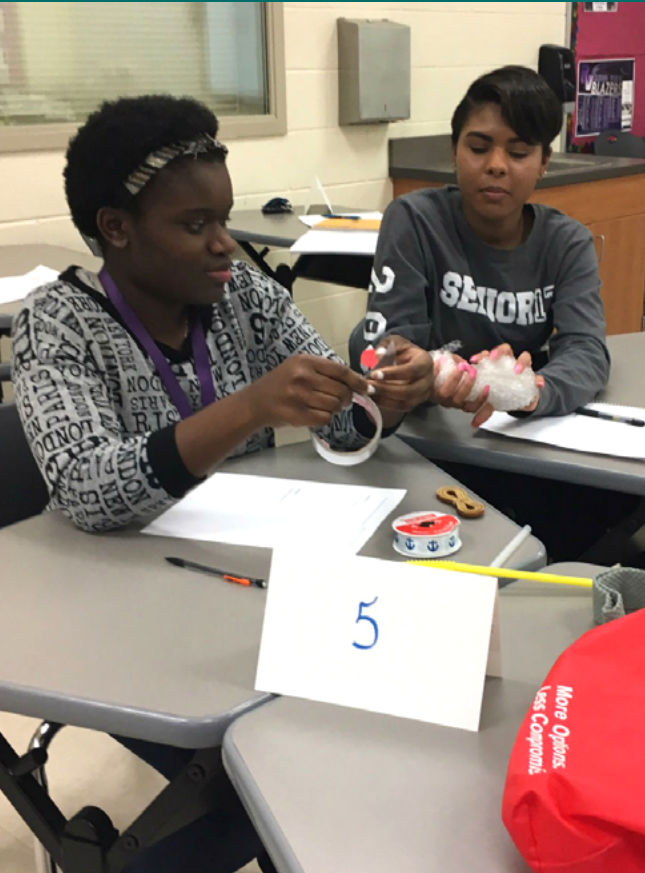


WORKFORCE READINESS



MEDTwo

Columbia, S.C.

215

Average number of students served during the school year

49%

Students from low-income families

Main funding sources:

- ▶ Local government funding
- ▶ Federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

Building on student interest and exposing students to careers and career pathways

The private sector spends more than \$164 billion every year on employee education and training to close workforce skill gaps and more than 1 in 3 workers agree that they do not have the education and training they need to get ahead. These issues beg the question: how do we sufficiently prepare youth to enter the future labor market as adults? Afterschool and summer learning programs are integral partners in this effort, providing students a ladder of supports that offer a step up for future success and help them reach their career aspirations.

Overview

The **MEDTwo** program provides students in Richland County School District Two's five high schools a comprehensive look into the wide range of medical careers available, including information on the steps required for each career pathway, through its seminar series. Students have the opportunity to earn digital badges participating in the seminar series, as well as the ability to earn academic credit through the program's health science lab component.

A typical day for students

Designed specifically to accommodate the schedules of high school students juggling multiple extracurricular activities after school and guest speakers' work hours, MEDTwo's seminar series begins at 5:30 p.m. Each seminar begins discussing the seminar's purpose and the information the program hopes students will leave the seminar with. Speakers, who have included forensic pathologists and pediatricians, talk with students about the day-to-day responsibilities of their job, the steps students need to take to land the job, and what students should start to think about if they are interested in that career pathway. Time is always reserved for students to ask questions and build a rapport with speakers.

The spring class component, which meets in-person once a week after school, is geared toward high school juniors and seniors who would like receive academic credit for a health sciences class. Throughout the week, students review and complete online content, however, the focus of the class is hands-on lab experience that reinforces the online content reviewed by students. Students spend time putting what they have learned into practice, working on occupational, physical, and speech therapy.

Program history

A collaborative effort between the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance, the Richland County School District Two, the South Carolina Department of Education, and the Richland County Library, the MEDTwo program was formed in response to increased student interest in health science careers paired with students' difficulty balancing health science classes with classes needed to meet graduation requirements. Launched in 2016, the program served more than 200 high school students in its first year.

Challenges

Employees are missing critical foundational skills that employers desire.

The ability to work in teams, problem solve, and communicate effectively are among the principal skills that employers consistently report desiring in their future hires, yet employers report difficulties finding potential and current employees possessing these set of skills.

Employers find it challenging to hire a workforce with the technical skills needed for open positions. In a 2017 survey of 500 leadership and human resource staff, 3 in 5 agreed that it was “common for job applicants to lack the technology skills important for success in their career.” Additionally, although more than half of the current U.S. labor market is comprised of middle-skills jobs, only 43 percent of workers are trained for these jobs.

Employers struggle to find candidates with job experience when looking to fill open positions. A survey of 400 employers found that candidate’s lack of experience was one of the top reasons reported by employers when asked why it was hard to fill positions and that 9 in 10 employers were more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate if they had an internship or apprenticeship with the company.

Read [Building Workforce Skills in Afterschool](#) to learn more.



Program characteristics

MEDTwo’s mission is not only to introduce high school students to the variety of health science career pathways available, but give students a better understanding of the steps they will need to take if they are interested in pursuing a health science career pathway. The program helps students make an informed decision about their career path, connecting students to health science professionals, who in turn share the responsibilities of their job, the requirements they met to enter their field, how they were able to advance, and the skills needed along the way.

The program also offers a course to provide hands-on learning experiences for students interested in the health sciences. For example, students in the course have been able to practice rehabilitation therapy, working in groups to learn how to help a patient with limited mobility.

Going into their second year, MEDTwo is looking to expand its programming, increase the frequency of their programs, and provide school credit for their lecture series.

Outcomes

Having recently wrapped up its first year of programming, MEDTwo has not yet undergone an evaluation. However, looking toward the future, the program hopes to conduct student surveys to help assess student satisfaction with the program, learn what students have gained from the program, and understand how to improve the program and better meet the needs of students. Anecdotally, MEDTwo students appreciate the insights into the healthcare fields that the program provides. A MEDTwo student said of the program, “The MEDTwo class was great, I learned a lot about [physical therapy] and [occupational therapy] and got to meet professionals in the healthcare fields. I highly recommend it to all students in our district.”

Recommendations

for connecting students to career pathways:

- ▶ Reach out as soon as possible to begin to build a relationship with schools, businesses, and community members. Communicating early helps to build good will toward the program, sharing how the program can support the work of partners.
- ▶ Start with a coffee instead of an ask. Build a rapport with potential partners, including community businesses and professionals, discussing the vision and goals of your program to help gain buy in.



**Afterschool
Alliance**

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