

About ProStart

The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation's ProStart program unites the foodservice industry and classroom together to offer high school students a platform to discover new interests and talents, while opening doors to fulfilling careers.

Curriculum

"Foundations of Restaurant Management and Culinary Arts" was developed by subject-matter experts and published by the NRAEF, in partnership with Pearson Education, a leading education publishing company. The two levels of the curriculum – Level One and Level Two – are not designed to be sequential; this makes it possible for small schools with limited resources to offer the ProStart program to students.

Connections

Connecting activities link the student's education with real industry experience. They typically include guest speakers, tours, job shadows and competitions. In many schools, an Industry Advisory Board guides the connecting activities to ensure they are relevant to today's industry.

Work Experience

Work experience is guided by supervisors/mentors and the ProStart Work Experience Competency Checklists – a comprehensive list of fundamental skills that students learn on-the-job. Student work experience hours may be earned through a combination of after-school and/or summer jobs, school-based enterprises and service activities, such as preparing and serving food at a shelter.

Assessments

More commonly known as "exams," the ProStart program offers a written assessment for each level of the curriculum. The questions meet statistical requirements for reliability, validity and rigor and are aligned with national educational standards for Family and Consumer Science education. The assessments are administered and scored following strict protocols to ensure validity.

Certification

The ProStart Certificate of Achievement (COA) is awarded to students who complete both levels of the program, pass the exams and document at least 400 hours of work experience, through which they have demonstrated workplace competency.

Scholarships

ProStart students who choose to pursue post-secondary school degrees/certifications often receive special consideration for scholarships, including those awarded by NRAEF, local chapters, specific post-secondary institutions or scholarship donors, as well as at events such as the state and national ProStart Invitationals. Those who have earned the COA may qualify for even more consideration.

Post-Secondary Recognition

Top post-secondary schools in the nation recognize the ProStart COA and award special packages to students with the ProStart credential, including college credits, advanced placement and credit for work experience.

Professional Development

The ProStart program also cultivates skills for educators. Professional-level training for ProStart educators is offered by the NRAEF during summer months at top colleges around the country. The weeklong “Summer Institutes” assist ProStart educators to develop cutting-edge skills and gain valuable industry knowledge. Completion of three levels of Summer Institutes, a lesson plan and documentation of at least 120 hours of industry work experience lead to the NRAEF Certified Secondary Foodservice Educator (CSFE) credential.

Additional Facts

- From culinary techniques to management skills, ProStart’s industry-driven curriculum provides real-life experience and builds practical skills and a foundation that will last a lifetime.
- The ProStart program began in 1997 with 100 high school students in six schools – Today, in partnership with State Restaurant Associations, ProStart is taught to nearly 120,000 students in more than 1,700 schools across 50 states, Guam and Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools in Europe and Asia.
- Students who receive the ProStart Certificate of Achievement (COA) are eligible for NRAEF scholarship opportunities and course credits at more 60 of the country’s leading hospitality and culinary arts colleges and universities.
- Each year, the NRAEF holds the annual National ProStart Invitational. It is a fast-paced competition where more than 350 top ProStart students demonstrate their mastery of restaurant leadership, culinary and management skills.
- The culinary competition highlights the creative abilities of each team as they prepare a three-course meal in 60 minutes, using only two butane burners with no access to running water or electricity.
- Management teams develop a business proposal for an original restaurant concept and present it to a panel of industry judges. Then, they are further tested to solve the types of challenges restaurant managers face on a daily basis.