



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# Canton High School Career Expo highlights pathways to success for students

The Canton High School Career Expo is an engaging and transformative event for students. This annual event is coordinated by the [Canton Area Chamber of Commerce](#), [Spoon River College](#), [Canton Park District](#), [Graham Health System](#), [Fulton County Farm Bureau](#), and University of Illinois Extension. Middle and high school students gain firsthand insights into various professions, sparking their interest and guiding their career aspirations.

Career exploration plays a crucial role in helping students navigate their future paths. Research consistently shows that early exposure to career options enhances students' understanding of the job market and aids in making informed decisions about their futures. The 2024 Canton Career Expo was a testament to this, with participants reporting significant benefits.

A survey of attendees revealed that 76% of students found the expo instrumental in deciding their future careers, while 86% discovered more local career possibilities than they had previously known. This broadening of horizons was critical in helping students recognize the diverse opportunities available within their own communities.

Students also noted the event's impact on their future planning. Seventy-nine percent of participants expressed intentions to research further into career paths that piqued their interest, and 80% planned to take classes aligned with their career goals. Additionally, 88% of students came away from the expo with the belief that their current actions could positively influence their future, highlighting the expo's motivational impact.

The hands-on activities and direct interactions with professionals were particularly valued by the students. One student shared, "My favorite part was getting to go to all the stations and talk and do the hands-on activities that went with the stations. All the people were very kind and I enjoyed it a lot." This sentiment underscored the importance of experiential learning in making career education impactful and enjoyable.

Moreover, 70% of students learned the next steps necessary to further their career ambitions, an essential component of effective career planning. As another student reflected, "The most important thing I learned was how involved some jobs are in our town and how much they do for us." This awareness fostered a greater appreciation for local industries and the roles they play in the community.

The 2024 [Canton High School](#) Career Expo proved to be a vital platform for empowering students, providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to navigate their future careers confidently. By connecting students with local businesses and professionals, the expo not only benefited the students but also strengthened community ties, fostering a future workforce that is informed, prepared, and inspired.



*Illinois Extension staff from the horticulture and natural resources and 4-H teams serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell Counties spent the day teaching 8th, 10th, and 11th grade students about career possibilities at the Canton High School Career Expo. Throughout the event, local professionals provide hands-on activities as a way for students to get a feel for different jobs within various "career clusters," and spark their interest in potential pathways for their future.*

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