Evaluation of the School-to-Work Out-of-School Youth Demonstration and Job Corps Model Centers

Final Report for the
Out-of-School Youth Demonstration
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared as part of a contract awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to conduct an Evaluation of the School-to-Work Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Demonstration and Job Corps Model Centers. The demonstration programs and Model Centers are alike in attempting to incorporate and adapt school-to-work principles in their services to out-of-school youth. This summary reflects the findings reported in the Final Report for the component of the study focused on the OSY Demonstration; as such, it presents a discussion of the design and implementation of the demonstration projects, including their objectives and strategies. A companion report addresses similar issues with respect to the Job Corps Model Centers.

BACKGROUND

School-to-work (STW) represents a potentially important improvement in the nation's efforts to fully prepare its young people for successful and productive careers. By teaching academic skills in a career context using active learning methods, youth may become more meaningfully engaged in the process of learning, develop a broader array of SCANS skills and competencies, and see how the skills they are acquiring can be applied. Moreover, including work-based activities makes it possible for them to learn skills in authentic, real-world settings, while familiarizing them with the demands and rigors of the work world. Based on this promise, STW partnerships around the nation have been responding to the challenges and opportunities afforded by the School-to-Work Opportunities Act by revamping curricula and pedagogy.

Typically, the focal point for these efforts has been the secondary school. As a consequence, too often high school dropouts and recent graduates with weak skills, who are disconnected from the traditional academic environment, are left out of these emerging systems. This omission means that our most vulnerable young adults, who might most benefit from the learning principles embedded in school-to-work, lack access to the opportunities the Act has created. The OSY STW Demonstration funded by the Department of Labor represents an effort to identify effective practices in reaching this population.

DOL'S CRITERIA FOR AWARDING DEMONSTRATION GRANT FUNDS

In the summer of 1997, DOL issued a grant announcement encouraging applications for competitive grants for the OSY Demonstration Projects. In total,

eleven grants were awarded, ranging in amounts from $100,000 to $140,000. The grants were to commence in October of 1997, and the period of performance was expected to last for 15 months; the expected completion of the grant period was thus to be the end of calendar year 1998. However, most grantees requested extensions, which pushed the period during which they received funding to the middle of 1999.

Because these were to be demonstration projects, DOL emphasized that it was encouraging applications from a variety of programs representing diverse approaches to serving the out-of-school youth population. However, the grant announcement also made clear that applications would only be considered from established employment and education providers and ones that had already incorporated in their existing programs at least some design elements that were consistent with school-to-work. To this degree, the grant funds were expected to be used to enable the selected providers to build on and enhance existing design elements within a school-to-work framework. Moreover, the grantees were expected to demonstrate a clear connection with existing federally-funded school-to-work systems.

To clarify its expectations, DOL spelled out in the grant announcement a number of "threshold criteria," which it took as constituting key features of well-developed school-to-work systems. These criteria related to the formation of partnerships, the design of programmatic components, and the measurement and self-assessment of progress. Bidders were expected to demonstrate conformance to a majority of these principles at the time they submitted their grant request and explain in their proposals how they would use their grant funds to advance these criteria still further. Among these criteria are stipulations that programs should:

- Exhibit strong community-wide partnership committed to school-to-work.
- Forge collaborative agreements among a variety of institutions serving out-of-school youth.
- Involve employers in planning and governance and in providing a range of services for youth.
- Have in place effective strategies for recruiting, retaining, and serving out-of-school youth.
- Include a system of integrated school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities.
- Organize learning around an appropriate system of career pathways that provides students with exposure to all aspects of an industry.

- Offer work-based learning activities that provide a variety of high quality work experiences and include adult work site mentors.
- Offer school-based learning activities that show a commitment to high academic standards and teach workplace basics in an applied context integrated with academic learning.
- Include professional development for worksite and classroom-based staff.
- Specify goals and objectives and expected outcomes for their programs, as well as a system to implement continuous improvement.

These threshold criteria focused the evaluation effort and served as a yardstick against which the success of the demonstration programs was judged.

DATA COLLECTION AS PART OF THE DEMONSTRATION EVALUATION

The evaluation consisted of a process study designed to identify challenges and strategies in adapting the principles and objectives of school-to-work to programs serving out-of-school youth. As part of the data collection associated with the study, research team members visited each grantee twice, with a two-day site visit each time. The first wave of these visits occurred through the summer and fall of 1998, and the return site visits occurred during the spring of 1999. During these site visits, field researchers conducted discussions with key grantee administrators and planners, case managers, classroom instructors, and worksite supervisors. They also conducted a focus group with participants, observed class-based and work-based instructional activities, and reviewed lesson plans, course outlines, and progress reports. Additional data collection conducted as part of this study included regular telephone reconnaissance with key respondents at the demonstration sites, to learn about the projects' evolution during the interval between site visits.

GRANTEES FUNDED UNDER THE STW/OSY DEMONSTRATION

The eleven grantees selected for funding by DOL varied enormously with respect to their existing designs and planned program improvements. For example, they began the demonstration from very different starting points—operating in different contexts with different organizational features, with different partnerships already in place, having different service emphases, etc. Some grantees were operating discrete, small-scale programs serving small numbers of participants (a dozen or two) each year; others were operating programs as part of huge organizations serving hundreds or thousands of young people. They also tried to accomplish very different things during the grant period, with some trying to enhance a school-based curriculum, others adding a work-

based learning component or mentorships, others providing for staff development, and so on. Not surprisingly, therefore, their experiences during the grant period unfolded very differently. Nonetheless, their experiences reveal important lessons about the difficulties of implementing systemic reform for programs serving out-of-school youth and suggest promising approaches and practices.

THE IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE

The grantees funded under the OSY Demonstration were a mixed bag from the outset. Some were adult or alternative high schools, with a clear focus on helping young people achieve their high school diploma or GED in a classroom setting. Other grantees were based on the YouthBuild model, which alternates periods of time in classroom academic, vocational, and work readiness skills training, with time in work-based learning at a construction site, where youth learn an array of skills while building or refurbishing housing for low-income individuals. A third group of grantees had their genesis as workforce development programs, often with a strong connection to JTPA and a focus on employability development.

Although this categorization clearly demarcates important differences, the groups were themselves internally heterogeneous in a way that makes generalizations about them difficult. Nonetheless, at the risk of glossing over important nuances of individual programs, the very different starting points defined by the groups generally positioned the programs very differently with respect to the threshold criteria and gave rise to unique implementation challenges. Thus, the nature of the lead agency that secured the demonstration grant made an important difference in defining pre-existing strengths and weaknesses and consequent action strategies for change. For example, the alternative and adult high schools typically had broad experience in providing academic instruction to young people in a classroom setting on an ongoing basis. Most were large institutions serving large numbers of participants, and they typically adhered to a regular school semester as the schedule for learning. However, in a concession to the greater flexibility that out-of-school youth require, enrollees could typically vary their course load or opt for morning or afternoon sessions to meet their other obligations.

In keeping with their status as alternative high schools, grantees in this group had prior experience in using classroom teaching methods that departed from the traditional high school in important ways (e.g., more flexible scheduling, more individualized attention, etc.), but not always in conformance with school-to-work. For example, some showed prior experience with using project-based learning and integrated

curricula, but others did not. Similarly, although most do make vocational course offerings available, some have little experience with organizing academic classroom learning around career pathways. With one exception, they also had little prior experience with using work-based learning. In fact, all grantees in this category identified the development or expansion of work-based opportunities as among their goals for the grant period. As well, they mentioned in their grant applications wanting to build stronger partnerships, expand the use of career pathways, and revamp their class curriculum to make better use of contextual learning.

In contrast to them, the two grantees based on the YouthBuild model had always used work-based learning as a fundamental part of their teaching strategy. Moreover, the close connection with a single career cluster makes the integration of all learning around a career pathway very feasible for them. However, precisely because of this close connection, students have limited options with respect to choosing a career pathway to guide their learning and even have limited exposure to different career options, facts that both grantees in this category were attempting to address with their grant funding.

The final group of grantees displayed a clear emphasis on developing youths' work readiness skills, and thus made career counseling, life skills training, pre-employment work maturity, and the like, a prominent feature of their service offerings. They also displayed a strong case management culture and tended to have extensive linkages in place with community service organizations to handle youths' needs for supportive services. Given their relative lack of special expertise in teaching academic skills, they typically used off-the-shelf instructional packages to prepare youth for passing the GED test. Three of the four grantees in this group made little use of work-based learning. The fourth, by contrast, arranged for all youth to undertake paid employment while enrolled, but it was typically not well integrated with classroom activities and was viewed more as a vehicle for giving youth an introduction to the work world rather than as a means for imparting a range of skills. Grantees in this group expressed a range of goals as part of their grant plans, including expanding work-based learning opportunities and revamping classroom curricula to make more systematic use of integrated skills instruction.

Partnerships and Partnership Formation

Grantees in all three of these categories typically had strong community-wide partnerships in place on which they were trying to build. These partners included

secondary schools and school districts, postsecondary institutions, local governments, community service agencies, and employers or employer groups. Members of the partnerships contributed substantial in-kind or financial resources that enabled grantees to greatly expand the range of services they could offer, or they provided specific services to support the grantees' efforts.

Although these contributions were always important, partners did not always share a common understanding of school-to-work principles, nor did they always grasp the role they were expected to play as part of a broader system. Where these elements were present, a much stronger partnership developed in support of school-to-work system development. For example, work-based learning opportunities were more likely to be learning rich and integrated with classroom activities when employers fully understood the grantees' learning objectives and participated from the outset in the design of the school-to-work service strategy.

Noticeably absent as strong partners were existing STW systems, which most grantees found paid little attention to meeting the needs of out-of-school youth and lacked a good sense of how to go about doing so. Thus, grantees typically served as a resource and lent their expertise to existing STW systems, rather than the other way around. Their general inability to merge their efforts into local STW partnerships is troubling, because it suggests that emerging local systems are paying little attention to the problems of serving out-of-school youth.

Recruitment and Counseling

Drawing on referrals from schools or from other sources, most grantees could count on a steady stream of applicants; this was especially true for alternative or adult high schools, which had stronger referral linkages with existing school systems. Given a pool of applicants from which to draw, many grantees established a screening mechanism to ensure that those enrolled met at least minimal levels of basic skills and expressed a modicum of motivation and commitment. But, despite whatever screening did occur, participants could surely be considered to be hard-to-serve, with most showing evidence of multiple barriers to success, including problems with substance abuse, low self-esteem, very poor academic skills, and a lack of understanding of the demands of the work world, all of which gave rise to myriad and complex service needs.

If there was one common strength across OSY demonstration grantees, it was their appreciation and understanding of these needs. Thus, all grantees had strong case management systems in place and developed supportive and nurturing relationships between adults and the young people being served. Indeed, participants identified these caring relationships as among the features of the programs that they valued the most. All programs also made provisions to meet youths' needs for an array of supportive services, including counseling, transportation assistance, health screenings, and the like. In these respects, the programs we studied demonstrated conformance to sound youth development principles.

School-Based Learning

With respect to school-based learning, all programs but one provided basic skills instruction and were geared towards preparing youth for the high school diploma or GED, and all offered training in workplace basics; eight offered training in vocational skills, either by referral or directly, in some cases as an optional activity.

Programs found that there was a tension between developing innovative, integrated instructional strategies while still gearing students for meeting the requirements of the GED or, to a lesser extent, the high school diploma. For example, to prepare youth for passing the GED in as short a time as possible, preparation courses were often focused on developing competency in the discrete reading, math, and science skills covered by the test. The emphasis on this "quick credential" does not encourage the modification of existing instructional strategies and creates a very real challenge to providing opportunities for students to think critically, problem-solve, and apply learning in context. At least, program administrators deemed it too risky to depart very far from traditional GED instructional approaches, in the absence of knowing about sound, well-tested alternatives. As a consequence, many programs found themselves falling back on off-the-shelf instructional packages, including computer-aided instruction. Similarly, for attaining the high school diploma, each out-of-school youth needed a unique set of course credits required for graduation; i.e., the number and types of courses that each student needed typically varied. This diversity created a very real challenge in designing innovative course materials that integrated learning across multiple subject areas. Finally, for both GED and high school diploma programs, the open-entry/open-exit nature of instruction, which many of them adopted, meant that different youth were participating in training for potentially greatly varying

lengths of time, which further made it difficult to plan coherent and cohesive programs of study.

As a consequence of these constraints, we found that some programs struggled with developing new ways of teaching academics that were in closer conformance to school-to-work principles. In these cases, the use of integrated curricula and alternative teaching strategies (such as project-based learning, team teaching, etc.) were typically limited.

Perhaps because of the structured way that teaching academics was approached, the teaching of workplace basics was usually viewed as a discrete, modular classroom activity. Thus, most programs taught life skills, work maturity skills, job search techniques, etc., in separate class periods with these personal development themes as a central focus. Although alternative teaching strategies were more likely to be used for this content area (e.g., role playing, group discussion), the integration with academic skills development was typically very limited.

These observations notwithstanding, about one-third of the demonstration grantees were quite innovative in their approach to school-based learning and demonstrated consistent and high conformance to DOL's threshold criteria for teaching academics and workplace basics. Thus, these grantees routinely relied on team-teaching, deliberately designed curricula to organize the teaching of academic skills and workplace basics around a career pathway, and made extensive use of project-based learning for skills development. For example, one grantee developed multi-disciplinary thematic courses that could earn students academic credit in multiple subjects simultaneously.

High-quality design principles were more consistently in evidence in the teaching of vocational skills, which was provided either directly or by referral for some or all students by eight of the eleven demonstration grantees. There seem to be natural opportunities that occur in vocational training courses to integrate academic skills (at least the skill set that applies to that vocation) and workplace basics, as well as opportunities for hands-on, active learning. These opportunities were generally used to full advantage.

The focus of the vocational training varied greatly across grantees, however. In some cases, it was geared towards preparing youth for entry into specific occupations (i.e., resembled traditional vocational education). In other cases, the goals were

broader, youth were more likely to be exposed to all aspects of an industry, and the vocational learning became a vehicle for teaching an array of skills. The latter was more likely to be the focus when the vocational training was provided in-house, rather than by referral, because in these instances grantees had direct control over instructional strategies and thus could modify them to advance broader program goals.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning activities were also to be provided by demonstration programs and, in order to follow high-quality design principles identified by DOL, should provide for a variety of work experiences integrated with school-based activities, be organized around a career theme, offer worksite mentors, and give youth the opportunity to earn academic credit and/or skill certificates. As with school-based learning, about one-third of the grantees consistently provided a range of high-quality work-based learning opportunities to all or most program participants being served. In these cases, the work experiences were closely tied with classroom activities and were used as a natural context for teaching an array of academic, vocational, and SCANS skills, as well as workplace basics.

Another third of the grantees utilized paid work experience as part of their service offerings, but these were not focused on a clearly defined training plan that went beyond fairly standard employability skills. Many work experience slots were thus designed to provide an initial exposure to the world of work rather than exposure to a particular career path in which the student was interested or as a training opportunity for specific skill development.

A final third of the grantees restricted their work-based service offerings primarily to job shadowing or guest speakers from local businesses, and thus could not offer the range of work-based learning opportunities that would have been desirable.

Part of the problem that grantees experienced in developing high-quality work-based learning was the challenge they encountered in recruiting employers who were willing to invest the time and resources to develop quality training opportunities for young people. Grantees utilized two primary strategies to recruit employers, neither of which worked well for grantees without strong employer partnerships to begin with. One strategy involved linking with intermediary organizations whose principal responsibility was to establish and maintain effective employer relationships; neither of the two grantees that used this approach was entirely satisfied with the results. The

other strategy took the form of hiring an individual to broker work-based experiences or assigning this responsibility to one or more existing staff. This approach demonstrated potential as an effective strategy, but it was very much dependent on the skills and contacts the staff persons brought with them.

In explaining their reluctance to participate, employers cited their lack of staff resources to devote to training, their need to focus on "the bottom line," and their reluctance to take responsibility for what they perceived to be troubled youth. In overcoming these objections, programs found, first, that a high degree of customization was necessary. Thus, different employers needed to be approached in different ways, and their concerns needed to be addressed individually. Second, and related to this, partnerships with employers needed to be viewed as reciprocal; that is, these relationships failed when they were formed on the basis of how employer partners could contribute to the demonstration program without also attending to how employers could benefit. By contrast, successful programs found it very important to appeal to employers in a way that would resonate with them. Third, it also proved important to involve employers in the initiative at the outset (for example, in helping design the program services), rather than asking them to provide work-based learning slots when the program design was already established. Finally, grantees were much more successful if they could build on strong pre-existing employer relationships; those grantees starting from scratch at the beginning of the grant period almost invariably ended up being disappointed if they planned on major employer involvement by the end of the period.

Another challenge in developing high quality work-based learning included the characteristics of the youth that made employers reluctant to work with them, including problems with substance abuse, limited basic skills, undeveloped workplace skills, and what employers perceived to be the students' lack of motivation and commitment. Also, many youth served by the programs were already working in jobs that often paid more (even if career and training options were limited) than the temporary internships or work experiences that programs could arrange.

Because of this array of challenges, only one grantee that did not have a strong work-based learning component to begin with was able to make substantial strides in this direction during the grant period, despite the fact that most grantees tried to do so. Overall, then, sites appeared to underestimate the time and level of effort required to develop and maintain high quality work-based learning experiences. Clearly, employer

involvement will demand a high level of effort to develop and nurture relationships, often requiring staff who have a specific set of skills and knowledge and who are dedicated wholly to this function.

Connecting Activities

A third key component of well-developed school-to-work systems include connecting activities, including efforts at building staff capacity and linking students to employment and postsecondary training options in the post-program period. With respect to capacity building, about half of the grantees resorted to single-day orientation sessions for staff at the beginning of a program cycle and/or took advantage of the occasional relevant training conference that was offered in the community. Most programs also made provisions for periodic staff meetings, but often these were focused on specific problems or issues or served as a forum to discuss specific concerns about individual students.

The remaining half were more deliberate in encouraging or requiring classroom instructors to undertake periodic intensive professional development. For example, one alternative high school had all teachers meet at the beginning of the school year for a "student-free" week devoted to professional development; it also required all staff to attend a minimum of four days of professional development activities per year, and supports teachers in their continuing education (e.g., for those pursuing ESL or special education certification).

Although staff at all of the demonstration grantees clearly were dedicated and hard working, and generally had long experience in working with out-of-school youth, concerted efforts at capacity building seemed to pay off in terms of a program's demonstrating greater conformance to DOL's threshold criteria. Thus, the fact that more grantees did not concentrate much attention on intensive and deliberate capacity building was unfortunate. Especially noteworthy was the fact that only a few grantees accessed the Technical Assistance set-aside funds available to the programs through the School-to-Work TA Providers' Network. The reluctance of others to do so seemed to stem from several factors. To begin with, most programs began the grant period with some sense of what they wanted to accomplish and, at least in their own minds, an appropriate strategy for how to achieve their objectives; by the time they realized that their efforts were not yielding the results that they expected, the grant period was drawing to a close. Other factors that explain the reluctance to use TA funds include

the grantees' lack of awareness of what assistance was available and how it could help them and an inability to perceive their own weaknesses.

Developing strategies to link classroom and work-based activities is another important connecting activity. Four grantees did indeed foster close coordination between these two learning components. In doing so, they arranged to have classroom instructors meet with worksite supervisors on a regular basis to discuss ways of integrating learning and work on the development of joint lesson plans. In other programs, by contrast, although classroom instructors might have met periodically with work supervisors, it was usually to discuss the progress of individual students or address problems that were occurring at the work sites.

Finally with respect to connecting activities, all grantees developed some strategies to link students with postsecondary training options. Usually these operated on an individual referral basis. Thus, students who expressed an interest might have been counseled about how to apply to college, request student aid, etc. Guest speakers and tours of college campuses were also common. More formal linkages with postsecondary institutions were infrequent, as only three grantees had formal articulation agreements with community colleges. The fact that more programs did not do so might be attributed to the preference that most youth expressed for immediate employment.

Developing a System of Continuous Improvement

Tracking youths' progress and developing a system of continuous improvement represents a final area in which DOL had developed threshold criteria. Clearly, based on the programs' designs, as described above, these grantees were focusing on imparting academic skills, work readiness and life skills, and, in some cases, vocational skills. By holding youths to high standards of conduct and achievement, programs were also endeavoring to favorably impact the participants' motivations and behaviors and boost their self-esteem. Grantees were able to track these attainments to some degree, especially those that were more quantifiable, through periodic performance appraisals. Similarly, youths' post-program outcomes and program retention rates were also monitored to some extent. On the latter score, it appears that in many programs from one-third to one-half of those enrolled had exited before completing their program objectives (e.g., attaining a high school diploma or GED), attesting to the difficulties inherent in serving this population. Partly because these data collection and tracking systems were rudimentary, systems of continuous improvement were quite informal,

with program administrators learning from instructors, case managers, and partners what program improvements might be desirable.

Challenges in Adapting the STW Model to Out-of-School Youth

Sound STW principles are sound in any context. Thus, we are struck by how comprehensive DOL's threshold criteria are for the OSY Demonstration and how appropriate they would be for STW system development for in-school as well as out-of-school youth. At the same time, serving out-of-school youth in a school-to-work context gives rise to unique issues and challenges that are daunting in their complexity.

To begin with, engaging out-of-school youth in a training program of any sort can itself be very difficult. These youth, unlike their in-school counterparts, are typically disconnected from institutions for learning and disaffected with structured learning environments. This lack of connection can make it difficult for training programs to identify and enroll prospective participants. Strategies adopted by the OSY grantees included using strong referrals from partners, especially school systems and neighborhood organizations, along with the innovative service design features that held out the promise to youth that this program represented something different.

Enrollment and retention are challenges too because out-of-school youth often need to earn an immediate income, due to family responsibilities or for other causes. For this reason, it is difficult for many of them to undergo training if it means forgoing the opportunity to accept a paid job. Similarly, they have other responsibilities that make regular attendance in a training program difficult, and have substantial barriers to successful participation—including problems with substance abuse, involvement with the criminal justice system, low self-esteem, uncertain motivation, family problems, etc.

School-to-work in and of itself offers the prospect of addressing some of these obstacles. To the extent that programs adopted active learning methods and used contextual instruction in a way that made learning seem relevant, out-of-school youth became engaged in a way that they had not experienced before. Beyond this, the demonstration programs that we studied adopted additional strategies, including using flexible scheduling to accommodate youths' other obligations and providing strong case management and supportive services to address an array of their other needs. It also proved important for programs to be clear about their expectations for young people at the outset, so that youth would have an accurate idea of what it was that they were

committing to. Other programs found it important to provide stipends for classroom learning and move youth into paid work-based learning as quickly as possible, to provide them with a steady source of income. Finally, although it was not demonstrated commonly among the programs we studied, involving participants in planning and governance gave them a sense of ownership that increased their motivation for learning and their engagement with the program's objectives.

Adapting school-to-work for out-of-school youth also presents problems and issues in program design. The structure of most in-school school-to-work efforts provides for many elements to be addressed throughout a young person's school participation. In well-developed school-to-work initiatives, schools have developed curricula to incorporate career exploration, establish career pathways, link school and work, etc., as a sequence of activities and services that spans the K – 12 years. At the minimum, school-to-work activities are emphasized during the last several years of secondary school.

By contrast, programs for out-of-school youth rarely plan on more than a single year of participation, and are often even much shorter than this. This fact gives rise to a struggle to telescope within a shorter length of participation the overall mix and sequence of services that would be desirable from a school-to-work standpoint. Aggravating the problem, most program participants will lack the basic skills and work readiness skills required for competence in the labor market and thus will need extensive remediation before being made ready for the demands of the high-performance work world.

Again, STW principles intrinsically offered a way of addressing these challenges. By integrating the teaching of an array of skills, programs ensured that skill building could proceed on multiple fronts at once, and through both school-based and work-based components. Similarly, in an effort to help youth achieve educational credentials quickly, multi-disciplinary courses were developed that offered credit for multiple subject areas simultaneously.

CONCLUSIONS

All of the demonstration programs were making important progress in reaching an extremely hard-to-serve population of young people, who are typically disenchanted from traditional educational institutions, have very poor academic skills, and a host of barriers to success, including problems with drug use, criminal records, poor self-

esteem, and lack of a good understanding of what it takes to succeed. All programs we studied displayed a firm grasp of these realities that was reflected in their program designs. Thus, all demonstrated a foundation in sound youth development principles, including an attention to skill building, fostering self-confidence, promoting one-on-one relationships with caring adults, and the like.

Their conformance to school-to-work principles, on the other hand, was mixed. About half showed compliance with all or most of DOL's threshold criteria, and thus organized learning around career pathways, integrated academic and vocational skills instruction, linked work-based and school-based learning, promoted connecting activities, provided exposure to all aspects of an industry, and so on. By contrast, other grantees, however strong they were by some standards, failed to come to grips with school-to-work as an integrated system for learning. Thus, while many of the individual program components may have been in place (e.g., teaching academic skills, teaching workplace basics, providing opportunities for work experience, etc.), these were not well integrated into a cohesive whole.

It was also clear that the grantees' ability to implement meaningful system reform during the grant period varied. The ability to affect systemic change requires clear vision, strong leadership, and adequate resources. It also requires a clear sense of what needs to be accomplished, as well as a deliberate and well thought-out action plan. About half of the grantees participating in this demonstration did indeed demonstrate substantial systemic change during the grant period. In these cases, some key element of the grantees' service strategy was noticeably changed in a way that aligned its project design in closer conformance with DOL's threshold criteria. Moreover, these changes represented true systemic reform and showed every indication of being *sustained and built upon* once the OSY grant funding ended. Examples of the types of changes that were implemented included adding an additional career pathway for students to choose or enhancing classroom curricula to further integrate the teaching of an array of skills in context. In contrast to these, the remaining half of the grantees were not able to achieve their project goals in ways that led to sustainable program accomplishments. In these cases, the grantee's service design at the end of the grant period looked little different than it did at the outset.

Typically, grantees that were able to achieve sustainable goals already had well-developed school-to-work systems in place. To this degree, it could be said that grantees that made the most progress were those that were farthest along to begin with.

Typically, these grantees had a clear vision at the outset of what school-to-work should entail. They were thus able to think strategically about what they wanted to achieve during the grant period, and they used their grant funds accordingly, to focus on some specific system feature that they wanted to implement or enhance. At the same time, they were flexible and adaptable, and thus could reformulate objectives and strategies in response to external constraints that impeded their implementation efforts.

In contrast, grantees that were less successful lacked a clear vision of school-to-work and what it was that needed to be accomplished during the grant period to enhance their STW system. As a consequence, they tended to formulate vague and broadly defined goals, were too ambitious in what they hoped to accomplish, and specified action steps that lacked focus.

OBSERVATIONS ON EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

It is apparent that implementing and sustaining school-to-work partnerships and learning strategies for the out-of-school youth population created difficulties for many of the demonstration projects, while others were quite successful in building important new systems for learning. Nonetheless, the experience of all of them provided substantial information about the process of forming school-to-work partnerships, assembling necessary resources, developing appropriate career pathways for the out-of-school youth population, and sustaining these efforts. Lessons learned from these experiences suggest that some crucial design elements, contexts, and critical conditions need to be in place for programs to affect lasting change. Based on these experiences, we can draw attention to a number of practices or strategies that may help guide subsequent efforts. Some of these echo themes central to sound STW system development; to this degree, our findings with respect to innovative practices in the OSY demonstration grantees reinforce principles that were developed more generally. Other recommendations reflect adaptations that programs need to make for meeting the needs of out-of-school youth or how they can most effectively implement change.

1. *Grantees attempting to implement systemic reform should focus narrowly on a small number of clearly defined goals, especially if they are small organizations with limited resources. Additionally, action strategies and financial and personnel resources must be adequately aligned with the organization's goals and objectives for change.* Implementing change takes time and concerted, focused effort. Organizations hoping to transform their service delivery structure to achieve greater conformance with school-to-work principles need to be strategic. They are better off focusing at any one time on a smaller number of clearly specified objectives,

rather than attempting to implement a wholesale transformation in a short period of time. Similarly, goals should be interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Thus, for example, programs attempting to establish a new career pathway might specify the adoption of this pathway as a goal, as well as goals pertaining to school-based and work-based learning that would support it. Grantees should also be sure that action steps are clearly laid out and are closely tied to their goals and objectives. By implication, organizations should resist the temptation to espouse broad and sweeping goal statements, with vague action plans, however sensible the end objective or laudable the intent.

2. *To be effective, all members of the partnership serving out-of-school youth must be clear about their individual responsibilities and must share a common understanding of school-to-work principles. Moreover, adequate resources must be devoted to coordinating their efforts.* Effective STW efforts for out-of-school youth will require contributions from a number of different actors and agencies, including secondary schools, employers, and community service agencies. However, to ensure that they work in concert and in support of the system goals, all partners must have a clear understanding of what they will be expected to contribute, and, just as importantly, must fully understand and embrace how their role contributes to school-to-work system development. Moreover, these partners can work in concert only if the lead organization devotes adequate resources to coordinating and overseeing the partners' efforts.

3. *Strong relationships with local school systems and neighborhood organizations will be especially important in recruiting out-of-school youth for program participation.* Grantees participating in the demonstration project that had strong linkages with the local school district(s) or neighborhood organizations were ensured of a ready source of referrals of out-of-school youth appropriate for program services. By contrast, grantees without such linkages often had difficulty achieving their recruitment objectives.

4. *Organizations serving out-of-school youth must be cognizant of how the needs of this population differ from those of in-school youth and they must be prepared to address those needs.* Out-of-school youth will be difficult to engage in a structured learning environment, will often need a steady income flow, and will have multiple barriers to successful program participation, including other responsibilities that make their participation difficult and personal or family problems. To address these issues, grantees should embrace innovative instructional methods that make clear the relevance of learning, offer flexible scheduling, offer strong case management, and provide opportunities for paid work experience. Strong linkages with community service organizations will also be important to ensure that youths' needs for supportive services can be met.

5. *Upfront assessment should be reciprocal, giving the grantee organization the chance to learn about the youths' needs and capabilities, but, just as important, providing the youth with a realistic picture of what will be expected of him or her and what opportunities are available.* Grantees must identify the youths' diverse service

needs early on in program participation, so that an appropriate training plan and service strategy can be developed. But, in focusing on what the grantee needs to learn about the youth, grantees sometimes ignore the fact that the youths in turn need to know about the grantee organization, including what services can be provided and what training choices are available. Grantees that provide this information will help ensure that enrollees have a clear and accurate sense of what is being expected of them and what they in turn can expect. Such an information exchange will also ensure that youth have an appropriate interest in whatever vocational training is provided or what career pathway the grantee will be using to structure learning, potentially helping the grantee minimize problems with high rates of participants' dropping out of the program prior to completion.

6. *Grantees serving out-of-school youth, especially smaller organizations that lack economies of scale, may find it advantageous to form networks with similar organizations, to broaden training choices*. Some grantees serving out-of-school youth as part of this demonstration project were quite small. Their size made it difficult for them to offer an array of career pathways from which enrollees could choose and similarly limited the options with respect to vocational training. Although none of the grantees that we studied adopted this strategy, one potential solution to broadening training choices for participants would be for similarly situated organizations to form loose networks that could foster cross-referrals.

7. *Grantees should involve students as important stakeholders and elicit their input regarding program design and services*. Out-of-school youth want a voice regarding what services will be provided to them, and how those services will be structured. Moreover, giving them input into important decision-making can be empowering, helping them overcome feelings of helplessness and lack of control over their lives, and giving them a sense of ownership of the program in which they are participating. Involvement can be at several levels, including program improvement and design, peer "discipline," student governance, and input into instructional approaches or learning goals. Thus, grantees should actively elicit the input of program participants with respect to major program features.

8. *Grantees should not allow the requirements of the GED (or high school diploma) to stifle the use of innovative classroom-based instructional methods that integrate the learning of academic and workplace skills. Information about promising alternative approaches should be widely disseminated*. Out-of-school youth participants will typically want to focus on achieving their training objectives, including attaining the GED or high school diploma, as quickly as possible. Given the rigidity of the GED (and, often, diploma requirements), grantees can thus be tempted to "teach to the test" to ensure that youth quickly get the academic credential they need. But the success of several of the demonstration grantees makes clear that GED or diploma requirements need not come at the expense of promoting innovative instructional strategies that are consistent with school-to-work principles. Peer exchanges or other forums should be used to disseminate information about promising

approaches, to help overcome grantees' understandable reluctance to depart from more traditional approaches.

9. *To the extent practical, vocational classroom instruction should go beyond preparing youth for narrow entry-level occupations but should instead promote learning in "all aspects of an industry."* Realistically, most out-of-school youth are interested in attaining full-time employment as quickly as possible. For this reason, some demonstration grantees focused on providing youth with concrete vocational skills that would get them a job upon program completion. However, attention also needs to be paid to providing youth with exposure to all aspects of an industry and developing transferable skills. One way to do so is to use occupational skills as the context for learning an array of SCANS and other skills, rather than focus on vocational skills instruction per se. In this way, the opportunities for employment or further training in a range of occupations spanning a skill hierarchy can be enhanced, rather than constrained.

10. *Apart from its effectiveness as a training strategy, paid internships will meet the need that many out-of-school youth will have for an immediate income and thus should be included as a integral program component. Stipends for classroom training also might be helpful in promoting retention*. Unlike their in-school counterparts, out-of-school youth, especially those who are older, will have family or other responsibilities that make their need for an immediate income urgent. Thus, programs have an additional reason for providing youth with paid internships as part of their program participation. Providing them with stipends for classroom training also should be considered for the same reason.

11. *At the same time, in their haste to provide paid employment opportunities, programs must be sure that out-of-school youth have the fundamental skills they need to perform satisfactorily at the worksite and that employers have expectations that are in keeping with their role as providers of training. Problems as they arise need to be addressed quickly*. Grantees who neglect to adequately prepare youth for their worksite experiences or convey appropriate expectations for both work supervisors and trainees risk having employers be frustrated or disappointed with the youths' performance, potentially undermining the relationship for the future. Thus, while there may be a need to move youth to worksite opportunities as quickly as possible, meeting this objective should not come at the expense of ensuring that employers' expectations of the students' job performance can be met. Staff must also be poised to "trouble-shoot," as a way of identifying problems as they arise and addressing them quickly.

12. *Explicit training goals should be developed for work experience or internships that are provided as part of work-based learning, and they should go beyond merely providing youth with work readiness skills*. Out-of-school youth are generally interested in obtaining employment as quickly as possible, while employers are sometimes reluctant to invest the effort to develop clear training objectives for their work-experience slots. Given these twin pressures, OSY demonstration grantees sometimes settled for internships that resembled traditional work experience rather

than work-based learning. But offering employment alone is not enough. Organizations should understand that work experiences provided as part of program participation are likely to be more rewarding, more motivating, and much better for the youths' skill development if explicit training plans are developed that go beyond merely providing youth with exposure to the work world or developing work readiness skills. Thus, work experience should be viewed as an integral part of the overall training plan.

13. *To ensure that employers' concerns are addressed promptly and that training plans associated with work-based learning are linked to classroom activities, programs should ensure that a staff member serves as a workplace liaison. Such an individual will need to customize the program's interactions with each participating employer to some degree*. Identifying problems that arise on the worksites quickly will often be key to keeping both the youth properly motivated and the employer satisfied that the program recognizes and is responsive to his or her needs. Thus, frequent contact between the grantee and employers who are providing work-based learning opportunities for students is essential. Having a staff member serve as a workplace liaison is one way of ensuring that this contact occurs. Because different employers will have unique concerns, needs, and interests in participating, a workplace liaison can "customize" the way in which the employer is approached. The liaison can also work to ensure that work-based learning and classroom-based learning are integrated to the fullest extent practical.

14. *Grantees should involve employers early on, in the program design stage, rather than wait until the design is established and then merely recruit employers for work-based learning slots*. Employers are more likely to feel ownership and responsibility for the success of the program if they are actively involved in its design at the outset. Fostering their early involvement will also ensure that they can have a hand in shaping the training plan, so that students who complete the program will have skills that employers value. By contrast, employers who are approached late in the game to provide work-based training slots will generally be less responsive and less likely to perceive their role within the context of the larger school-to-work system. Plainly put, learning-rich worksite training opportunities that are integrated with classroom learning are simply unlikely to develop, however persistent the grantee's coaxing, unless the employers are involved in planning out the outset, have the opportunity to ensure that their interests and needs are understood and addressed, and come to feel ownership of the program's objectives.

15. *Efforts to promote the capacity of staff on an ongoing basis should not be ignored*. Developing curricula that integrate the teaching of an array of workplace skills is not easy. Field researchers were uniformly impressed by the dedication and long experience of instructors, and their knowledge of the needs of out-of-school youth. However, staff cannot be expected to intuit innovative learning strategies or engage in curriculum development consistent with school-to-work on their own. For this reason, deliberate and ongoing efforts at capacity building are essential. It is important that these efforts go beyond periodic staff meetings to discuss students'

performance or problems as they arise. For the same reason, provisions should be made to provide training for work supervisors and mentors.

16. *Organizations attempting to implement systemic reform should develop a formal process for periodically reviewing project accomplishments, and modifying goals or action steps accordingly*. For a number of the OSY demonstration grantees, goals established at the outset were not realized for a variety of reasons, including external constraints, the failure of expected contributions from partners to materialize, or flaws in the initial implementation strategies. Grantees that were successful in overcoming these challenges typically had a more structured process of review to support efforts towards continuous improvement. This process enabled them to assess progress towards project accomplishments and make modifications to either goals/objectives or strategies, accordingly.

17. *Organizations attempting to develop new program components should include plans for sustaining the initiative at the outset*. A number of the grantees participating in the OSY Demonstration developed or provided important services during the grant period that they were unable to sustain once grant funding ended. If the focus is on sustainable change, how the initiative can be sustained should be thought through at the outset and made a part of the program plan.

18. *State and local STW partnerships must re-evaluate their charge to serve "all youth."* Our evaluation has not entailed a study of STW partnerships throughout the nation, so we cannot say with certainty how typical the OSY demonstration grantees' efforts at engaging local STW partnerships have been. However, based on their experience, it appears that existing STW partnerships are devoting little attention to the needs of out-of-school youth. Additional focus needs to be directed at how STW systems can embrace this population, who surely desperately need and potentially can benefit so much from, what STW has to offer.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social Policy Research Associates and its subcontractor, Brandeis University's Center for Human Resources, were awarded a contract in mid-April 1998 by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to conduct the Evaluation of the School-to-Work Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Demonstration and Job Corps Model Centers. The Demonstrations and Model Centers are alike in attempting to incorporate and adapt school-to-work principles in their service to out-of-school youth. The evaluation consisted of a process study of their efforts with a focus on "lessons learned," and was conducted over approximately a two-year period. This volume is the Final Report for the component of the study focused on the OSY Demonstrations; as such, it presents a discussion of the design and implementation of the demonstration projects, including their objectives and strategies, partnership arrangements, and strategies with respect to classroom-based and work-based learning. A companion report addresses similar issues with respect to the Job Corps Model Centers.

BACKGROUND

The landmark School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 constitutes an important context for the evaluation, in that it directs much needed attention to the lack of connectedness between work and learning for young people and offers the promise of substantially reshaping the U.S. educational system to develop principles and practices of context-rich instruction, integrate academic with vocational instruction and classroom with workplace learning, and promote exposure to the world of work for young people at an early age. But, as states hasten to implement school-to-work (STW) programs in their schools, they risk leaving out the important subset of youth that includes high school dropouts and recent graduates. The demonstration projects and Model Centers that were studied as part of the evaluation represent important thrusts toward reaching this population.

Reasons for School-to-Work Initiatives

A variety of reasons have been put forth over the last two decades for implementing school-to-work systems for America's youth. Early on, attention focused on the poor school-to-work transition experiences of the "forgotten half" of American youth who do not attend post-secondary education (W.T. Grant Foundation, 1988). Indeed, evidence suggests that the non-college bound experience an extended period of

"floundering" in the labor market in the years just after they leave high school, marked by frequent job hopping among unrelated jobs, interspersed with protracted spells of unemployment (e.g., Osterman, 1980). Of course, some job shopping can be beneficial, as youth seek out the jobs that best match their interests and abilities. But, just as clearly, excessive instability in the early years can "scar" youth by labeling them as unstable or unreliable in the eyes of employers and result in foregone opportunities for investment in job skills during the critical period when young workers need to be establishing themselves on a career trajectory.[1]

The associated costs of lost productivity, both to society and the young people themselves, led some policy analysts to argue that secondary schools ill served the non-college bound by leaving them poorly prepared for entrance into the labor market. The high school's curriculum, it was argued, was organized around academic subjects geared towards meeting the needs of those intending to go to college; meanwhile, the vocational and general tracks, the typical refuge of the non-college bound, failed to provide students with sound basic and critical thinking skills or adequately prepare them for a vocation. Indeed, analysts have concluded that the typical vocational education program in America's secondary schools provides scant advantages in the labor market. By contrast, it was pointed out that other industrial nations—Germany was often held out as an exemplar—had well developed apprenticeship systems that directly linked the school systems with opportunities for young people to gain practical work experience and first-rate vocational skills training. Similar systems were proposed for the U.S.

Although early arguments on behalf of school-to-work thus focused on better meeting the needs of the non-college bound, the tenor of the debate subsequently shifted to emphasize the importance and value of integrated academic and vocational skills instruction for all young people, including high achievers. Secondary schools were criticized for emphasizing rote memorization and the decontextualized learning of facts devoid from guidance about how to apply knowledge learned in the classroom to solving practical problems. As a consequence, young people were felt to be poorly prepared for the needs of the emerging, high-performance workplace that demanded critical thinking and problem-solving skills of workers. Although the claims were

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[1] For literature on this debate, see Becker and Hills (1980, 1983), Ellwood (1982), Lynch (1989), and D'Amico and Maxwell (1994).

sometimes overstated, evidence from cognitive psychology was also cited to point out that people learn more efficiently and are more highly motivated when they are actively involved in creating learning for themselves and when learning is embedded in a meaningful context that engages the mind.[2]

Along these lines, linking academic and vocational learning was seen as an obvious way of providing a context for the teaching of basic and SCANS skills, as well as introducing youth to the demands and rigors of the work world.[3] Youth could be better prepared for their futures, it was thought, if their educational programs were imbued with career themes, if academic learning became contextualized and occurred in complex "authentic" situations, and if students were to become active participants in the learning process.

Showing remarkable prescience, John Dewey expressed these same ideas nearly a century ago. He decried what he saw as the artificial separation between academic and vocational learning and believed that movements underway at the time to develop academic and vocational tracks in secondary schools were seriously misguided. He emphasized that developing the capacity of young people to think critically could best be achieved when their natural instincts to discover and explore were given free reign:

> To organize education so that natural active tendencies shall be fully enlisted in doing something, while seeing to it that the doing requires observation, the acquisition of information, and the use of constructive imagination, is what most needs to be done…Education through occupation …combines…more of the factors conductive to learning than any other method (Dewey, 1916 reprinted 1977: pp. 137, 309).

The advantages of school-to-work systems are thus believed to be manifold. First, contextual active learning of the sort being promoted is believed to best promote higher-order thinking skills. As youth exercise these skills again and again in a variety of contexts, rather than engaging in rote memorization, they develop the ability to problem solve, think critically, analyze information, communicate ideas, and make

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[2] For a review of some of this evidence, see Anderson, Reder, and Simon (1998).

[3] The SCANS skills were defined by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills as representing the array of skills required of workers in the competitive, and high-achieving workplace. The Commission identified three foundation skills, including basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities, and five competencies (those relating to resources, information, the interpersonal, systems, and technology). See U.S. Department of Labor (1991).

logical arguments. Because these skills are increasingly in demand among the nation's employers, potential future labor shortages can be averted, while well-trained workers will find their labor market opportunities much enhanced (Johnston and Packer, 1987; Bailey, 1995). Second, these learning methods are thought to increase youth's motivation for learning. By helping young people see the applicability of what they are learning to the world around them and their futures, school-to-work can be highly motivating. By virtue of this fact, youth might apply themselves more forcefully to their schooling, including their academic courses, and develop a greater interest and inclination in pursuing post-secondary education. Third, the methods associated with school-to-work often imply learning as part of a collaborative and interactive process as a member of a team. As such, a "community of support" develops for learning that again enhances youths' motivations and overcomes the depersonalization that has been identified as a contributor to lagging student achievement and higher dropout rates (Kemple, 1997).

What Should School-to-Work Entail?

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) identifies three key elements of school-to-work systems.

- School-based learning. This component includes:
  - Career awareness, career exploration, and counseling.
  - The opportunity for "interested students" to select a career major, which becomes the focus of learning.
  - A program of study based on high academic and high skill standards.
  - A program of instruction and curriculum that integrates academic and vocational learning, incorporating all aspects of an industry and tied to the students' career majors.
  - Regularly scheduled evaluations to identify students' strengths and weaknesses.
  - Procedures to facilitate entry into additional training or postsecondary education.
- Work-based learning. Mandatory activities include:
  - Work experience.
  - A planned program of job training and work experiences that are coordinated with learning in the classroom and relevant to the students' career majors.

  - Workplace mentoring.
  - Instruction in general workplace competencies.
  - Instruction to all aspects of the industry.
- Connecting activities. Connecting activities should include:
  - Strategies for matching students with work-based learning opportunities.
  - School-site mentors who act as liaisons among the student and the employers, teachers, and parents.
  - Professional development for teachers, mentors, school- and work-based staff and counselors.
  - Outreach to encourage the active participation of employers.
  - Post-program transition assistance to aid students in their entry into employment or further education and connect them with needed community services.
  - Monitoring program performance.

Although this formulation of school-to-work dates only to the enactment of the STWOA in 1994, many of the underlying ideas are much older, as the review presented earlier in this chapter suggests. As such, they have found expression in a variety of learning strategies that have been adopted over the decades, with vestiges that have served as building blocks of more recent school-to-work reforms. More generally, school-to-work is being introduced in the context of well-developed American high schools with pre-existing structures that make wholesale reform difficult. Even then, as the above review also suggests, school-to-work has been promoted for a variety of reasons, with different goals and objectives given emphasis. For these reasons, a number of discrete elements of school-to-work have been developed within secondary schools, with some emphasizing school-based components and others work-based components. These can be summarized as follows:

- *Tech Prep*. This strategy primarily relies on school-based learning and consists of efforts to develop articulated programs of four years of sequential course work in specific fields such as business, health, engineering, and agriculture. Tech-Prep participation typically begins during the last two years of high school and continues with two years of post-secondary education, leading to an associates degree.
- *Career Academies*. A career academy is a "school-within-a-school" that provides students with a three- or four-year program integrating academic learning with the study of a specific industry. Students in an

academy are typically grouped together for many of their high school courses and work under a small number of academy teachers during their course of study. The academic curriculum draws heavily from the academy's industrial field, and local employers also provide work and mentoring to students during summer internships in this area.

- *Youth Apprenticeship*. Youth apprenticeship programs provide an example of a primarily work-based intervention that is designed to bridge the gap between high school, postsecondary education, and work, while relying heavily on the workplace as the major focal point for learning. Students learn technical skills and related skills in math, science, and problem solving related to specific industries such as health care, machining, electronics, or hotel services. A recognized credential is typically awarded upon completion of the program.
- *School-Based Enterprises*. School-based enterprises (SBEs) engage students in producing goods or services for sale or use to people other than the participating students themselves, and to this degree simulate a work-based learning opportunity. Unlike youth apprenticeships and career academies, school-based enterprises do not require direct participation by businesses in their operation, but do require a substantial investment of school time and resources.
- *Cooperative Education*. Cooperative education is by far the most widespread activity combining school and work activities in the U.S. and has been recognized by federal authority since 1917. Through written cooperative agreements between schools and employers, students receive instruction that includes required academic courses and vocational training, alternating study in school with a job in a related occupational field. Typically work-based learning is only weakly related to school-based coursework.
- *Career majors or pathways*. If done well, this model holds the prospect of constituting a well-developed school-to-work system, with integrated school-based and work-based components. A typical program might offer multiple career pathways, with each pathway consisting of a sequence of related courses and work-based learning experiences. All students are expected to chose a pathway and thereafter will take courses that are built around the career theme. Emphasis is placed on integrating academic and occupational learning, integrating school-based and work-based learning, and establishing connections with postsecondary institutions.

These designs vary in important ways and, just as importantly, are implemented in different ways. Thus, in practice, systems are developed that implement only parts of these models or that combine aspects of them to create "hybrid" designs (Pauly,

Kopp, and Haimson, 1995). As a consequence, the systems vary both within and across type. For example, they differ in the relative emphasis placed on work-based vs. school-based learning. They differ too in the extent to which true structural reform takes place. At one extreme, both academic and vocational courses are revamped to relate closely to each other and the career theme; at the other, school-to-work is viewed as an "add-on," which might take the form of embellishing or adding a course or two. They differ too in the extent to which STW is seen as a part of or stemming from the reform of vocational education, as opposed to constituting something entirely new that can meet the needs of all students rather than just special subsets (e.g., at-risk youth, the non-college bound). Finally, designs differ in the extent to which they promote opportunities for postsecondary school attendance, including four-year colleges.

Given this diversity, school-to-work as it is implemented can look dramatically different from one school to the next. Even defining what school-to-work is becomes very difficult. However, attempts to delineate essential elements of well-developed models typically identify these key features:[4]

1. The integration of academic and vocational learning combining both classroom- and work-based learning and effective linkages between secondary and post-secondary schooling.
2. Defined career majors.
3. The incorporation of school-based learning, work-based learning, and activities connecting the two.
4. Exposure of students to experiences in all aspects of an industry.
5. Equal access to all students to the full range of program components.

Others configure the key elements in a slightly different way, but all emphasize the importance of building a system that includes the integration of classroom and work-based components, the integration of academic and vocational skills instruction that is organized around career themes, and the reliance on active applied learning and learning in context. According to this vision, therefore, school-to-work must entail true reform and will generally entail a wholesale restructuring of the traditional ways of doing things.

[4] Identified in Ryan (1997).

Adapting the Model to the Needs of Out-of-School Youth

As states and local communities concentrate their efforts on developing comprehensive systems in response to the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, the logical focal point for implementation is the schools. For young people who are disenchanted with and disconnected from the traditional academic environment, this means that our most vulnerable young adults lack access to the opportunities the Act has created. This omission is unfortunate, because high school dropouts and disaffected graduates generally do not have the highly developed sets of skills required of today's workers. Consequently, they suffer chronic unemployment and earnings that increasingly lag behind their more highly educated peers.

The imperative for reform becomes even more apparent when one considers the fiscal and social costs associated with poor academic achievement:

- Among males ages 25 years and over with earnings, high school graduates (with no postsecondary education) earned over $8,300 more per year in 1998 than did those who did not complete high school. Among females the earnings gap is about $6,000 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1998).
- The National Dropout Prevention Center reports that, in 1990, 82% of the nation's prisoners were high school dropouts (see www. dropoutprevention.org).
- The same source reports that each year's class of dropouts will cost the country over $200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue.

Given the above observations, it is apparent that both out-of-school young people and society could benefit greatly from the opportunities afforded by the STWOA. However, the process of implementing these goals for out-of-school youth proves to be much more difficult than that of implementing them for young people within a regular high school. Indeed, serving out-of-school youth in a school-to-work framework gives rise to a number of important and unique implementation challenges, relating to recruitment and retention, program structure, and strategies for skills development.

Recruitment and Retention. Out-of-school youth, unlike youth attending school, are not concentrated in one location (i.e., the schools) and are not necessarily connected to a particular institution that will encourage access to school-to-work or other education and training, and support services. This lack of connection often adversely affects the system's ability to identify and enroll out-of-school youth in

programs of any type. The target population, after all, consists of youth who are disaffected from structured learning environments, and convincing them to undertake more of the same represents a substantial challenge.

Once recruited, the lack of connection can often adversely affect retention unless programs quickly establish trusting, task-based relationships between youth and adults. Additionally, the differences between what out-of-school youth perceive as their immediate need (a job), and what program staff "know" is needed (training), creates tension in developing that relationship, and thus, reinforces the young person's experiences that the system does not understand and is not responsive to his/her needs—they have walked out of larger, more institutional systems for the same reason, and feel no loyalty to stick around for more of the same. At the same time, STW principles, with their emphasis on the connectedness between work and learning, offer the promise of providing out-of-school youth with the necessary motivation.

Among other challenges with respect to retention are the doubtless greater supportive services that out-of-school youth will need. Out-of-school youth are disproportionately represented in target groups such as teen parents, adjudicated youth/offenders, substance abusers, welfare recipients, etc. This association gives rise to an additional set of challenges—the need for extensive supportive services and counseling, and the coordination of services provided through different institutions. If these issues are not adequately addressed from the beginning, young people will leave the program out of need for other services and frustration over conflicting expectations. The programs will thus need to tap into existing supportive service resources to access day care, housing, health services, counseling, etc. They will need to identify solutions to the very real problems of transportation barriers and conflicting priorities (family/social obligations, probation/parole requirements, etc.). They will need to coordinate with probation/parole officers, public assistance caseworkers, and other professionals with whom the youth are in contact in order to maximize resources and remove barriers to participation and successful completion.

Program Structure and School-to-Work Components. Adapting school-to-work components for out-of-school youth also presents problems and issues in program structure related to the length of participation. The structure of most in-school school-to-work efforts provides for many elements to be addressed throughout a young person's school participation. In most school-to-work initiatives, schools have developed curricula to incorporate career exploration, establish career pathways, link

school and work, etc., as a sequence of activities and services that span the K – 12 years. At the minimum, school-to-work activities are emphasized during the last several years of secondary school.

By contrast, programs for out-of-school youth rarely plan on more than a single year of participation, and are often even much shorter. This fact gives rise to a variety of problems and issues. Most obvious is the struggle to telescope within a shorter length of participation the overall mix and sequence of services that would be desirable from a school-to-work standpoint. For example, ensuring that adequate attention is devoted to academics may limit opportunities for work-based learning, career readiness training, and the like. Adding to the difficulty, the requirements for the high school diploma or GED impose a certain rigidity to the academic courses that must be provided. Meeting these requirements expeditiously can make innovation with respect to the integration of vocational and academic skills instruction difficult or risky.

Providing for the careful selection of career pathways will also be difficult within the shortened timeframe. In well-developed school-to-work systems for in-school youth, career counseling and assessment are engaged in as careful and deliberate activities during the middle-school years, before the selection of a career pathway is made. In programs for out-of-school youth, career assessment and counseling and academic and vocational skills training all must occur within an abbreviated time frame.

Skill Development. Most program participants will be high school dropouts or disaffected high school graduates who lack the sets of skills required of today's workers. Their transition to high wage/high skill employment opportunities, post-secondary education, or additional training will require extensive basic skills remediation and opportunities to develop and practically apply the set of generic workplace skills that employers are demanding. In order to achieve the high academic standards associated with school-to-work principles, this skill building will need to be incorporated into the program design, while also connecting work and learning and providing opportunities for the practical application of new knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, traditional programs of instruction for out-of-school youth have not consistently incorporated these principles within their instructional designs. If the demonstration projects intend to build on existing designs, administrators thus must engage in careful planning in order to ensure consistency with the quality principles of

school-to-work, ensuring both high academic standards and instruction within the context of integrated academic and vocational learning.

Additionally, vocational programs for out-of-school youth have typically concentrated on preparing young people for narrowly-defined entry-level occupations. Yet, in an effort to move beyond narrow vocational education, school-to-work emphasizes exposure to *all aspects of an industry*, with its concomitant expectation that youth should be prepared for entry into an array of jobs or further training within a broadly-defined occupational or industry cluster. Preparing out-of-school youth for immediate entry into the job market (for those for whom further training is not foreseen) without unduly "pigeon-holing" or precluding wider sets of opportunities will constitute an important challenge.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STW/OSY DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

In the summer of 1997, DOL issued a grant announcement encouraging applications for competitive grants for the OSY Demonstration Projects. In total, eleven grants were awarded, ranging in amounts from $100,000 to $140,000. The grants were to commence in October of 1997, and the period of performance was expected to last for 15 months. The expected completion of the grant period was thus to be the end of calendar year 1998, although most grantees requested and received no-cost extensions that extended the grant period to, in many cases, the summer of 1999.

Criteria for Awards

Because these were to be demonstration projects, DOL emphasized that it was encouraging applications from a variety of programs representing diverse approaches to serving the out-of-school youth population. However, the grant announcement also made clear that applications would only be considered from established employment and education providers and ones that had already incorporated in their existing programs at least some design elements that were consistent with school-to-work. To this degree, the grant funds were expected to be used to enable the selected providers to build on and enhance existing design elements within a school-to-work framework. Moreover, the grantees were expected to demonstrate a clear connection with existing federally-funded school-to-work systems.

To clarify its expectations, DOL spelled out in the grant announcement a number of "threshold criteria," which it took as constituting key features of well-developed school-to-work systems. These criteria—relating to the formation of partnerships, the design of programmatic components, and the measurement and self-assessment of progress—are spelled out in Table I-1. Bidders were expected to demonstrate conformance to a majority of these principles at the time they submitted their grant request and explain in their proposals how they would use their grant funds to advance these criteria still further, by implementing a school-to-work element not currently a part of the project or enhancing existing school-to-work features still further.

Table I-1
DOL's Threshold Criteria for the OSY Demonstration

Partnership Criteria

1. There is a strong community-wide partnership that is committed to preparing young people for the world of work and/or further educational and occupational training by providing appropriate activities and services which reflect that fact that youth learn best by learning in context and being actively engaged in their own learning.
2. There is strong support for the existing initiative and for the school-to-work concept from appropriate out-of-school youth/school-to-work stakeholders—such as secondary schools, alternative high schools, adult high schools, parents, young people, employers, community-based organizations, labor, post-secondary institutions, private industry councils, government agencies—as well as strategies for maintaining their support and involvement. In particular, a strong leadership role played by CBOs and, where appropriate, adult high schools as stakeholders in the school-to-work initiative should be demonstrated.
3. Collaborative agreements exist among a variety of institutions, including: those serving out-of-school youth (e.g., CBOs, adult high schools, Job Corps), public post-secondary and secondary schools, vocational education entities, employers and employer organizations, labor organizations, apprenticeship agencies, local government agencies, and JTPA private industry councils.
4. Employers play strong and active roles in the planning and governance of the existing initiative, and provide a range of services for the out-of-school youth component, such as providing a variety of worksite learning experiences, developing assessment criteria, and participating in career exposure activities.
5. Resources from a variety of sources (e.g., school-to-work, federal categorical, State and local education funds, private sector) are systematically used in an integrated manner, to effectively address the work and learning needs of out-of-school youth.
6. A realistic and coherent strategy is in place to collaborate with the statewide school-to-work system, as well as any existing local school-to-work systems.

Programmatic Criteria

7. Effective strategies are in place for recruiting, retaining, and serving out-of-school youth in the school-to-work framework.
8. A system of integrated school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities is present in the existing out-of-school youth initiative, and is responsive to the cultural diversity of the youth is serves.
9. Learning is organized around an appropriate system of career pathways that are consistent with emerging industry and state standards for mastery of academic competencies and occupational skills.
10. Learning includes activities that offer students exposure to all aspects of an industry.

Table I-1 (concluded)

Programmatic Criteria (cont'd)

11. Work-based learning activities include the following:
    a. A variety of different types of high quality work experiences and on-the-job training tailored to the needs of each out-of-school youth served,
    b. Adult worksite mentors, and
    c. The attainment of skill certificates and academic credits.
12. School-based learning activities include:
    a. Commitment to high academic standards for all out-of-school youth participants,
    b. Workplace basics and learning in an applied context integrated with academic learning, and
    c. Opportunities for post-secondary education, including both academic and further occupational/job training opportunities (e.g., dual enrollment options so that students can earn both high school and college credits simultaneously).
13. Connecting activities include:
    a. Ongoing professional development for worksite and classroom-based staff to ensure understanding of school-to-work components and the provision of high-quality services for out-of-school youth,
    b. A range of strategies to effectively connect school-based and work-based learning activities, including dedicated staff that serve as school-based, work-based liaisons or coordinators,
    c. The conduct of outreach and public relations for all stakeholders involved in out-of-school youth activities, including parents, youth, CBOs, local elected officials, school boards and school administrators, employers, and alternative schools and adult high schools,
    d. Linkages between human resource service organizations and academic institutions to meet the needs of individual youth (e.g., pregnant and parenting teens),
    e. The provision of transportation and other support services specific to the needs of out-of-school, and
    f. Strategies that develop the interpersonal skills of students, such as personal responsibility, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

Measurement Criteria

14. Specific goals and objectives and outcomes (or progress indicators) as they relate to the provision of services to out-of-school youth in a school-to-work framework.
15. The ability to implement and adjust improvement plans based on the continuous measurement of progress of the goals, objectives and outcomes, as indicated above.
16. The use of various types of "assessment tools" that would measure not only student mastery of skills, but also whether the student is able to integrate, apply and perform the learned knowledge, skills and abilities in real life situations, and that would serve as predictors of readiness for a variety of work, community college, advanced training and other real life situations.

Grantees Funded Under the STW/OSY Demonstration

The eleven grantees selected for funding by DOL varied enormously with respect to their existing designs and planned program improvements. These differences, which will be described in more detail in the next chapter, included not only basic attributes of the agency applying for funds, but also fundamental differences in proposed service strategies and designs. For example, grant recipients included adult or alternative high schools, agencies of local governments, employer organizations, and community-based organizations. These basic attributes in turn yielded important implications for project designs, as will be described in the next chapter.

The demonstrations differed as well in the contexts within which they were operating and their plans for implementation. These differences sometimes made it difficult to put boundaries around "the program" being studied in a way that was consistent from one grantee to the next. For example, at one extreme some grantees were using their funds to establish a fairly small-scale and discrete program, even though the grantee itself might have been a much larger organization operating a variety of other programs for out-of-school youth. For example, the City of Phoenix Department of Human Services, which (with its partners) was operating a number of school-to-work programs for out-of-school youth, used its funds to establish a discrete program, YouthSkilled, which was intended to serve about 20 students in a manufacturing pathway, modeled after its successful YouthBuild program. Similarly, Austin's American Institute for Learning, a charter school and CBO serving hundreds of youth annually in a variety of programs, intended to establish a Principles of Technology pathway for 24 students.

At the other extreme, some grant recipients serving hundreds of out-of-school youth annually were intending to use their funds to make some overall enhancements or changes that might affect many more youth but in a more incremental way. For example, the Lancaster County Academy, which serves about 100 youth annually in a high school diploma program in its adult high school, wanted to develop linkages with businesses in additional industries, beyond its initial focus on retail trade and services, to provide a wider range of work-based opportunities for students. Similarly, the School Study Council of Ohio was applying for grant funds so that an adult high school and CBO, serving out-of-school youth in GED preparation and work readiness programs primarily through school-based learning, could attempt to connect to existing career pathways available in the local STW partnership.

Related to this, the grant recipients differed in the ways in which they intended to use their funds, with some planning on hiring additional staff (e.g., counselors, workplace liaisons), others developing new curricula, and still others buying new equipment; the ways in which funds were proposed to be used are detailed in Chapter III.

Among the other important differences in the proposed designs was the extent to which work-based learning was a prominent pre-existing program feature. At the one extreme, some programs had for some time placed substantial emphasis on worksite experiences for youth. In the Just-a-Start YouthBuild program, for example, students spend substantial time engaged in learning at actual work sites and through service learning; grant funds were being used to improve career exploration activities and develop a high school degree program to supplant its GED program. Many other grantees had heretofore no, or only minor, work-based learning components in place, and were intending to use their grant funds to move in this direction. For example, the Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center was planning to develop mentorships and internships for out-of-school youth enrolled in its high school diploma and GED programs. Similarly, Milwaukee Area Technical College, which serves several thousand students annually in its adult high school, was intending to develop 50-100 mentorships and work experience slots.

Programs also varied in the areas of vocational skills instruction they made available to students. Some programs primarily relied on a single vocational training option, which included machinery, construction, or retail trade. A few others offered students the choice of several different options, such as some adult high schools that made a variety of vocational courses of study available. Some remaining programs concentrated on providing students with general workplace readiness skills, without offering any specific vocational training.

Finally, the programs varied in their duration, with some lasting a fixed length, such as nine months or a full year. By contrast, others were entirely self-paced, adopting an open-entry and open-exit model, with students spending varying lengths of time in the program depending on the credits or courses they needed to attain their high school diploma or GED.

Despite these differences, the programs that were funded also demonstrated a number of commonalties. For example, they all served primarily high school dropouts,

focused heavily on basic skills remediation, and endeavored to prepare their students for the GED or, in a few cases, a regular high school diploma. Participants in all programs could also clearly be described as being very hard-to-serve, with not only poor basic skills and weak academic performance, but other barriers to success as evidenced by their being substance abusers, teen parents, public assistance recipients, adjudicated youth or ex-offenders, and products of dysfunctional families.

These commonalties and differences will be explored in much more detail in subsequent chapter. However, for ready reference Table I-2 lists the eleven grant recipients, along with a program name by which the out-of-school youth services we predominantly studied will be consistently referred throughout this report. We thought these names were more useful as a moniker, because they more often give a hint of an essential program feature in a way that the grantee name sometimes does not.

DATA COLLECTION AS PART OF THE DEMONSTRATION EVALUATION

The evaluation of the Demonstration Projects consisted of a process study designed to address the following research issues:

- What are the problems encountered in adapting the strategies, principles, and objectives of school-to-work to programs serving out-of-school youth? In what ways have the demonstration sites addressed or solved these problems?
- In what ways do the programs establish linkages with other state or local school-to-work systems? How effective are these linkages in promoting program improvements?
- In what ways must effective school-to-work strategies for serving out-of-school youth differ from those for serving in-school youth?
- In what ways do school-to-work strategies for serving out-of-school youth differ from more traditional approaches to serving this population?

In collecting information about the demonstration projects to answer these questions, research team members visited each grantee twice, with a two-day site visit each time. The first wave of these visits occurred through the summer and fall of 1998, and the return site visits occurred during the spring of 1999. During these site visits, research team members:

- Conducted discussions with key grantee administrators and planners, to learn about project goals and objectives, staffing and staff training,

Table I-2
Grantees Funded by DOL as Part of the
OSY Demonstration

Program	Grantee
Austin American Institute for Learning	American Institute for Learning Austin, TX
Baltimore Youth Opportunities	Office of Employment Development Baltimore, MD
Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild	Just-a-Start Corporation Cambridge, MA
Lancaster County Academy	Lancaster County Academy Lancaster, PA
Memphis Youth Fair Chance	City of Memphis Memphis, TN
Milwaukee HY-TECC II	Milwaukee Area Technical College Milwaukee, WI
New York Family Learning Institute	Federation Employment and Guidance Services, New York, NY
Ohio School Study Council	School Study Council of Ohio Columbus, OH
Phoenix YouthSkilled	City of Phoenix Human Services Department, Phoenix, AZ
Rhode Island Commerce Academy	Chamber Education Foundation Warwick, RI
Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center	Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center, Yakima, WA

service designs, the nature of key partnerships, and relationships with the statewide or local school-to-work programs.

- Conducted discussions with grantee staff responsible for recruitment, assessment, and service planning, to learn about the characteristics of youth targeted for program participation, recruitment and retention problems and strategies, the types of assessments used to develop individualized service strategies, and on-going case management and supportive services that are provided.
- Conducted discussions with curriculum planners, instructors, and employers and work supervisors. These interviews were designed to provide information about curriculum design, staff training and development, the content and context of classroom and work-based instruction as well as strategies used to link these activities, the extent to which instruction integrates the teaching of academic and workplace skills, the extent to which instruction is organized around career pathways, strategies for ensuring that high academic standards are promoted, opportunities for mentorships, and ways in which active learning methods are utilized.
- Conducted discussions with selected key partners, to learn about the partner's role in helping to plan or implement the project and other efforts for meeting the needs of out-of-school youth.
- Conducted unobtrusive observations of class-based and work-based instructional activities, with an eye to understanding their conformance to school-to-work principles (e.g., promoting high standards, integrating academic and vocational skills instruction, relying on active learning methods, teachers and work supervisors adopting a coaching approach to instruction, etc.).
- Conducted focus groups with program participants, to learn about their reactions to the instruction and services they were receiving.
- Studied lesson plans, textbooks and workbooks, and course outlines, to learn from another perspective about the content of and context for the instruction.

Additional data collection conducted as part of this study included regular telephone reconnaissance with key respondents at the demonstration sites, to learn about the projects' evolution during the interval between site visits, including changes to prior designs or plans, barriers that were encountered to implementation, and solutions that were devised. Research team members also collected from each site their grant proposal, periodic written progress reports, and any other documents perceived to be of relevance that were made available.

Although not of direct relevance to the evaluation of the STW/OSY Demonstration Projects, the research team also undertook similar data collection for 30 Job Corps Centers that were awarded special funds, also with the purpose of adapting school-to-work principles in their service designs.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The technical approach to addressing the key research questions for this evaluation is grounded in a conceptual model of the components of high quality school-to-work systems, drawn from an extensive body of literature, as well as the threshold criteria spelled out by DOL in its grant announcement for the demonstration project funding. This model, which drives the design of the data collection and analysis, has two components. The first component, shown in Exhibit I-1, depicts the elements of partnerships and school-to-work design and implementation in a temporal model of desired youth outcomes. The second component, shown in Exhibit I-2, identifies the quality indicators for each of these elements, drawn from the threshold criteria.

Strategic Partnerships

As Exhibit I-1 shows, one of the presumed prerequisites of well-developed school-to-work systems is the existence of strategic partnerships among a number of stakeholders to support the school-to-work concept. For demonstration projects, these partners will primarily be external to the organization and might include the business community, the state or local school-to-work systems, adult high schools, community-based organizations, other youth service agencies, and the like. Demonstration grantees that are able to meet a number of threshold criteria for strong partnerships are thought more likely to succeed in developing high quality school-to-work programs. These criteria, identified in Exhibit I-2, include:

- Strong support by key stakeholders, whether internal or external.
- Collaborative agreements among a variety of institutions, including educational providers and social service agencies.
- A strong and active role for employers in planning and providing a range of services and, for the demonstration projects, in governance.
- The integration of resources from a variety of funding streams.
- Strategies to collaborate with the statewide and local school-to-work systems.

Exhibit I-1
Model of School-to-Work Programs for Out-of-school Youth

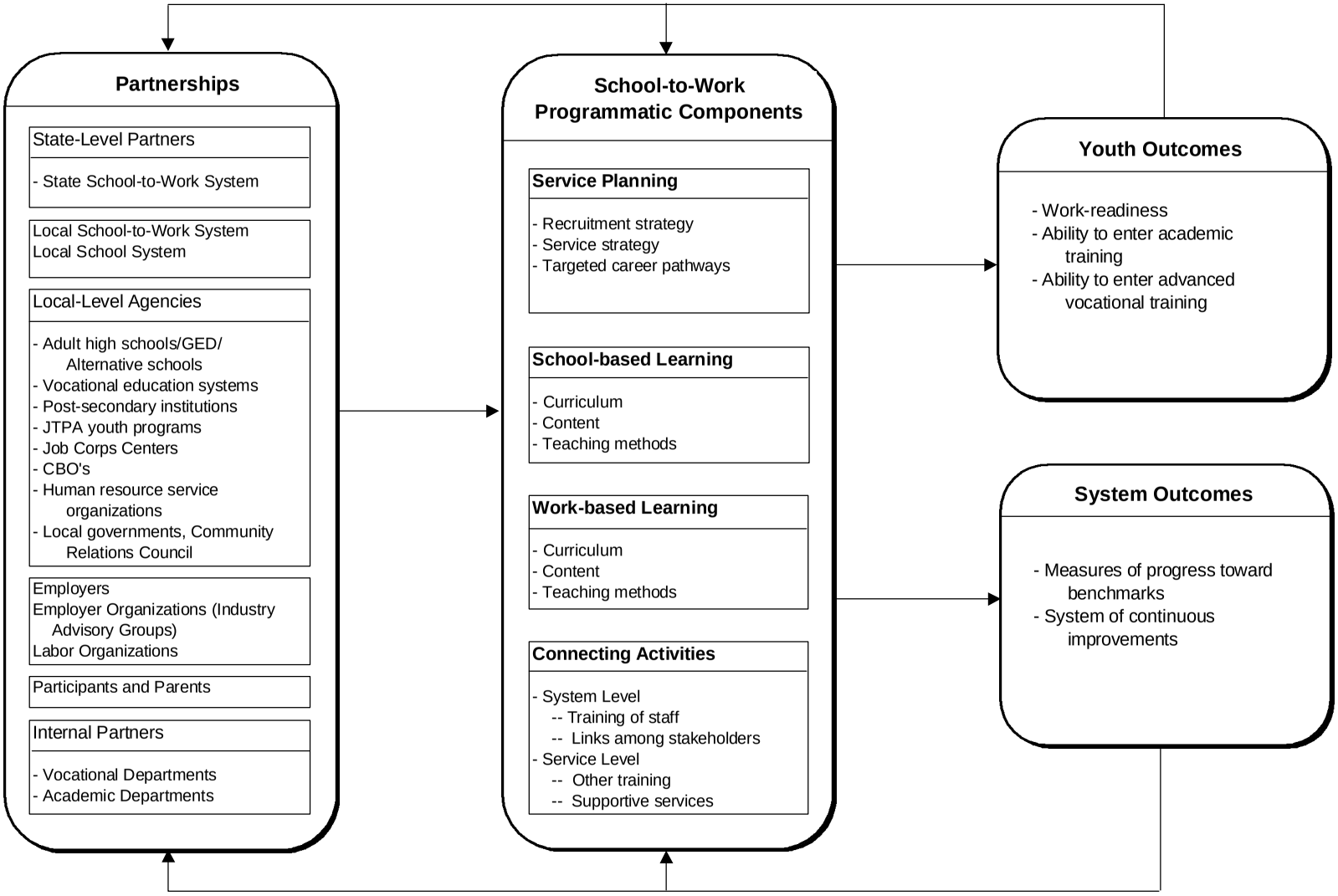
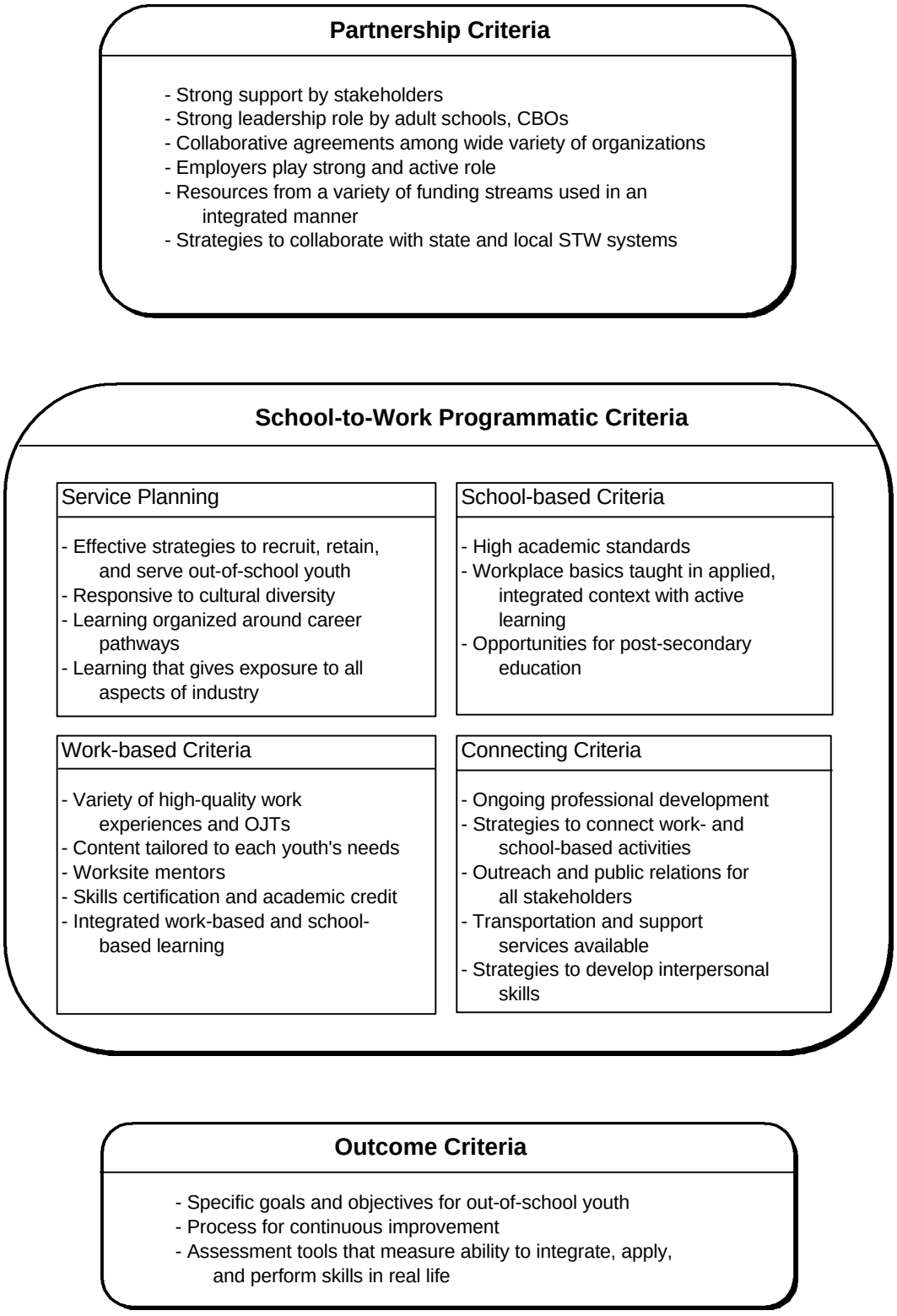


Exhibit I-2
Criteria for High Quality School-to-Work Programs for Out-of-school Youth



Strong partnerships, as exemplified by these criteria, are felt to be important because each key stakeholder brings to the planning and implementation process different expertise and resources to augment the quality and the depth of the school-to-work curriculum and services. Key external partners include: (1) *state-level partners* (state school-to-work system); (2) *local school partners* (secondary schools, local school-to-work partnerships); (3) *local-level agencies* (alternative high schools, adult schools, post-secondary schools, vocational education systems, JTPA programs, local governments, CBOs and human resource service organizations); (4) *employers and labor organizations*; (5) *parents*; and (6) *out-of-school youth*. Below, we describe the ways in which these groups can contribute to a high-quality school-to-work system.

- *State partners*. Federally funded state school-to-work systems can be a great resource for demonstration projects by providing connections into the existing network of school-to-work providers, sharing sample school-to-work curricula, and referring grantees to successful models of school-to-work initiatives for out-of-school youth.
- *Local school partners*. Likewise, local school systems can also be a readily available resource for demonstration projects. To begin with, benefits can include participant referrals and access to sequenced services for at-risk youth. Additionally, local school-to-work systems can incorporate grantees into existing partnerships with local employers, post-secondary institutions, private industry councils, and other partners. Similarly, instructors can provide sample school- and work-based curricula or refer grantees to successful providers of school-to-work initiatives for out-of-school youth.
- *Local-level agencies*. Some of the agencies in this category were the grantee for this demonstration; others play important partnership roles. These agencies might include:
  - *Alternative high schools*. Alternative schools bring some added advantages as a grantee or a key partner in the school-to-work initiative. To begin with, they are already an important part of the local school system and serve as a magnet for out-of-school youth who are serious about continuing or completing their education to improve their marketability in the work place. Moreover, alternative-school faculty have extensive instructional expertise in working with out-of-school youth.
  - *Other programs serving out-of-school youth*. Programs already serving youth, such as CBOs and JTPA Title II-C programs are also both grant recipients and key partners, and their value stems from a number of factors. For example, they have a history of serving young people in the community, and they place heavy

emphasis on individualized services. They are also likely to have strong partnerships already in place with local school districts and other key stakeholders. Participation of or coordination with these youth programs can result in joint outreach and recruitment of at-risk youth, sequenced services for out-of-school youth, joint marketing efforts to employers, and sharing of educational and financial resources.

  - *Post-secondary institutions*. Partnership with post-secondary institutions might facilitate a smoother transition for participants from the school-to-work program to a more formal career or employment training program.
  - *Human resource service organizations*. Partnerships with these organizations will help grantees to better provide critical supportive services (childcare, social services, transportation, etc.) for youth who may need them.

- *Employers and organized labor*. Employer participation can be essential for establishing skills and occupational standards. In addition, these partners can provide valuable input in reshaping the school-to-work curriculum, and can provide work-based training opportunities, mentorships, and job shadowing to students during their participation.
- *Parents and out-of-school youth*. Youth and their parents know better than anyone the shortcomings of a traditionally-designed curriculum and what needs to happen differently. Thus, school-to-work providers might benefit from working closely with these partners to develop alternative learning strategies for the out-of-school youth population.

The existence of these linkages can facilitate the development of strong school-to-work programs and are likely to flourish when partners are able to establish a joint strategy, respect one another's needs and strengths, and overcome institutional inertia and self-protective tendencies to jointly meet the career development and training needs of participants.

Components of Well-Developed School-to-Work Systems

The school-to-work program component of the model (middle column of Exhibit I-1) consists of a number of separate elements, including recruitment, service planning, school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. We describe each of these system elements below.

Recruitment Strategy. An important first step in a temporal sense is the effective targeting and recruitment of subsets of the eligible youth population. As shown in Exhibit I-2, quality indicators for this step are whether the demonstration

grantees have a clear strategy for identifying which youth should be targeted and have developed procedures to effectively recruit them. Frequently, this involves working closely with schools and other youth programs to identify out-of-school youth who are in need of school-to-work training and developing effective outreach and recruitment procedures.

Service Strategy. An effective service strategy consists of assessment, individualized service planning, and case management.

- *Assessment*. Conducting valid and reliable assessments of youths' skills and career interests can be a critical task. Assessment should determine whether a youth possesses a broader set of skills required in the labor market, such as the SCANS foundation skills and competencies. Assessment should also be comprehensive enough to diagnose a youth's specific career interests and learning gaps and supportive services needs, so that an individualized training plan can be developed.
- *Individualized Service Strategies*. The assessment results should be used to develop an individualized service strategy (ISS) tailored to the skills, interests, and cultural background of each participant. The out-of-school youth should be integrally involved in setting the goals and planning the services. The service strategy should also set high expectations for what the youth can achieve in the program and be responsive to the cultural diversity of the youth. The results of the process should be clear, yielding appropriate goals for the transition to work that the participant is committed to achieving.
- *Case Management*. Ongoing case management can be key to identifying youths' ability to meet the school-to-work learning objectives and keeping them on target. Beginning with the process of developing the ISS and assigning youth to services, case management can be of value in shepherding the youth through the process of service delivery and monitoring the implementation of the service plan to ensure that it continues to be responsive to the youth's needs. Effective case managers should be able to quickly identify factors that are impeding the out-of-school youth's ability to meet his or her school-based or work-based learning objectives, whether there are deficiencies with the instruction itself or threats posed by external circumstances (e.g., personal difficulties, child care needs, etc.).

In accordance with the threshold criteria, these services, along with the school-based, work-based, and connecting activities, should be responsive to the cultural diversity of the participants.

Targeted Career Pathways. Another important system-wide criterion specifies that learning is organized around an appropriate system of career pathways that are consistent with emerging industry and state standards for mastery of academic competencies and occupational skills. Good career pathways for out-of-school youth have several characteristics in common. They should not only include clear entry points tied to a service sequence, but they should also provide a sense of direction and purpose for academic achievement so that the youth are prepared for the work world and subsequent education (e.g., post-secondary school training). The length or time dimension of the career pathways is also an important factor. Because out-of-school youth are not a captive school audience, they need a school-to-work program that fits their timetable. For example, the three- to four-year programs that most high schools offer will generally be too lengthy for this population. Finally, high-quality demonstration projects are expected to offer learning activities that expose students to all aspects of an industry, rather than to narrowly defined entry-level jobs.

School-Based Learning. To be consistent with the principles of school-to-work, school-based learning requires considerable restructuring of education so that out-of-school youth see the relevance of additional academic training and can get "turned on" to more schooling. Grantees striving to develop a high-quality program should have all of the following base activities:

- *Career awareness and career exploration and counseling*. Comprehensive career counseling and exploration can be critical for well-developed programs. Students will generally need help in identifying their career interests, goals, and majors. Of particular interest are programs that provide options that are not traditional for youth's gender, race, or ethnicity.
- *A program of study designed to meet high academic standards*. According to the threshold criteria, programs should promote high standards to ensure that participants have the skills needed for success in the workplace and for continued education and training, including post-secondary education. A dual enrollment option might also be promoted, where feasible, so that students could earn college credits.
- *Curriculum and instruction that integrate academic and vocational learning*. These might include applied methodologies and interdisciplinary team-teaching strategies. In addition, instruction might incorporate aspects of industry tied to the career major of the participant.

- *Regular evaluations*. Participants need regularly scheduled evaluations with the teacher or counselor and ongoing problem-solving to identify the youth's academic strengths and weaknesses, academic progress, workplace knowledge, goals for the future, and needs for additional learning opportunities to master core academic and vocational skills. (See also Case management services described above.)
- *Procedures to facilitate youths' transition to other training programs, post-secondary education programs, or the work world*. Out-of-school youth need guidance on immediate plans after completion of their program. They must be made aware of their options, informed well enough in advance to prepare to exercise these options, and be given necessary transition assistance.
- *High-quality instruction*. A strong design will use project-based learning and other active learning methods, train youth for skills transfer and skills durability, provide youth sufficient opportunities to learn, and adapt instruction to students' progress. Of equal importance are instructors who are caring adults and approach their tasks as "coaches" or mentors rather than "directors" of youths' activities. Indeed, strong mentorships have been identified as a critical component of youth programs, especially those for young people who are at risk (Mincy, 1994).

In short, the school-based learning component in demonstration sites should teach workplace basics in an applied, integrated context with active academic learning, and should afford its youth participants opportunities for post-secondary education, including both academic and further occupational/job training opportunities.

Work-Based Learning Components. Work-based learning is an important complement to conventional school-based learning and a key component of a well-developed school-to-work system. Whether it occurs off-site at an actual workplace or on-site as a simulated workplace, its promise can be fulfilled only if the experience is of high quality. Hamilton and Hamilton (1997) identify seven principles that make work-based learning effective:

- Youth gain basic and high level technical competence through challenging work.
- Youth gain broad technical competence and understand all aspects of the industry through rotation and projects.
- Youth gain personal and social competence in the workplace.
- Workplace teachers convey clear expectations to youth and assess progress toward achieving them.

- Youth learn from adults with formally assigned teaching roles.
- Youth achieve high academic standards.
- Youth identify and follow career paths.

These principles are reflected in the work-based quality criteria that we have identified in the threshold criteria identified in Exhibit I-2. These criteria indicate that high-quality work-based learning activities must allow youth to have a variety of high-quality work experiences and on-the-job training tailored to their individual needs, adult worksite mentors, and skills certification and opportunities for academic credit.

Connecting Activities. A number of separate activities fall under this category. *System-level* connecting activities might include the following:

- Providing ongoing professional development for worksite and school-based staff to ensure understanding of school-to-work components and the provision of high-quality services for out-of-school youth.
- Providing assistance to schools and employers to integrate school-based and work-based components. This could include dedicated staff that serve as school-based/work-based liaisons or coordinators.
- Providing assistance to integrate academic and occupational learning into each component.
- Providing technical assistance and services to employers, including small- and medium-sized businesses.
- Encouraging the active participation of employers.
- Conducting outreach and public relations for all stakeholders involved in out-of-school youth activities.
- Linking youth development activities with employer and industry strategies for updating the skills of their workers.

Service-level connecting activities could include the following:

- Matching students with work-based learning opportunities with employers.
- Providing, with respect to each student, a school-site mentor to act as a liaison among the youth and the employer, school, teacher, school administrator, and parent of the students, and, if appropriate, other community partners.
- For youth who have terminated, providing assistance in finding an appropriate job or continuing their education.

- Making linkages between human resource service organizations and academic institutions to meet the needs of individual youth (e.g. pregnant and parenting teens), and providing for transportation and other supportive services that are specific to the needs of out-of-school youth.

Outcomes

The far right box of Exhibit I-1 identifies the outcomes that high-quality school-to-work initiatives strive to achieve. At the level of the young participant, completion of a school-to-work program should enable the youth to be work-ready and able to enter into academic training or advanced vocational training. While youth targeted by these programs will have characteristics that may make them difficult to serve, high expectations should prevail and youth should complete the school-to-work program possessing an array of SCANS skills and competencies that can help them in future careers. The challenge is for the demonstration projects to achieve these objectives and measure them.

Finally, projects should be guided by some specific outcome criteria for measuring their own success, which, as the feedback loop in Exhibit I-2 suggests, should be used for improving their performance. These elements include:

- Specific goals and objectives for out-of-school youth.
- A process for continuous improvement.
- Assessment tools that measure youths' ability to integrate, apply, and perform skills in real life.

As part of this process of self-assessment, planners should ask "*What program outcomes are expected?*". Often, responses to this question are based in part on external factors such as the requirements of the funding source, but can also include expected results consistent with the goals of the community's broader initiative or effort. Moreover, outcomes should relate to the needs of the targeted population; that is to say, attainment of the outcome should result in a particular benefit to the group of individuals being served.

Once outcomes are defined, program designers should carefully consider "*What strategies will produce the planned outcomes?*". In determining appropriate strategies, staff should also assess what already exists in their community in relationship to the needs of the targeted population and the outcomes they hope to achieve. In other words, they need to identify what is currently being done upon which they can build,

and what gaps in services are present. This requires an examination of resources (human, physical, and fiscal), current programming, services, and activities, and system capability (e.g., what is available within the broader system even though the current program does not include it).

The next step in the self-assessment process is to determine "*How will we know we are successful?*". This should include an on-going strategy to benchmark progress. Moreover, that information should be used for continuous improvement. Thus, the feedback mechanisms should be used to redefine program objectives and reformulate strategies to achieve those objectives, as appropriate.

II. PROGRAM DESIGN

As we have already discussed, opportunities available through school-to-work systems are often not easily accessed by out-of-school youth. By investing in a variety of out-of school youth programs that already included many STW principles, the Department of Labor hoped to address this disconnect. The Solicitation for Grant Application clearly encouraged the development of models that would provide knowledge to the field on how to best incorporate STW principles in programs serving out-of-school youth, and how these programs could be connected to the overall STW system. Thus, rather than making funds available to establish new school-to-work programs for out-of-school youth, DOL expected that the demonstration projects funded through the grant would build upon or enhance their existing efforts.

The Department provided potential programs with a basic framework that specified elements that should be in place in established programs. As outlined in Chapter I, these indicators, or *threshold criteria*, delineated specific partnership, programmatic, and measurement indicators, and the conditions that should exist within each. By characterizing these criteria as a baseline of activity for effectively serving out-of-school youth in a school-to-work framework, DOL established the groundwork for the program design. It also provided clear guidance to sites regarding its broad expectations that "most, but not necessarily all, of the strategies and essential elements of a school-to-work system [as delineated in the threshold criteria]…will be present in the existing youth initiative,"[1] and its anticipation that proposed activities would lead to a "system which meets all the threshold criteria by the end of the period of performance."

This chapter will describe how the demonstration sites designed their programs to expand their existing efforts. We will first provide an overview of the foundation programs that served as the starting points for the various projects. Next we will detail the goals each project established. This will set the context for our examination of how

[1] The selection process included an initial screening to determine that the applicants' programs met a majority of the threshold criteria. "Majority" was defined as more than 50% of each of the partnership, programmatic and measurement criteria and at least one of each of the work-based learning and connecting activities criteria.

the design focus and planned strategies contributed to goal attainment and progress toward the overall outcome the Department of Labor expected.

FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

The SGA required that applicants describe in their proposals how their current, or foundation, programs were consistent with the threshold criteria with respect to their services for out-of-school youth. We started our examination of the foundation programs with these descriptions in order to develop a sense of the starting points for what the demonstration sites hoped to accomplish, as well as how they intended to carry out their projects.

To build on our observations from Chapter I, grant recipients reflected a wide range of differences in their starting points. This variety posed an interesting challenge as we began our analysis of the design focus and strategies: how might these programs be characterized in order to provide a framework for our discussion on program design? At first review, it appeared that the demonstration sites represented eleven disparate programs with only their services to out-of-school youth in common: STW system connections were diverse, lead agencies differed from site to site, and program structures were unique. Further analysis, however, suggested that several of the foundation programs were organized around common models and representative strategies that could serve as a basis for our categorization. These models represent three distinct approaches employed by the existing programs and can be characterized as: alternative/adult high schools, YouthBuild models, and workforce preparation models. Ten of the eleven OSY Demonstration programs fall predominantly into one or another of these categories; the eleventh program represents a hybrid that combines elements of an alternative high school with a workforce preparation program.

These models, the demonstration programs that fall into each, and their predominant features are displayed in Table II-1. The remainder of this section will describe these foundation models. We emphasize that these descriptions are summaries

of the programs *at the time they applied for grant funds* (rather than at the end of the grant period) and represent the grantees' *self-described* conformance to the threshold criteria. Understanding that self-assessments may not always be totally objective with regard to strengths and weaknesses, we have added our thoughts of how the foundation programs complied with the criteria where appropriate, again as of the time the grant was announced rather than at its conclusion.[2]

[2] How foundation programs evolved during the grant period to conform to the threshold criteria with respect to school-based, work-based, and connecting activities occupies much of the rest of the Report.

Table II-1
Typology of OSY Demonstration Grantees

Type	Grantees Represented	Typical Features
Alternative High Schools	• Austin American Institute for Learning • Lancaster County Academy • Milwaukee HY-TECC II • Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center	• Strong focus on attainment of secondary school diploma or GED, in keeping with status as alternative high schools • Youth participate as long as needed, taking whatever courses necessary, until achieving the educational credential • Strong connections to local school systems; typically weaker connections to employers • Usually limited opportunities for work-based learning
YouthBuild	• Cambridge Just-a-Start • Phoenix YouthSkilled	• Strong school-based and work-based components • Approximately 12 months duration • Emphasis on integration of vocational and academic instruction around a single career pathway
Workforce Preparation Programs	• Baltimore Youth Opportunities • Memphis Youth Fair Chance • NY Family Learning Institute • Rhode Island Commerce Academy	• Strong emphasis on developing employability skills • Strong case management • Usually provide GED preparation, often using computer-aided instruction • (With one exception), limited opportunity for work-based learning.
Combination Models	• Ohio Schools Study Council	• A hybrid, consisting of weak links between multiple partners • Each partner has its own focus

Alternative/Adult High School

Alternative education was originally construed as an umbrella term covering a range of options in schooling. It now typically describes educational programming for "at-risk" youth—most generally those who are unlikely to finish, or have already dropped out of, high school. Alternative high schools often have small class sizes, low student-to-teacher ratios, and flexible scheduling, and use non-traditional teaching strategies. They may serve both students at risk of dropping out and young people who have left the mainstream educational environment. They are designed to provide courses that lead to a high school diploma, and usually can only enroll students up to a certain age (typically determined by the state restrictions on upper age limits). Adult high schools are often similar in structure to alternative high schools, but normally enroll only those individuals who have dropped out of school and who are above 16 years old. Upper age limits are not established. The school usually focuses on providing courses leading to a high school diploma, but often also offers GED preparation as an option.

The starting points for four of the projects—Austin American Institute for Learning (AIL), Lancaster County Academy, Milwaukee HY-TECC II, and Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center (YVOIC)—are grounded in an alternative or adult high school approach. These projects are generally characterized by a focus on providing learning leading to attainment of a secondary certificate (GED certificate or high school diploma), a substantial history of providing educational services to out-of-school youth, and strong connections to the local STW partnership.

Two of the four projects (AIL and YVOIC) are also involved in the operation of employment preparation/training programs, as well as other projects that focus on youth issues and supports. AIL is a comprehensive human investment center that operates a variety of programs for over 500 out-of-school youth annually. The foundation program recently added a Charter School, enabling students to earn a high school diploma. Based on their proposal, there appeared to be three missing elements in their current program's conformance to the threshold criteria: a realistic and coherent collaborative strategy with the school-to-work system (as opposed to strong connections); a system of career pathways; and activities that offered students exposure to all aspects of the industry.

YVOIC also operates JTPA programs (using Title II-B, II-C, and 8%-education funds) serving both in-school and out-of-school youth, an Urban/Rural School-to-Work

Opportunities Grant, and a Quantum Opportunities Program. The alternative high school (EXCEL) can lead to a high school diploma or GED attainment. YVOIC's proposal indicated that the organization was in the process of incorporating school-to-work principles and practices into operations at the school.

The other two projects within this model (Lancaster County Academy and Milwaukee HY-TECC II) are rooted in the existing education system and both appear to be well connected to the local school-to-work system. Lancaster County Academy contracts with ten of the sixteen school districts in the county to provide "slots" for students who have dropped out of school. Service learning and career/life planning are required of all students. School-based learning is self-paced and competency-based and includes all subjects required for a Pennsylvania high school diploma. The curriculum also concentrates on work readiness and employability skills. In their proposal, Lancaster County Academy boasted of a solid foundation in all the threshold criteria, although career pathway options were restricted to the retail industry, and the availability of work-based learning opportunities were limited in scope and scale.

Milwaukee HY-TECC II is an adult high school within a local technical college—Milwaukee Area Technical College, or MATC—which serves 2,500 students annually. In the foundation program, core academic, occupational, and career courses are provided. Students can attain a high school credential based on competencies from life skills and can take dual credits for high school and college. An effort is afoot to convert all classes into competency-based courses, as determined by industry and state standards. In describing their existing program in relationship to the threshold criteria, Milwaukee HY-TECC II indicated limitations in work-based learning activities and hoped to build on what was available for in-school youth in the community. They also wanted to bolster overall work-based learning strategies and mentoring.

YouthBuild

The YouthBuild model is a comprehensive youth and community development program that engages young adults in construction activities in low-income communities and provides education, training in the construction trades, and leadership development. YouthBuild programs are typically 12 months long and have a focus on developing a strong positive peer group. Youth participate full time, usually alternating weeks at one or more construction sites with weeks in an alternative "school" environment. In addition to training and education, students assist in the

governance of the program and participate in community service projects. Programs are operated by autonomous local organizations or by local governments.

The foundation for two of the projects (Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild and Phoenix YouthSkilled) is consistent with this design and focus. Just-a-Start YouthBuild is operated by a community-based organization and is an active participant in state and local STW partnerships. This program provides academic and vocational training in construction trades, basic skills remediation, GED preparation, and supportive services. The program is also an AmeriCorps program and is the recipient of an earlier STWOA Out-of-School Youth grant to develop STW services for out-of-school youth. The focus is to organize all curricula and activities in academic and technical skills; life skills and employability; goal setting, career decision-making and career development; and citizenship/leadership skills. In addressing the relationship of their existing program to the threshold criteria, the proposal indicated that Just-a-Start was "working on" an integrated system of school-based, work-based, and connecting activities. The concentration on the construction trades also placed limitations on the development of a "system" of career pathways.

YouthBuild is also the foundation program for Phoenix YouthSkilled. The foundation YouthBuild program is a partnership between the local city government (the lead agency), the vocational campus of the major urban school district, and two community-based organizations, one of which is the community service arm of labor unions. This collaborative provides academic and vocational training in construction trades (electrical, carpentry, and plumbing), GED preparation, and leadership development, supported by case management. Although it included only one CBO, a similar alliance was established for the YouthSkilled project, which was being established with the demonstration funds, and which applies the YouthBuild model to training in manufacturing technology. There is not a strong school-to-work partnership in the local area; therefore, the existing program was limited in its ability to connect to the local system. The foundation program focused on the construction trades, which limited the development of a "system" of career pathways, but YouthSkilled was seen as an effort to overcome this limitation.

Workforce Preparation Programs

The workforce preparation model is characterized by a strong focus on employment and employability development, including pre-employment and work maturity skills (job seeking and job keeping skills). However, training often includes

GED preparation, basic skills remediation, and occupational skills training. Also typical of workforce preparation programs is a commitment to case management and supportive services. There are normally ties to the Department of Labor, such as through JTPA or other youth initiatives, and, therefore, programs generally emphasize job placement as an anticipated outcome.

Four of the foundation programs (Baltimore Youth Opportunities, Memphis Youth Fair Chance, New York Family Learning Institute, and Rhode Island Commerce Academy) have a solid basis in workforce preparation programs and initiatives. Two programs (Baltimore Youth Opportunities and Memphis Youth Fair Chance) are continuations of Youth Opportunities and Youth Fair Chance initiatives, respectively. These efforts were both Department of Labor-funded programs that focused resources and services in concentrated geographic areas within communities. They sought to establish local governing structures and learning resource centers, provide comprehensive services within the targeted communities, and effect systemic change in how services were provided (through leveraging funds and coordinating services, collaborative efforts, community input into program design and governance, etc.).

Baltimore Youth Opportunities is administered and managed by the Baltimore Office of Employment Development (OED), which serves as the administrative entity for all local JTPA funds. OED contracts with neighborhood CBOs as "home rooms," emphasizing the connections that disaffected youth have through these organizations. The model includes three sequential phases: 1) outreach, assessment and preparation; 2) work experience and connecting activities; and 3) transition to more intensive educational or training services. The thinking was that, through work experience and connecting activities, youth could be brought to the point where they were ready for formal education and training. Their proposal described a foundation in all the threshold criteria as it pertained to in-school youth, but lacked substantive involvement of out-of-school youth in the system. Our analysis of the foundation program also suggested that the connections between these key elements—particularly with the emphasis on decentralized service provision—were still in the developmental stage, indicating the need for a coherent strategy that provided out-of-school youth with access to STW activities and services.

In keeping with the Youth Fair Chance initiative, the City of Memphis' Youth Fair Chance program consists of recreation and community initiatives (including providing health counseling, credit counseling, sports activities, referrals for social

services, and the like), as well as educational services for in-school and out-of-school youth. Out-of-school youth are served through the Community Resource Center. The key focus is the Adult Career Academy, which provides academic instruction and opportunities for selected occupational skills training and work-based instruction. While Memphis Youth Fair Chance had strong collaborative efforts and partnerships in place, they were not necessarily specific to school-to-work for out-of-school youth. Their description indicated a focus on specific training activities rather than an integrated system. Available strategies to provide work-based learning also appeared to be limited.

The foundation for the New York and Rhode Island projects, while not grounded in a larger workforce development initiative, come from a solid basis of providing JTPA programming for out-of-school youth. The parent organization in New York, Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS), is a large not-for-profit organization that also serves as the hub of all STW activities in the Bronx. FEGS is organized with several programmatic divisions and units within those divisions. The Youth Employment Unit, part of the Education and Career Services division, provides JTPA services such as pre-employment/work maturity skills training, occupational and basic skills training, personal and vocational counseling, GED preparation, job referral and placement, and post-placement follow-up. This unit served as the starting point for the Family Learning Institute, a project designed to provide GED preparation and training in computer literacy, as well as to engage parenting out-of-school youth in the educational development of their children. In their proposal, FEGS described an effort to develop a work-based learning component and system of career pathways. An interesting self-description of the proposed activities through the Family Learning Institute was "as a connecting activity."

In Rhode Island, the Chamber Education Foundation (CEF), a non-profit corporation that originated with the Warwick Chamber of Commerce—but is autonomous from the Chamber—has developed a program for the out-of-school population that provides a general workforce preparation credential. The Commerce Academy has developed a Certificate of Workforce Readiness (CWR) that is crosswalked with SCANS. The CWR focuses on seven areas: personal management, communication, teamwork, academics (GED, computer-assisted instruction), workplace literacy, technology, and employability. Participants benefit from career assessment and formal performance reviews with a career coach. CEF has strong connections to

the state and local STW systems and is also a member of the National STW Technical Assistance Provider Network. In relationship to the threshold criteria, the foundation program needed to move beyond the CWR to develop an integrated system of school-based, work-based, and connecting activities, and a system of career pathways.

Combination Model

This model combines the alternative/adult high school and workforce preparation models described above and is represented by the foundation program of the Ohio School Study Council. This project brings together the existing adult high school of the Columbus Public School District and Columbus Works, a CBO that provides employment training, placement and retention services to economically disadvantaged young people ages 18-25. Both organizations are partners in the local STW partnership, which has focused on developing and providing STW elements for in-school youth. Columbus Works coordinates with and has collaborative agreements with numerous other community-based organizations that provide supportive services, and with local employers and other training programs. The foundation program appeared to have a solid school-to-work system in place for in-school youth, but had not expanded the system to include out-of-school youth. They had limited access available to a system of career pathways for out-of-school youth, and indicated a need to develop connecting strategies, mentoring opportunities, and work-based training.

GOALS

DOL's threshold criteria (detailed in Chapter I) designated three distinct components—partnership, programmatic and measurement. Programmatic criteria could be further divided into four areas of focus—career pathways, school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. In analyzing the various project goals in relationship to the threshold criteria, we found that most projects appeared to concentrate on the programmatic elements, with some attention paid to partnerships. Expected outcomes were generally evenly divided between these categories: eight sites had *partnership* goals (these included building stronger partnerships with employers, business/industry, postsecondary schools, other providers of service, etc), eight projects developed goals in the *career pathway* element, nine sites had goals specific to enhancing *school-based learning*, six programs hoped to create or augment *work-based learning* activities, and nine projects established goals in the *connecting activities* category. Table II-2 is provided to depict the types of goals by foundation program category.

Table II-2
Types of Goals, by Program Type

	Alternative/Adult High Schools	YouthBuild	Workforce Development	TOTAL
Partnerships	3	2	3	**8**
Career Pathways	4	2	2	**8**
School-Based	4	2	3	**9**
Work-Based	4	0	2	**6**
Connecting Activities	4	1	4	**9**

Table II-3 details site-specific goals and indicates the number of goals, by site, for each school-to-work element. As this table suggests, many partnership goals were broad in scope, such as ensuring out-of-school youth access to the STW system, creating a model strategy for partnerships for out-of-school youth, establishing a community-based governance strategy, and formalizing a youth service providers network. Others targeted particular partners, such as the local community college or a specific business/industry. Goals relating to career pathways were typically geared toward creating one or more pathways to add to the local menu of offerings and often included a career awareness or planning focus. Curriculum development was the primary goal of projects that specified goals to enhance the school-based learning component, followed closely by establishing more effective links to postsecondary education or other training opportunities. Projects that established work-based learning goals appeared to focus primarily on mentoring activities, although job shadowing and job readiness/life skills were also represented. Goals associated with connecting activities targeted employer involvement, staff development, and support services.

All sites established at least three goals; three sites had as many as seven goals. Generally speaking, goals were distributed across several school-to-work elements: seven sites had goals in at least four elements, and the two projects that specified three goals targeted three different STW elements.

Our analysis suggests that, with one exception, goals were better defined and measurable when fewer were articulated. For example, Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild set three goals: to strengthen/formalize the partnership with the local community college, to develop a career exploratory program, and to design an

accredited high school diploma program for out-of-school youth. Phoenix YouthSkilled targeted four expected goals: to establish linkages with manufacturing employers, to establish a second career pathway, to provide training in machining/welding and basic academic skills, and to provide placement/post-secondary connections. Conversely, projects that had more than four goals tended to establish expectations that were more general in nature. For example, Memphis Youth Fair Chance, with six goals, hoped to encourage comprehensive strategies and establish community-based governance strategies; Baltimore Youth Opportunities hoped to "strengthen work and learning connections." These broader goals are clearly more difficult to attain within the limited timeframe in which the projects would operate (the demonstration was intended to be a 15-month project, to include a three-month planning period).

DESIGN FOCUS

In examining the design focus for each project, our primary interest was to assess whether or not the program design might lead to achieving the goals that the projects established, as well as to describe the overall purpose, or intended outcome,[3] of the grant. We first crosswalked goals and proposed activities for each project to determine if there was consistency between the two. This information has been summarized in Table II-4. Next, we examined the relationship between the activities to determine how the activities contributed to an overall strategy. Finally, we reviewed the proposed operational structure and staffing to ascertain the degree to which these might support project implementation and goal attainment.

Generally, there appeared to be a match between goals and proposed activities. Most projects included one or more activities for each goal established, although there were a few instances where activities or strategies were not specified for a particular goal. It was less clear whether or not the activities represented a coherent *strategy*[4] to accomplish the corresponding goal—or, taken together, whether the combination of

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[3] As stated in the Solicitation for Grant Applications, in evaluating grant applications the Department of Labor awarded points based on "the extent to which proposed activities would lead to an out-of-school youth/school-to-work system which meets all the threshold criteria by the end of the period of performance."

[4] We define "strategy" as a set of interrelated activities that have a direct correlation with established goals, and that are clearly connected to the overall expected outcome.

activities constituted an overall strategy to achieve the purpose of the grant. For example, several projects included activities such as "hire a coordinator" or "allocate funds" for a particular purpose, but did not provide a clear sense of what the individual hired would do to support the goal or how the purchase or expenditure on particular activities would support the overall operation of the project or tie into the larger picture. Similarly, as we looked at the relationship between the various activities and how these were connected to the desired outcome, we found in some projects that activities were not consistently related to each other, nor were they aligned with the outcome. For example, one grantee included a number of discrete activities that were fairly standard employment and training activities, such as providing GED preparation, life skills training, job readiness workshops, work experiences, and supportive services, and contracting for occupational skills training. Additional activities included hiring an individual to serve as coordinator, and providing staff development around curriculum integration. With the exception of enhancing curriculum integration, these essentially appeared to be stand-alone activities that were normally provided through the existing foundation program. For example, there did not seem to be a strategy that would ensure that GED preparation would relate to occupational skills training opportunities to which participants would be referred, or to their work experiences or job readiness training. As a result, it was difficult to ascertain how these activities would comprise an overall strategy to develop a coherent system that would serve out-of-school youth in a school-to-work framework.

In other programs, planned activities appeared to demonstrate strong interrelationships, but did not seem to connect to the expected Department of Labor outcome. In one project it was apparent that the design included a comprehensive strategy of readiness activities through community connections, case management, close ties to workplace mentors, and workshops addressing work and life skills and issues. While this approach formed a critical foundation for addressing the *youth development* needs of the participants, it represented a narrow, more preparatory focus that did not address the full range of elements for developing a school-to-work program for out-of-school youth.

Table II-3
Demonstration Grant Goals, by STW Component

Site	Partnerships	Career Pathways	School-Based	Work-Based	Connecting
Austin American Institute for Learning (4)	Create a model strategy for partnership development focusing on OSY. (1)	Create Principles of Technology (PT) course. (1)	Create PT curriculum. (1)		Develop active role of employers in all career development programs. (1)
Baltimore Youth Opportunities (7)	Complete the youth service network; further develop Youth Leadership Council. (1)		Create tutoring component at each "home room" (CBO). Enhance life skills curriculum. (2)	Enhance mentoring component. (1)	Build stronger relations with the private sector. Strengthen work and learning connections. Expand outreach and recruitment. (3)
Cambridge Just-a-Start Youth Build (3)	Strengthen/formalize partnership with local community college. (1)	Develop career exploratory program. (1)	Design accredited high school diploma program for OSY. (1)		
Lancaster County Academy (7)	Work with business and industry (academic needs of present and future employees). (1)	Expand work-based learning to different career paths. (1)	Provide links to other training, employment, apprenticeship and post-secondary education. Apply work-based academic competencies to diploma requirements. (2)	Perform job analyses. Foster mentoring relationships. (2)	Accommodate childcare and transportation needs. (1)
Memphis Youth Fair Chance (6)	Provide a Learning Resource Center. Encourage comprehensive strategies/establish community-based governance strategies. (2)	Expand vocational training opportunities in hospitality, health, and computer. (1)	Design programs to be delivered via integrated training and instructional curriculum. (1)		Staff development. Tuition support. (2)

Note: Numbers in parentheses denote the number of goals that were established in each category.

Table II-3 (continued)

Site	Partnerships	Career Pathways	School-Based	Work-Based	Connecting
Milwaukee HY-TECC II (7)		Develop and implement state certified skilled co-op in business. Assist students develop career pathways. (2)	Facilitate use of Analyze & Apply curriculum. Include work-based component in all occupational courses. (2)	Enroll OSY in work-based learning. Assign workplace mentors to OSY. Assist students master SCANS competencies. (3)	
New York Family Learning Institute (6)			Purchase additional computers for lab. Provide computer literacy training and GED preparation. (2)	Establish job shadowing. Provide job readiness training. (2)	Provide support for parents who are out-of-school youth. Teach parenting skills. (2)
Ohio School Study Council (4)	Ensure OSY access to STW system. (1)			Facilitate mentors. (1)	Professional development. Facilitate transitional services. (2)
Phoenix YouthSkilled (4)	Establish linkages with manufacturing employers. (1)	Establish a second career path. (1)	Provide training in machining and/or welding and basic academic skills. (1)		Job/postsecondary placement. (1)
Rhode Island Commerce Academy (3)	Continue to develop partnerships with "supply-side" agencies. (1)	Implement certificate program CIR in Telecommunications. (1)			Expand acceptance of the CWR program among employers. (1)
Yakima Opportunities Industrialization Center (5)		Relate course offerings to 5 career paths. Infuse career pathway concept into curriculum. (1)	Adopt school-to-work curriculum and infuse into existing school curriculum. (1)	Develop work experience sites and program: infuse work experience to existing school program. Integrate life skills and pre-employment curriculum into classes. (2)	Staff development activities. (1)

Our examination into operational structure, staffing patterns, and committed resources also pointed to a number of potential design flaws that, in retrospect, contributed to the implementation challenges the projects would eventually experience. First, there appeared to be a frequent disconnect between proposed activities and planned staffing and resource allocation. As an example, one project articulated six project goals, five of which were related to direct service provision, including providing basic skills, life skills and GED preparation, and developing and implementing work-based opportunities for participants. The responsibility for arranging all these activities, however, rested on only one full-time staff person. A similar example is represented by a grantee that established a large number of far-reaching goals, such as expanding work-based learning to different career paths, linking to other training and employment organizations and programs, and applying work-based competencies to graduation requirements, among others. A part-time coordinator was hired to manage this series of complex tasks. Even allowing for the contributions and support from existing staff committed to overall program operation and administration, these functions would seem to require a greater degree of time and effort to adequately implement than a part-time staff person could provide. Another example of this disconnect is illustrated in the area of curriculum development. Four of the nine projects that included curriculum development as a goal did not indicate in their plan staff devoted to this function.

Second, the manner in which grant recipients assigned responsibility for major components of their projects appeared to contribute to the coherence of the overall strategy, or the lack thereof. For example, the designs for five projects included sub-contracts with other organizations for key services such as development of work opportunities, marketing, job analyses to support curriculum development aligned to workplace needs, case management and life skills training, etc. One of these essentially subcontracted all activities to three separate organizations. An additional project included in its design a non-financial relationship with a non-profit, industry-led organization to identify work-based learning and employment opportunities for participants. Consigning these functions to other organizations as part of the original design appeared to add a degree of separation to overall implementation, which in turn contributed to a disconnect between planned activities. This was exacerbated when the project did not devote human or fiscal resources to provide adequate oversight or to

coordinate the operation of the sub-contracted activities between one another, or with the functions conducted directly by the grant recipient. Conversely, projects that had designs that included more internal control and direct management of major activities appeared to be able to affect a greater degree of coordination between activities, develop and implement missing school-to-work elements, and/or enhance existing activities. They also seemed to demonstrate progress toward developing a school-to-work program serving out-of-school youth, although the "systems" resulting from the projects tended to be smaller in scale and reach a relatively small number of out-of-school youth within the larger community.

Last, projects were generally very ambitious with regard to what they hoped to accomplish given the amount of funding available and the anticipated duration of the grant. There appeared to be a relationship between the number and specificity of goals and congruent strategies. Programs with more numerous and more sweeping and general goals were hard pressed to have clear strategies for implementation in mind for each of them. By contrast, those that focused on specific and well-defined goals tended to have articulated congruent implementation strategies, resulting in a coordinated and purposeful approach to goal attainment.

To demonstrate this connectivity, we cite the strategies employed by the two YouthBuild-based projects—Cambridge Just-a-Start and Phoenix YouthSkilled. The Just-a-Start project hoped to strengthen and formalize its partnership with Bunker Hill Community College in order to provide extended opportunities for participants. To accomplish this, staff would refine the project's curriculum to create articulated courses and explore the possibility of dually enrolling students. The project also targeted the development of a career exploratory program and planned two specific activities to support the goal: 1) identify and work with training institutions offering a variety of career options, and 2) expose students to occupations/career ladders requiring postsecondary education by providing lab experiences with hands-on activities (field trips, speakers) and providing classes at the identified training institutions. Last, Just-a-Start expected to design an accredited high school diploma program for out-of-school youth. To accomplish this goal, they would work with the local school district to build on the existing external degree program currently offered to adults, as well as continue the development of a "competency inventory" and assessment process started under funding from another grant. The staffing and budget structure tied these activities together: a percent of effort was allocated to several existing positions (the Program

Manager, the Vocational Instructor, a Curriculum Developer and the Job Developer), establishing a strategic distribution of organizational and fiscal resources focused toward specific outcomes.

Similarly, Phoenix YouthSkilled articulated explicit goals, developed specific corresponding activities, and strategically allocated resources (human, fiscal, and organizational) to support the activities. In creating a project that would adapt the YouthBuild model to the manufacturing technology field, a goal was to establish linkages with manufacturing employers to identify workplace skills and provide career exposure, work-based learning, mentoring opportunities, and job placement assistance. The Program Director and Vocational School liaison, both of whose time was provided to the project in-kind, would bear this responsibility. A related goal was to establish a second career path within the project, manufacturing technology. Drawing on existing course offerings at the vocational school of the local high school district (one of the partners in the project), as well as the existing YouthBuild structure, their strategy was to modify and implement a manufacturing technology pathway and offer a sequential one-year program that moved from 100% classroom training to 100% work-based activities in four phases. To address the goal focus of providing training in machining and/or welding and basic academic skills, another partner in the grant was given a subcontract to provide vocational and academic instruction. Their last goal centered on providing connections to postsecondary education and job placement for students in this pathway. Funds were allocated for a percent of effort of a job developer to address placement, and the project would access the vocational school's relationship with the local community college to provide college level courses if students were interested and ready. Tying these activities together was a caseworker, who would conduct life skills, work readiness, and leadership training, and identify and provide or access appropriate support services. Thus, all four of the grantee's goals were focused on reinforcing the same objective, and an appropriate strategy was identified for each.

CONCLUSION

We can identify several key elements that contributed to effective design strategies. First, scope and scale matter. Projects that defined a smaller system and more clearly defined set of goals appeared more likely to have congruent strategies. They worked with a smaller number of students and fewer employers concentrated in one or two industries, and included resources to coordinate the activities of key

partners. This approach contributed to a more manageable overall effort and enhanced goal attainment.

Second, targeting is important. Projects that developed activities that addressed weaker elements of their foundation programs and then focused efforts on developing these elements appeared to experience more success. By targeting specific elements and then expending resources to create a *deeper (vs. wider)* approach, these programs showed a greater degree of progress consistent with the threshold criteria.

Finally, effective strategies require that goals are clearly defined and measurable, that activities address each goal, and that those activities relate to each other and ultimately connect to the expected outcome. Projects where this critical tenet was evident appeared to be able to implement program elements that led to overall system development.

Table II-4
Grantees' Proposed Goals and Strategies

Lead Agency and Foundation	Project Goals	Proposed Strategies
Austin American Institute for Learning (AIL) Comprehensive human investment center serving over 500 youth annually in a wide variety of programs, including a Charter high school that enables youth to earn a H.S. diploma.	**Partnerships**: Create a model strategy for partnership development focusing on OSY. **Career Pathways**: Create Principles of Technology (PT) program. **School-based Learning**: Develop and implement PT preparation curriculum. **Connecting Activities**: Develop active role of employers in all career development programs.	**Partnerships**: Industry Liaison to work with the local partnership to insinuate AIL into STW system. **Career Pathways**: Implement Principles of Technology course – enroll 24 students; employ full-time PT instructor. **School-based Learning**: Provide GED preparation/H.S. diploma and courses in career preparation and those relating to the technology field. Create preparatory course for Principles of Technology and identify curricular needs for Industrial Electronics sequence (Curriculum Developer); purchase 2-station computer lab and Cambridge Physics curriculum; provide project-based learning activities. **Work-based Learning**: Students to participate in work internships and shadowing in technology after completion of required introductory courses. **Connecting Activities**: Industry Liaison to engage employers in providing career exploration activities, involvement in program design and providing employment opportunities.
Baltimore Youth Opportunities Local government operating a Youth Opportunities program that contracts with community based organizations to provide outreach, assessment and preparation; work-based learning and connecting activities; and transition services.	**Partnerships**: Complete the youth service network; further develop Youth Leadership Council. **School-based-Learning**: Create tutoring component at each "home room" (CBO). **Work-based Learning**: Enhance mentoring component; enhance life skills curriculum. **Connecting Activities**: Strengthen work and learning connections; expand outreach and recruitment; build stronger relations with the private sector (internships, job training and education alternatives).	**Partnerships**: Funds allocated for development of Youth Provider's Network. **School-based Learning**: Contract with CBOs to develop/provide orientation, assessment, on-site tutoring services; Business Broker to develop career/training plans; referral for GED preparation; link with local community college for postsecondary opportunities; develop occupational skills training curriculum. **Work-based Learning**: CBOs to place youths in internships/work experiences in a variety of industries and provide weekly life skills training; employers serve as workplace mentors **Connecting Activities**: CBOs to provide case management services; full-time "Business Broker" to build relationships with/engage employers and link with CBOs to match students with internships and conduct follow-up; provide mentoring training; develop connections with other providers for GED, postsecondary education, occupational skills training; involve students in leadership activities.

Table II-4 (continued)

Lead Agency and Foundation	Project Goals	Proposed Strategies
Cambridge Just-a-Start Youth Build YouthBuild program, providing academic and vocational training in construction.	**Partnerships**: Strengthen/ formalize partnership with local community college. **Career Pathways**: Develop career exploratory program. **School-based Learning**: Design accredited high school diploma program for OSY.	**Partnerships**: Refine curricula to create articulated courses with local community college; explore dual enrollment activities. **Career Pathways**: Identify and work with training institutions to develop career exploration program; expose students to occupations/career ladders requiring postsecondary education; provide lab experiences with hands-on activities (field trips, speakers); provide classes at training institutions. **School-based Learning**: GED preparation, remediation, career planning; construction related instruction; work with local school district to develop youth-centered External Degree Program (high school diploma); continue development of Competency Inventory and assessment process; purchase computers. **Work-based Learning**: Life skills classes and leadership development activities; worksite training in construction; community service projects. Percent of effort allocated for Program Manager, Vocational Instructor, Curriculum Developer and Job Developer to accomplish activities.
Lancaster County Academy Adult high school offering a high school diploma program and work-based learning to 200 students annually.	**Partnerships**: Work with business and industry (academic needs of present and future employees). **Career Pathways**: Expand number of career paths available. **School-based Learning**: Provide links to other training, employment, apprenticeship and post-secondary education; apply work-based academic competencies to diploma requirements. **Work-based Learning**: Perform job analyses; foster mentoring relationships. **Connecting Activities**: Accommodate childcare and transportation needs.	**Partnerships**: STW Coordinator to work with local employers to identify academic/occupational needs of workforce. **Career Pathways**: Add work-based opportunities in manufacturing, industrial technology, electronics, building trades, transportation and distribution, and medical technology. **School-based Learning**: High school diploma program, along with courses in career planning; revise curriculum to integrate instructional support; conduct academic and occupational assessment; upgrade computer network; provide computer software-specific training; develop links to postsecondary training, expand articulation agreements; funds available for student tuition; **Work-based Learning**: Courses in work readiness and life skills; job shadowing in retail with planned expansion to other industries; service learning; contract for job analyses for one job at each employer site; develop mentoring activities. **Connecting Activities**: Provide transportation/access other supportive serves, including child care; work with PIC and other employer groups to identify employers to participate; share “best practices” and strategies with other schools and businesses.

Table II-4 (continued)

Lead Agency and Foundation	Project Goals	Proposed Strategies
Memphis Youth Fair Chance Local government's Youth Fair Chance program, consisting of recreation, community, and in-school and out-of-school programs	**Partnerships**: Provide a Learning/ Resource Center; encourage comprehensive strategies/ establish community-based governance strategies. **Career Pathways**: Expand vocational training opportunities in hospitality, health, and computer. **School-based Learning**: Design programs to be delivered via integrated training and instructional curriculum. **Connecting Activities** Staff development; tuition support.	**Partnerships**: Hire full time Client Service Center Coordinator. **Career Pathways**: Contract for occupational skills training in three targeted career paths; establish training model for out-of-school youth. **School-based Learning**: GED preparation and introductory vocational skills; provide assessment and orientation; integrate curriculum; refer youth for training. **Work-based Learning**: Provide life skills classes, job shadowing, field experiences and workshops on job readiness and workplace dynamics. **Connecting Activities**: Staff Development coordinator to provide training on curriculum integration, mentor orientation; provide/access supportive services; tuition support.
Milwaukee **HY-TECC II** Adult high school, within a technical college, serves 2,500 students annually	**Career Pathways**: Develop and implement state-certified skilled co-op in business; assist students develop career pathways. **School-based Learning**: Facilitate use of Analyze & Apply curriculum; include work-based component in all occupational courses. **Work-based Learning**: Enroll OSY in work-based learning; assign workplace mentors to OSY; assist students master SCANS competencies.	**Career Pathways**: Develop/implement business co-op; Outreach and Recruitment Specialist to assist students select career pathways and courses. **School-based Learning**: Preparation for high school diploma or GED and career planning; vocational courses at student's option; provide tuition assistance for career/occupational courses; incorporate Analyze and Apply curriculum. **Work-based Learning**: Establish mentorships and work experience slots for 50-100 students; enroll students in a variety of existing and new co-ops; include work-based components in all occupational courses (tours, speakers, job shadowing, etc.); provide instruction in SCANS in all regular classes (Outreach and Recruitment Specialist to provide individualized instruction). **Connecting Activities**: Contract for Workplace Liaison Services to provide employer connections; provide employer stipends; in-kind provision of professional development for instructors (including training in Analyze and Apply); in-kind provision of mentor training to employers; work with regional training partnership to identify and develop work-based learning sites, Outreach and Recruitment Specialist to interact with school, employers, student for problem-solving.

Table II-4 (continued)

Lead Agency and Foundation	Project Goals	Proposed Strategies
New York Family Learning Institute CBO that serves as "hub" of state-funded STW activities in the Bronx and that operates a variety of employment/training and social programs serving over 50,000 annually.	**School-based Learning**: Purchase additional computers for computer lab; provide computer literacy training and GED preparation. **Work-based Learning**: Establish job shadowing; provide job readiness training. **Connecting Activities**: Provide support for parents who are out-of-school youth; provide parenting skills training.	**School-based Learning**: Full-time Education Specialist to provide intake, assessment, orientation, educational plan development, GED preparation, remediation, computer literacy training and pre-vocational counseling; Also planned is curriculum development, career exploration activities, referral for job opportunities; Computer lab to be purchased. **Work-based Learning**: Job shadowing, job readiness training, leadership development activities; industry visits; development of speaker's bureau. **Connecting Activities**: Provide parenting skills classes, parent/child educational classes; case management; violence prevention substance abuse and esteem-building workshops; conduct public awareness activities with STW partnership, local educational entities, supportive service network and employer advisory board.
Ohio School Study Council Adult high school and a CBO, providing GED preparation and job readiness training.	**Partnerships**: Ensure OSY access to STW system. **Work-based Learning**: Facilitate mentors. **Connecting Activities**: Professional development; facilitate transitional services.	**Partnerships:** Project is partnership between local Adult High School and CBO (Columbus Works) to assist out-of-school youth access existing STW system for in-school youth (all services subcontracted to these organizations). School District to hire Out-of-school Youth Cluster Leader to liaison between District, Columbus Works and other STW efforts to ensure the connection. **School-based Learning**: GED preparation; some job readiness and vocational skills training; OSY Cluster Leader to update student career plans; Develop links with community college to explore postsecondary education opportunities. **Work-based Learning**: Subcontract for mentoring services. **Connecting Activities**: OSY Cluster Leader to facilitate staff development activities in mentor training, collaborative planning for vocational and academic instruction, technology in business and education, redirection of educational programming, workplace safety, personnel realignment and site-based programming; Develop training manuals (in-kind); Collaborate with CBO to implement diversity training program; Initiate pilot program for mentor training. Follow-up Coordinator (Columbus Works staff) to assist Cluster Leader; work with employers to troubleshoot/resolve student problems; provide post-program follow-up.

Table II-4 (continued)

Lead Agency and Foundation	Project Goals	Proposed Strategies
Phoenix YouthSkilled Local government that is already operating a Youth-Build program, providing academic and vocational training in construction.	**Partnerships**: Establish linkages with manufacturing employers (identify work-place skills, provide career exposure, work-based learning, mentoring, and job placement).	**Partnerships**: Program Director (time provided in-kind) and Vocational School liaison to identify and involve businesses.
	Career Pathways: Establish second career path	**Career Pathways**: Modify and implement Manufacturing Technology pathway.
	School-based Learning: Provide training in machining and/or welding and basic academic skills; provide connections to post-secondary education.	**School-based Learning**: GED preparation, basic skills development and vocational training in manufacturing technology. Sequential 1-year program that moves from 100% classroom training to 100% work-based activities in 4 phases. "Academic synthesis" class held daily. Subcontract to CBO for vocational and academic instruction. College level courses to be provided concurrently if students interested and ready. **Work-based Learning**: Youth placed at worksites relating to machining after 1st 12 weeks for 50% of time, 80% in phase III and 100% in phase IV. Employers to act as workplace mentors. Life skills, work readiness, and leadership training provided throughout program duration. Job Developer to arrange work experiences; caseworker to provide leadership training.
	Connecting Activities: Job placement.	**Connecting Activities**: Full-time Caseworker to identify and provide/access support services; Frequent on-site visits to workplaces to assess progress; Businesses involved in curriculum development. Students to transition to full-time employment following completion. Funds allocated for computers and software and student stipends.
Rhode Island Commerce Academy Chamber of Commerce, which has been operating a work-readiness program for OSY since 1995	**Partnerships**: Continue to develop partnerships with "supply-side" agencies.	
	Career Pathways: Implement certificate program in Telecommunications.	**Career Pathways**: Academy Director to work with industry to develop Certificate of Industry Readiness in telecommunications) **School-based Learning**: Full-time Career Coach to provide individual coaching for GED preparation and work readiness training leading to CWR; Develop Certificate of Industry Readiness curriculum (telecommunication); job shadowing; internships.
	Connecting Activities: Expand acceptance of a Certificate of Work Readiness (CWR) program among employers.	**Connecting Activities**: Contract with marketing firm; hire PR/marketing professional; produce materials for marketing; develop replication package (training manuals, training courses, etc); provide on-going staff development; work with industry groups to define competencies, standards and training materials and to develop career exploration experiences; conduct customer satisfaction activities.

Table II-4 (concluded)

Lead Agency and Foundation	Project Goals	Proposed Strategies
Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center Alternative high school operated by OIC serves 75 students; OIC also operates many other programs for in-school and out-of-school youth.	**Career Pathways**: Relate course offerings to 5 career paths; Infuse career pathway concept into curriculum. **School-based Learning**: Adopt school-to-work curriculum; infuse into existing school curriculum. **Work-based Learning**: Develop work experience sites and program: infuse work experience to existing school program; integrate life skills and pre-employment curriculum into classes. **Connecting Activities**: Professional development for Alternative/Adult high school teachers.	**School-based learning**: GED preparation and high school diploma program; career exploration; at least 8 field trips for students (e.g., businesses, leadership conference, postsecondary institutions, etc.); vocational exploration workshops. Coordinated by full-time Student Services Coordinator. **Work-based Learning**: Job shadowing, instruction in workplace competencies, and mentorships, internships/work experiences tied to career pathways (funds allocated for student wages); service learning activities. Coordinated by full-time Employment Services Coordinator. **Connecting Activities**: Student Services Coordinator to provide professional development to teachers on: CCP computer-assisted instruction lab, integrating academic curriculum with world of work expectations, integrating classroom instruction with work experience, portfolio development, designing school-based learning and accessing postsecondary education; support/monitor student progress (school, work and life). Employment Services Coordinator to match students with work experiences; provide/access needed supportive services; design work-based learning activities with employers; recruit employers; train workplace mentors.

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III. LEVERAGING, FUNDING, AND PARTNERSHIPS

As with school-to-work programs for in-school youth, the success of school-to-work projects for out-of-school youth often depends on forging strong collaborations among critical stakeholders such as secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, school-to-work systems, and employers. An effective partnership requires joint development of a set of common goals and objectives, willingness among partners to identify and commit resources, and active participation in designing, overseeing, and implementing program services in accordance with the common vision of school-to-work for out-of-school youth.

This chapter examines the composition of the out-of-school youth/school-to-work demonstration projects and the resources that were mobilized by the demonstration programs. First, we identify the level of funding, leveraged resources, and planned expenditure of the DOL grant. Second, we describe the entities that initiated, designed, and implemented the demonstration programs and how the lead agencies affected the programs' designs. Then, we summarize the key roles and responsibilities of each of the partners. Finally, we discuss ways in which the eleven projects in this demonstration meet the school-to-work partnership criteria.

PROJECT FUNDING AND LEVERAGING OF RESOURCES

Grants from the Department of Labor for the School-to-Work Out-of-School Youth Demonstration Projects ranged from $100,000 to $140,000. However, the amount of resources that each grantee brought into the demonstration projects, and the amount that they were able to leverage, varied substantially.

With respect to grant funding, almost half of the grantees received $140,000 from the Department of Labor, and, in most instances, the greater part of the grant money was spent on staffing the project. The staff of the Austin American Institute for Learning, for example, spent most of their funds on an instructor, curriculum writer, and industry liaison. In contrast, two of the demonstration projects devoted the bulk of their grant funds to expanding their computer equipment and facilities. Exhibit III-1 summarizes these results by showing the grant amounts and how grantees proposed to spend their funds.

Exhibit III-1
Expenditure of DOL Demonstration Grant Funds

Project	Grant Amount	Staffing	Curric. Develop-ment	Staff Development	Equipment	Other
Austin American Institute for Learning	$140,000	Instruction, Employer Coordination	Curriculum Writer		Equipment	
Baltimore Youth Opportunities	$140,000	Employer Coordination				Subcontracted to 4 CBOs, Youth Provider Network
Cambridge Just-a-Start Youth Build	$131,957	Vocational Instruction, Employer Coordination	Curriculum Coordinator	Staff Develop-ment Consultant	Computers	
Lancaster County Academy	$100,000	STW Coordination,			Computer network	Job analysis for employers, Tuition
Memphis Youth Fair Chance	$140,000	Administration, STW Coordination		Staff develop-ment, Tuition	Computers	Client Center Service Coordination, Tuition
Milwaukee HY-TECC II	$139,998	Administration, Employer Coordination				
New York Family Learning Institute	$139,424	Instruction			Computers	
Ohio Schools Study Council	$140,000	STW Coordination, Administration		Mentor Training		
Phoenix YouthSkilled	$140,000	Instruction, Employer Coordination, Supportive Service			Computers, Software	Stipends
Rhode Island Commerce Academy	$134,029	Marketing, Career Coaching		Used TA line of credit		
Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center	$140,000	STW Coordination, Student Service		Used TA line of credit		Wages

In keeping with the terms of the grant solicitation, grant funds were given to existing entities for (in most cases) on-going programs. By implication, all grantees should have been receiving substantial resources from other sources. Amounts and sources of leveraged funds varied widely and included funds from federal, state, and local government sources, as well as private funders such as foundations and businesses. A number of grantees were able to leverage funds from other projects that were also operated by the lead agencies. Others effectively leveraged funding resources from their partners. A few were successful in soliciting support from private employers (usually in the form of wages for youth at worksites or in-kind contributions, such as equipment donations). The range of these sources is shown in Exhibit III-2. It was not always possible for us to receive a full accounting of dollars contributed from all these sources, but the amount of funds leveraged clearly reached several hundred thousand dollars in some cases.

THE INFLUENCE OF LEAD AGENCIES ON PROJECT DESIGNS

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the backgrounds of the lead grantee agencies were enormously diverse and included public adult or alternative high schools, city agencies (e.g., those operating Youth Fair Chance or Youth Opportunity Unlimited programs), nonprofit agencies, and employer organizations. The nature of the lead agency had important influences on the program designs that emerged and on the nature of the partnerships that resulted. Thus, the school-to-work demonstration projects that were led by adult or alternative high school providers had a more traditional focus on academics and vocational training, and the school-based learning was often structured in a way that resembled traditional public high schools. For example, the majority of the participants in Milwaukee's HY-TECC-II program attended academic classes that were offered in two-hour blocks during the day during eight-week semesters, and took the high school courses that they needed for graduation. Similarly, the Lancaster Academy in Pennsylvania offered traditional high school subjects in English, science, social studies, math, literature/reading, and health. However, both programs showed some innovation in their service designs by basing the classroom component upon a self-paced and competency-based system that included graduation requirements and that mandated some career readiness activities.

Exhibit III-2
Funding and Leveraging

Project	From Whom
Austin American Institute for Learning	TX Workforce Commission, TX Education Agency, AmeriCorps, HUD YouthBuild, private foundations and corporations
Baltimore Youth Opportunities	JTPA and Baltimore City Foundation
Cambridge Just-a-Start Youth Build	JTPA IIC, AmeriCorps, HUD YouthBuild, City of Cambridge CDBG, foundations and corporations, revenues from work performed
Lancaster County Academy	Local school districts and in-kind donation for facilities
Memphis Youth Fair Chance	JTPA, state and city government
Milwaukee HY-TECC II	College operating funds, Perkins Tech Act, NCRVE, private/foundation grants, some state school-to-work funds
New York Family Learning Institute	Federal and state
Ohio School Study Council	Federal and state (inc. STW funds), local school district
Phoenix YouthSkilled	State and local government, public entities, business
Rhode Island Commerce Academy	State
Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center	State, JTPA, other school-to-work grants,

Note: This table identifies major funding sources other than the OSY grant.

By contrast, the programs that were operated by city agencies as an adjunct to their Youth Fair Chance or Youth Opportunity Unlimited programs (i.e., those in Memphis and Baltimore) focused extensively on connecting activities, such as linking to a variety of institutions to provide academic, vocational, training, and social support for youth. The one demonstration project whose lead agency was an employer organization, Rhode Island's Commerce Academy, was clearly employer-driven, featured strong partnerships with a network of employers, and focused heavily on work readiness issues.

Other factors about the lead agency also appear to have affected the project's ability to implement a model school-to-work program. These factors include: (1) the composition of the lead agencies' staff, (2) the staff's prior experience in working with out-of-school youth, (3) the agencies' prior experience with designing and implementing school-to-work programs, and (4) the staff's prior experience in working with employers.

- *The composition of the lead agencies' staff*. Staff's knowledge of the labor market and the skills that employers demanded weighed heavily in the design of programs that emphasized the connection between work and learning. For example, staff at the Rhode Island Commerce Academy had strong backgrounds in school-business partnerships and in human resources. In fact, the director of this academy had spent 18 years in human resources. The program's design and implementation reflected these facts.
- *Prior staff experience with out-of-school youth*. All of the lead agencies had varying levels of experience in working with the out-of-school youth population. Three agencies had been working with out-of-school youth, including dropouts, for more than 20 years. The agencies' extensive experience in working with this population was reflected in the special attention that staff gave to the challenges and needs of out-of-school youth. For example, the City of Baltimore Office of Employment Development's Youth Opportunities program had a strong emphasis on case management and individual mentoring in recognition of this, and it and other programs were very aware of the youths' needs for counseling and supportive services.
- *Prior staff experience with designing and implementing school-to-work programs*. Many of the 11 demonstration projects had staff who had prior experience developing and implementing school-to-work programs. Their experience in this area was reflected in the leadership role that they played to other school-to-work projects in their communities. For example, Austin's American Institute for Learning

expected to share its expertise with the local STW partnership. It also planned to share curriculum with the Capital Area Training Foundation for dissemination to other organizations serving out-of-school youth and to public schools. Conversely, programs whose staff members lacked a firm grounding in STW principles generally had a harder time articulating a clear vision for what they were trying to accomplish that was consistent with the threshold criteria.

- *Prior staff experience in working with employers*. As will be discussed extensively in the next section on partnerships, staff members' background or prior experience in working with employers played a significant role in the projects' ability to establish a viable work-based school-to-work component for their participants. Involvement of employers has proven to be a tremendous challenge for many school-to-work projects, but employers were much more willing to be an ongoing and equal partner if they felt that the project staff understood their needs and constraints.

THE PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

As reflected in DOL's threshold criteria, forging strong partnerships among a number of key players is thought to be important to creating effective school and work-based learning activities. This section identifies the different types of partners that were frequently involved in the demonstration projects and the roles they played in creating and delivering school-to-work services for out-of-school youth.

Consistent with the original goal of the solicitation for grant applications—which was to assist youth initiatives build upon a foundation of existing school-to-work services—all of the demonstration projects had already formed strong collaborations with other entities around youth and school-to-work services. Exhibit III-3 identifies the key partners that formally and informally collaborated with the lead agency to enhance and expand the school-to-work programs for out-of-school youth. The key partners and the roles that they have played thus far are described below.

School and School Districts: Interestingly, eight of the eleven demonstration projects included the strong involvement of schools or districts, either as the lead agency (in three of the grants) or through formal or informal collaborative agreements (in five others). Unless they were the lead agency, school partners played a relatively inactive role in the governance of the demonstration projects. Indeed, fewer than half of the demonstration projects had school partners who performed any sort of governance or oversight function on the projects. Instead, unless they were the lead agency, school partners were often asked to assist in the recruitment and referral of

youth who had dropped out of school. Other roles that demonstration projects often relied on schools to perform included providing GED instruction, classroom training in academic subjects towards a high school diploma, or vocational skills training.

Exhibit III-3
Key Partners in the Out-of-School Youth/School-to-Work Demonstration Projects

Grantee Name/Project Name	District/High School	Colleges/Technical Schools	School-to-Work Systems	PIC/JTPA	Employer/Employer Groups	City/Public Agencies	Nonprofit
American Institute for Learning	✓*	✓	✓		✓		✓*
Baltimore Youth Opportunities		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓
Cambridge Just a Start	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓*
Lancaster County Academy	✓*		✓		✓		
Memphis Youth Fair Chance	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓*	✓
Milwaukee HY-TECC II	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓		✓
NY Family Learning Institute			✓				✓*
Ohio School Study Council	✓*	✓	✓				✓
Phoenix YouthSkilled	✓			✓	✓	✓*	
Rhode Island Commerce Academy		✓	✓		✓*	✓	
Yakima Valley OIC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓*

* Grantee organization

Further, demonstration project staff worked with schools to develop articulation agreement for credits towards high school diplomas.

The Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center provides an example of a typical formal collaborative agreement between a demonstration project grantee and school district. The district agreed to:

- Refer individuals who had dropped out or graduated from school.
- Communicate information to students and OIC staff for the purpose of providing services within the STW programs.
- Assist in obtaining appropriate documents and facilitating releases of information.

Schools and districts also contributed to the project by integrating their financial resources into the school-to-work program. For example, the Yakima Valley OIC received funding from the school district based on average daily attendance. Similarly, Phoenix YouthSkilled was able to leverage almost $90,000 from its alternative high school partner, Metro Tech Vocational Institute, in the form of education per diem, salaries for a job developer and counselor, facilities, and equipment.

Colleges/Technical Schools. Eight of the demonstration projects involved collaborations with post-secondary institutional partners. College or technical school partners played a number of roles in the projects. Collaborative arrangements called for them to provide direct services, such as GED or vocational skills training and career exploration activities. A number of the grantees also collaborated with colleges/technical schools to form articulation agreement for their school-to-work curricula or to secure preferred admission for their graduates. For example, the Austin American Institute for Learning was developing an articulation agreement with a local community college so that students completing the Principles of Technology class could accrue credit for Industrial Electronics at Austin Community College (ACC), which is a pre-requisite for the Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology Program at ACC. Similarly, the Chamber Education Foundation of Rhode Island was working with the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), where Certificate of Work Readiness and Certificate of Industry Readiness graduates would be given preferred admission into the technical areas at CCRI. However, colleges or technical schools played a role in the governance of the school-to-work project in only three of the demonstration partnerships.

STW Partners. Surprisingly, only eight of the eleven school-to-work projects attempted to collaborate with local or statewide school-to-work systems. Where collaborations were formed, the projects benefited from additional opportunities for professional development, curriculum integration, and employer connections/referrals. Some of the lead agencies were considered innovators within the school-to-work community and provided leadership to other school-to-work initiatives. For example, the Austin American Institute for Learning provided models for assessment strategies that it shared with other school-to-work programs.

However, establishing linkages with other school-to-work efforts did not necessarily guarantee a strong program based on contextual training or school-to-work principles. More generally, efforts to establish linkages with STW partners were often disappointing. For example, one demonstration project found little value in participating in the local school-to-work system for two reasons. First, the school-to-work system was in flux and much political in-fighting among consortium members was occurring over allocation of financial resources across geographic areas within the state. Secondly, the grantee found the leadership provided by the school-to-work system weak in terms of how to adopt the school-to-work model to serve the out-of-school youth population. The project staff strongly felt that the traditional school-to-work model did not embrace alternative education for non-traditional youth populations.

Employers and Employer Groups. Establishing linkages with employers was perhaps one of the weakest aspects of many of the demonstration projects. Although nine of the eleven projects established linkages with employers, the nature, extent, and quality of the collaborative relationships with employers varied tremendously. Most of these linkages with employers had little impact in the development and implementation of work-based learning activities. For instance, three of the projects had no school-based or work-based training organized around a particular career path. Five of the projects did not have an integrated work-based learning component. Furthermore, fewer than half of the projects involved employers in the crucial role of establishing occupational training and assessment standards, such as giving input on curriculum design and competencies required. Similarly, in only two of the projects did employers play an active role in the governance of the school-to-work project. Instead, private sector participation typically meant asking employers to be guest speakers or to provide tours, job shadowing experiences, mentorships, and in a few cases, work-based learning opportunities such as internships.

The Rhode Island Commerce Academy provides an example of the strong role that employers could play, however. This grantee was initially able to solicit significant input from employers, and thus provides a compelling example of how grant funds could be used to gather substantial employer input to develop an employer-endorsed curriculum at the outset. This grantee's goal was to create the Certificate of Industry Readiness (CIR), as a way of integrating instruction around a career pathway and providing students with strong vocational skills training. The Academy decided to start with the development of a CIR in telecommunications, an industry for which employers were clamoring for trained workers. The creation of the Certificate of Industry Readiness seemed like a win-win for everyone and a way to get businesses more committed to supporting the program. The CIR in telecommunications did not develop as expected for a variety of reasons; nonetheless, employers retained their strong commitment.

There were a number of possible reasons why employers have not played a more prominent role in the school-to-work partnerships. One reason was the challenge of attracting, training, supporting, and monitoring employers to ensure their work-based experiences were learning-rich and complementary to the on-site instructional components. Project staff generally found that curriculum integration was much harder than they realized, and that employers were wary of investing substantial time and effort in developing their work experience slots into sound training opportunities.

An important underlying issue was the fact that "time is money" in the business world, and many employers were thus reluctant to take on the commitment to make the work-based component a truly learning-rich experience. Many of the projects' staff, for example, were clear about what they wanted—hands-on, task-based, mentoring relationships *at the worksite*. But many businesses saw this as too much effort, and felt more comfortable playing a more limited role. Paradoxically, small businesses felt less equipped to take on this effort, and yet were often the employers willing to provide job opportunities for learners. Fearing that their participants would not have positive learning experiences in many cases, some projects gradually moved away from attempting to implement the work-based learning component over time.

Many businesses also seemed to fear the unknown, having never done something like this before. In other cases, they were interested in avoiding another bad experience, for those who had bad experiences working with out-of-school populations in the past.

Finally, with limited project funding, staff may have also felt ill equipped or too over-burdened to be able to effectively recruit, train and monitor worksite supervisors.

These observations notwithstanding, employers in a number of projects did integrate their resources into the school-to-work projects. Their substantial contributions to the demonstration projects consisted of paying wages directly to youth who were participating in work-based learning activities, providing capital or equipment, donating classroom training space, and investing the time of industry representatives in planning meetings.

City/Public Agencies. Three of the grant recipients were city or public agencies, and an additional demonstration program included a city agency in the partnership. Representing the public sector of the partnerships, public agency grantees play a variety of roles, including grant fiscal sponsorship, oversight, project planning, implementation, and they contributed resources and linkages with other federal or state-funded programs. Grantees such as the City of Phoenix, the City of Baltimore Office of Employment Development, and the City of Memphis had the distinct advantage of being able to leverage public, city, state, and federal resources to augment the projects' ability to better serve out-of-school youth in a comprehensive manner. For example, using a history of linkages and cooperative relationships, the City of Baltimore Office of Employment Development (OED) Youth Opportunities Unlimited project pooled resources from JTPA and five CBOs to greatly extend the range of services that would otherwise have not been possible. Thus:

- OED arranged paid internships using JTPA funds, which allowed youth who would otherwise have been unemployable to obtain meaningful jobs within the private sector.
- OED financed full-time positions in three One-Stop centers to provide particular attention to youth who visit One-Stop centers. These youth specialists provide employability assessments and counseling, referrals to appropriate services, and follow-up attention. They represent an important recruitment arm for all OED youth services, as well as for other community agencies serving youth.

Nonprofit Organizations. Nonprofit organizations played either a lead role or a secondary role in providing supportive services, GED and life skills training, health services, and counseling in eight of the demonstration projects. Again, the City of Baltimore OED provided an excellent example of partnering with nonprofits to serve out-of-school youth. The five community-based organizations that served as

neighborhood-based "homerooms" provided a myriad of services to meet the needs of the out-of-school youth population. Although each CBO had its unique features, they generally were responsible for:

- Recruiting youth to participate in the program, which was facilitated by their strong links to their local communities.
- Providing life skills training.
- Providing intensive case management geared towards the needs of each individual student.
- Providing tutoring on an as-needed basis to address academic skill deficiencies that may emerge.
- Providing directly or arranging referrals to GED or ABE programs.
- Arranging field trips or guest speakers.

Nonprofit organizations such as the Austin American Institute for Learning provided one of the more innovative examples of how an organization can create an out-of-school youth program for out-of-school youth. AIL operates an adult high school and draws on over 50 funding sources to provide a comprehensive array of innovative youth programs and services. For example, it has established a number of career pathways for its students, including performance arts, multimedia, computer technology, health, and others, and emphasizes project-based and contextual learning in its academic skills instruction.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that initiating and maintaining a collaboration of diverse organizations and institutions around school-to-work principles has been challenging for some of the demonstration grantees. Nonetheless, there have been many notable successes, and the demonstration projects have provided substantial information about the process of creating school-to-work partnerships that are committed to contextual training for out-of-school youth in accordance with the school-to-work model. To summarize some of our observations about funding, leveraging, and partnerships across demonstration projects, we provide an assessment of the extent to which the demonstration projects met the partnership criteria for school-to-work as they were identified in the Department of Labor's Solicitation of Grant Applications.

1. *There is a strong community-wide partnership that is committed to providing services that reflect the fact that youth learn best by learning in context. There is strong support from appropriate stakeholders, and collaborative agreements exist among a variety of institutions (threshold criteria 1-3).*

Many of the grantees funded for this demonstration project had forged strong community-wide partnerships. However, there is limited evidence that most of the partnerships were firmly based upon the commitment to contextual training and the school-to-work model. Instead, some partnerships had committed to the broader goal of effecting change in disaffected youth so that they are able to benefit from traditional education and training environments. Given a number of the projects' emphasis on supporting youth to develop a broad set of social, pre-employment, academic, and social skills, the work-based component often resembled a work experience program rather than a work-based learning program focused on occupational skills or an organized career path. Also, in several of the projects, while the number of organizations involved in the partnerships were numerous, their contributions to creating a focused school-to-work program were not observable due to their ill-defined roles and responsibilities in the partnership.

Participation of different groups of stakeholders varied across projects. However, parents and youth were consistently *not* a part of the planning, implementation, and oversight of the projects. Employers played varying roles in nine of the eleven projects, but, again, governance and planning were usually not among them. On the other hand, public education institutions and CBOs played a relatively strong role in providing supportive, classroom, and work-based training services.

2. *Employers play a strong and active role in planning and governance and provide a range of services (threshold criterion 4).*

A common characteristic of the demonstration projects is the relatively inactive role of employers in planning and governance. In projects that were employer-driven, sponsored, or initiated, such as Rhode Island's Chamber Education Foundation, the Austin American Institute for Learning, Phoenix YouthSkilled, and Lancaster County Academy, the focus on introducing specific industries into curricula and integrating classroom with work-based learning opportunities seemed to be much stronger. Projects that primarily relied on employers to provide a range of services, without initially involving them in the planning process, appeared to be less cohesive around principles of school-to-work and had weaker employer participation throughout the project.

3. Resources are leveraged from a variety of sources and are used systematically and in an integrated manner (threshold criterion 5).

Substantial financial and in-kind resources appeared to be leveraged into the out-of-school youth projects, although it was difficult for projects to make precise estimates of the actual funds and in-kind resources contributed. Subsequent to the demonstration grant period, projects were able to leverage additional resources from existing funding sources to sustain various components of the demonstration projects.

4. Collaboration occurs with the statewide or local school-to-work system (threshold criterion 6).

Grantees' ability to collaborate with school-to-work systems also varied across projects. Eight of the projects have some sort of connection with the local or statewide school-to-work systems, but, in some cases, it was not clear, beyond system-building goals, how these connections had an impact on programmatic criteria. Some projects criticized the school-to-work system's unwillingness to expand its narrow definition of how the school-to-work model could be adapted to serving out-of-school youth.

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IV. RECRUITMENT, COUNSELING, AND SUPPORT

Ancillary programmatic components that are typically important in a high quality school-to-work system—including targeting, recruitment, assessment, matching to services, counseling, and supportive services—are especially significant in programs serving out-of-school youth. Because of their lack of connection to traditional institutions, these youth are often difficult to identify and enroll in STW programs. Moreover, out-of-school youth targeted by these demonstration projects are disproportionately represented in groups that have extensive supportive service and counseling needs, such as teen parents, substance abusers, adjudicated youth, and welfare recipients. For these reasons, the STW demonstration programs have faced numerous challenges to effectively recruiting and serving out-of-school youth. Below we describe how ancillary services varied across the sites and assess their effectiveness.

TARGETING

Targeting out-of-school youth for school-to-work programs means not only identifying age restrictions for eligibility but also identifying other characteristics of relevance. Setting these criteria depends in part on the number of out-of-school youth desiring services in a given locality. Fortunately, targeting for most of the demonstration programs was made easier because the need for out-of-school youth services outweighed the capacity of the programs to serve. Given the abundance of potential youth applicants, the OSY demonstrations could identify who among the out-of-school youth population they were interested in reaching.

The age group targeted by the demonstration programs was generally 16 to 21 year olds. However, there were noteworthy exceptions. With respect to the upper age limit, in many states 21 is the maximum age for which the state will fund a youth's public education. This was an important consideration for programs that used public education funds. However, a couple of demonstration programs that were not bound by such concerns raised the upper age bound of persons they would enroll to the upper twenties. At the other end of the age range, some programs set a minimum age requirement of 18, or even higher, as a result of unsuccessful experiences with those who were younger. For example, the director of one of these programs believes that youth under 18 years of age are not ready for his program because it requires a high level of commitment and self-motivation. He was surprised to discover the amount of

"baggage" that youth applicants brought with them. Consequently, his program focused on serving young adults—in fact, half of its participants were over 24 years of age.

Beyond age restrictions, some programs targeted specific subpopulations of out-of-school youth, including single or teen parents, welfare recipients, youth under court supervision, or, more generally, "the most at risk" or "those facing multiple barriers." At the same time, nearly all programs screened applicants for meeting minimal requirements in some way. Usually, this included setting minimum basic skills requirements, which ranged from 6th grade level in English and Math to senior status in high school or a minimum number of high school units completed. Programs felt it was important to set minimum skill levels to ensure that they could provide some benefit to those who enrolled. In general, smaller programs with fewer resources and teachers had to limit the range of skill levels accommodated, while larger programs were able to handle a broader range of skills. Some programs also assessed applicants' motivation through interviews in order to determine who would most likely complete the program.

Careful application of screening strategies is one way to ensure that participants are willing and able to take advantage of the program services offered them. However, for the demonstration programs, such targeting and screening surely did not result in participants who were free of obstacles. Indeed, many youth who made it through the enrollment process came from extremely troubled circumstances, including regular substance abuse and prior incarceration.

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment, in terms of numbers of applicants, posed little difficulty for most of the demonstration sites, although there were some exceptions. As mentioned above, recruitment of eligible youth was facilitated by an excess demand for services. Some programs were operating at capacity and had to turn people away. One program, for example, which was designed to serve 30 to 40 people, had a waiting list of 100. However, several programs had much more difficulty recruiting youth and, in some cases, could not meet enrollment targets. They were typically grantees with weaker connections to local school systems and were located in areas of low unemployment, where potential trainees were harder to come by because they looked for work first.

Because the demonstration programs were serving out-of-school youth prior to this grant, they had established recruitment strategies in place. Across demonstration sites, these practices varied considerably, from those grantees that actively conducted outreach activities to those using more passive dependence on referrals.

Grantees that had fewer difficulties recruiting adequate numbers of participants relied on passive recruitment strategies, primarily referrals from their partners. Most important for them were referrals from local school districts. This strategy was implemented in several different ways. One program used its close relationship with local high schools to obtain lists of long-term absentees from which to recruit. Other programs operating in charter or alternative high schools formed agreements with local school districts, whereby the districts contracted educational services for hard-to-serve high school dropouts financed through state average daily attendance dollars. One limitation of these types of programs is that, as in regular high school, students must meet state requirements for "seat time," in order for the program to receive payment for their attendance. The programs typically meet this requirement by offering classes on the same full-day schedule as do regular high schools. As a result, the academic schedule may be too rigid, especially for students who have work or family-related obligations.

Grantees also relied on referrals from human service agencies and CBOs that come into contact with out-of-school or at-risk youth in the community. For example, one project worked with youth specialists in One-Stop Centers.

In contrast to these examples, other grantees lacked strong referral sources and consequently had a much more difficult time recruiting adequate numbers of participants, despite the fact that they resorted to very aggressive recruitment tactics. One of these programs waged an aggressive outreach campaign using flyers, as well as conducted in-person visits to public housing complexes, youth hangouts, community agencies, adult education classes and programs, and churches. This program also offered financial awards for current students who referred successful new recruits. Still, the most successful referral method in this program turned out to be word-of-mouth. Another grantee, which operates in a thriving local economy with low unemployment rates, utilized neighborhood presentations, agency and personal contacts, newspaper advertisements, and public service announcements. This program felt that difficulty recruiting trainees was complicated by the fact that unskilled youth were able to obtain employment at starting wages as high as $8 per hour.

Two other programs also experienced difficulty meeting the recruitment challenge. One enlisted the local welfare department's help in enclosing flyers in each welfare check to advertise the STW program. This produced confusing results—half of those who responded to the flyer made appointments that they failed to keep and many others mistakenly thought that they were showing up for a job. In this instance, efforts to work more closely with case workers to encourage referrals of out-of-school youth might have improved the success of the strategy. In any case, recruiting from the population of welfare recipients in this state could have been difficult, because enrollment in the STW program started the 24-month time clock ticking, after which participants would have lost their benefits. In another program that had difficulty in recruiting, a new out-of-school youth coordinator lacked the wealth of local connections that had served other programs so well in obtaining referrals. Efforts to reach youth by going out into the community were not well accepted by local youngsters who often mistook the out-of-school youth coordinator for a narcotics agent.

The difficulty experienced by these programs in recruiting out-of-school youth highlights the importance of using a wide network of community partners. Partner agencies may have more contact with out-of-school youth and can thus be an invaluable source of potential applicants.

But even where recruiting adequate numbers of participants was not a problem and programs had a wealth of applicants from which to draw, the match between those who were enrolled and the services the programs could provide was sometimes weak. As a result, not all of those recruited appeared to be suitable for the program in which they enrolled. Evidence demonstrates that sometimes youth did not fully understand what they were applying for. This was apparent in one program, for example, where youth respondents suggested that a longer orientation be provided to better prepare them for their training experience. In other programs, youth expressed disappointment with the career training options available to them, which they fully understood only after they were enrolled. Less than desirable retention rates at most sites (to be discussed more fully in Chapter VIII) provide further evidence that the fit was not ideal between some youth and their programs. These problems could have been a result of inadequate assessment or orientation. Most obviously, while the up-front assessment process served the needs of the program for identifying youth who met targeting criteria, youth may not have obtained enough information about the program to make an informed decision about whether the program was a good fit for them.

ASSESSMENT AND MATCHING TO SERVICES

Once potential program participants were identified, the assessment of individuals' skills, interests, and barriers was conducted in order to determine eligibility and, in theory, to design a service plan to meet the educational, career, and supportive service needs of the youth. Individualized service plans are important to ensure that each youth is receiving the service mix that will most likely lead to successful program completion.

Strategies for matching youth to services received less emphasis than did other program components. In fact, programs were overall fairly vague about their process of matching youth to services, and service planning was more informal, rather than structured and documented. For this reason, it was difficult to gauge the appropriateness of individual service plans in terms of assessment results.

Nonetheless, because nearly all the demonstration programs included a basic educational component, academic guidance was the most commonly provided service matching activity. Academic assessment strategies employed by the demonstration programs varied little. Most programs administered the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or similar instrument to assess basic skills and/or reviewed high school transcripts to identify credit deficiencies. Academic learning plans were developed accordingly.

However, less emphasis was placed on assessing and planning work-based activities or career paths. For example, few programs conducted an up-front assessment of occupational interests. The exceptions were in programs with multiple vocational offerings and in one additional program that used JTPA assessment procedures. One reason for the lack of emphasis on up-front occupational assessment is that most programs had very limited choices for the selection of a career path to guide training, as was discussed in the previous chapter. In these cases, regardless of whether or not an up-front career assessment was conducted, matching to work-based services was extremely limited. More commonly, career interests were ascertained during career exploration classes conducted as part of the program of services, and, sometimes, youth would then receive further guidance in formulating subsequent career plans.

COUNSELING AND CASE MANAGEMENT

Because out-of-school youth experience so many barriers, the challenge for STW programs was to provide a level of counseling or case management that met the full range of students' needs, thereby increasing their chance of success. On this score, the counseling provided by the demonstration programs was typically quite comprehensive and included guiding youth through their academic and work-related service needs, as well as providing and referring them to a multitude of supportive services.

But while all out-of-school youth demonstration programs provided some level of counseling and focused on similar issues, they used various delivery strategies. Several programs spread responsibility beyond just a specially designated counseling staff. For example, two programs reported utilizing counselors, teachers, and work site and administrative staff to counsel youth. One transferred responsibility for academic counseling to a few teachers and left counselors free to focus on youths' personal issues and crises. Because these needs were so integral to the educational experience for at-risk youth, the program felt that counselors should devote their full attention to them. This focus worked particularly well in this small educational institution where counselors, teachers, and students had frequent contact. Other programs used the classroom as a forum for youth to share their concerns weekly, and often youth were visited by counselors daily or weekly in academic classes. A program that lacked sufficient funds to hire a counselor specifically for the STW out-of-school youth students depended on its JTPA counseling staff for youth who were co-enrolled in both programs. However, because only some of the youth were co-enrolled in JTPA, the rest might not have received the counseling assistance they needed.

Programs also focused on building caring relationships between youths and adults. Realizing that at-risk youth often lacked caring, nurturing role models at home, these programs approached their role as not only to educate but to really care for the youths' well being. Small caseloads, frequent contact with youth, and a willingness to take on any issue or problem characterized counseling services at these sites. One program, for example, was characterized as having young, energetic, interested, African-American counselors to serve their predominantly African-American student body. They served as role models, advocates, and mentors, and were liaisons with other agencies, employers, family, friends, and probation officers.

These nurturing relationships were clearly very important to the youth and likely contributed to the success of the programs. Students almost uniformly praised this

aspect of the demonstration programs, reported that they trusted and valued their counselor, and felt that the counselor truly cared about what happened to them. These relationships were typically characterized as "nurturing" and "mother-like." In the words of several participants:

> You can talk to them about anything. To them it's not just a nine to five job – it's a mission. They'll put their necks on the line.
>
> [The staff and other students] are like a second family – they support us through all our ups and downs.
>
> I like all the staff. They are very friendly, helpful and encouraging. They don't act superior.
>
> The teachers here really care about me, about what I am learning and where I am going. This is very different from the teachers in the regular high school that I came from.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Providing supportive services or linkages to services was a crucial part of the service package provided by the demonstrations. The extent to which youths' supportive service needs were met impacted whether or not they were able to successfully complete a program. While programs could not be expected to directly meet all support needs, they could use their community networks and partnerships to direct youth to appropriate service providers.

Nearly all the demonstration sites provided supportive service assistance by referring youth to agencies and CBOs that provide child care, transportation, housing, mental or physical health services, domestic violence counseling, and financial assistance. For example, one program allowed students access to several resource centers on campus from which to get support services or referrals. Some programs had counselors or case managers, while other relied on teachers and other staff for this referral role.

Although supportive service needs varied little across programs, there were some differences across programs in the types of services they offered directly. Several programs provided direct assistance with transportation, usually in the form of bus vouchers, and provided clothing closets from which students could borrow interview clothing. One program had an on-site health clinic operated through their partnership with a local community clinic. Another operated a food bank and energy assistance

program for the community. Still another actively advocated for youth under Child Protective Services and served as a liaison for court dates and hearings.

CONCLUSION

The demonstration programs attempted to strike a balance in targeting youth who were hard-to-serve, while also ensuring that those enrolled met at least minimal requirements with respect to basic skills and levels of motivation. Although recruitment strategies varied across programs, due to excess need for program services recruitment was mostly sufficient for ensuring adequate numbers of enrollees. Recruitment was accomplished through strong referral linkages with other agencies (e.g., the school district). Some programs, however, experienced difficulty in reaching their recruitment goals, despite using aggressive recruitment strategies, and may need to consider increasing their network of community partners to increase the number of referrals.

Assessment methods were fairly consistent across programs, focusing on testing, transcripts and interviews. Students were generally well matched to their academic classes, but programs rarely demonstrated strength in matching to vocational training. Partly this was because up-front assessment of vocational interests did not seem relevant, as most programs had few vocational pathways from which youth could choose. Thus, these programs at best would assess career interests and needs in career exploration classes, once the assignment to services had already occurred.

Counseling activities in the STW out-of-school youth programs emphasized addressing the range of barriers youth face in transitioning from school-to-work, rather than strictly focusing on academics. This was important because of the broad nature of supportive service needs in the out-of-school youth population. Overall, programs not only provided the necessary support services, they did so in a caring manner. The most salient feature of ancillary services for youth was the caring, trusting relationships formed between youth participants and adult staff members. Thus, while programs may continue to face challenges in serving the out-of-school youth population, dedicated staff are leading them in the right direction.

V. SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING

In an effort to promote a new pedagogy for the classroom, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act envisions "a program of instruction and curriculum that integrates both academic and vocational learning (including applied methodologies and team-teaching strategies), and incorporates instruction, to the extent practicable, in all aspects of an industry, appropriately tied to the career major of a participant." At the same time, it makes clear that such systems should not diminish or dilute academic excellence, through the requirement that a program of study developed in response to the legislation must be "designed to meet the same academic content standards the State has established for all students…and to meet the requirements necessary to prepare a student for postsecondary education and the requirements necessary for a student to earn a skills certificate.[1]

The Department of Labor echoed these themes in the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) by specifying three criteria relating to school-based learning activities. As detailed in Chapter I, these include the requirements that demonstration programs should exhibit:

1. A commitment to high academic standards for all out-of-school youth participants,
2. Workplace basics and learning in applied context integrated with academic learning, and
3. Opportunities for post-secondary education.

This chapter will describe how the demonstration projects organized and implemented school-based learning activities and the degree to which these activities conformed to the threshold criteria presented as guiding principles in the SGA. Our analysis will begin with an overview of the structure and content of school-based learning activities, followed by, in turn, a discussion of the structure, scheduling and the integration of learning in academic, vocational, and work readiness skills. Subsequent sections will look at the degree to which connections were made to

[1] A skills certificate is defined as a portable, industry-recognized credential issued by a STW program under an approved State plan, which certifies that a student has mastered skills at levels that are at least as challenging as skill standards endorsed by the National Skill Standards Board established under the National Skills Standards Act of 1994.

postsecondary training/education opportunities and how those connections were made, and the kinds of career paths available and how the projects addressed their development. Last, we will discuss the challenges projects faced in implementing school-based activities, as well as approaches and features that appeared to be most effective as projects implemented these activities.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING

As discussed in the preceding chapter, when they enrolled in the demonstration programs virtually all participants demonstrated weak basic skills and lacked a high school diploma. In light of this, imparting academic skills was understandably a strong focus of virtually all of the demonstration programs. Indeed, all but one made academic skills instruction an explicit part of their program design, and all but this one were explicitly intending for participants to attain a high school diploma or GED at program completion.[2]

Teaching workplace basics or "softer" skills was similarly a strong and explicit focus of the programs we studied. In fact, all programs included this as a school-based learning objective, although the emphasis varied somewhat from program to program, including those focusing on career planning, life skills training, job search techniques, leadership training, and the like.

Much less important overall was vocational skills training. Three programs did not provide opportunities for students to learn job skills in the classroom (or, for that matter, at the worksite). By contrast, three others were explicitly preparing students for specific jobs or careers. A third group of four programs, including several of the alternative high schools, made vocational training an optional component of learning. Finally, one program, in what might have come closer to an ideal STW model, provided classes with a vocational focus, but these were intended to provide the context for the learning of broader sets of skills rather for specific occupations.

The OSY demonstrations also used various scheduling arrangements to accommodate school-based learning. Some adopted fairly rigid schedules and expected participants to attend regularly. Others gave students some degree of choice in their

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[2] As mentioned in Chapter II, a number of programs gave students the option of pursuing either a high school diploma or GED, with their choice dependent on what might best fit their individual circumstances (e.g., depending on how many credits they needed for a diploma, etc.).

schedules to impart more flexibility. For example, some allowed participants to select between morning, afternoon, or evening class sessions, while in others students had the flexibility to select which and how many courses they would attend each school term.

Teaching Academic Skills

The most common academic focus was GED preparation, offered exclusively at six sites. An additional site provided referral for GED preparation as an optional activity. Three sites offered participants a choice of either GED preparation or a course of study leading to a high school diploma, and one project, serving as an alternative high school for ten local school districts, was structured to provide courses leading to a state accredited high school diploma.

Programs offering GED preparation focused on providing instruction that would meet requirements for passing the GED examination. Many of the projects that offered GED preparation also provided basic skills remediation to address the academic needs of participants with low skill levels. Most GED preparation classes were structured so that students attended daily classes for 2 – 4 hours until ready to take the GED examination; others had a less formal schedule, establishing regular times when GED preparation would be available and allowing students to attend as they could. Many had similar designs—they were self-paced, individualized, and often computer-assisted with "off-the-shelf" curriculum packages. However, instructors were consistently available to assist students with individual learning needs. There appeared to be regular benchmarking of progress, through both the periodic assessment of skill development and formal GED practice tests. However, sites appeared to struggle with teaching academic skills in an applied context. In fact, GED tutorials were very much exam-driven and usually of the drill-and-practice variety, with infrequent focus on workplace skills or connections to work.

One project, Cambridge Just-a-Start (JAS) YouthBuild, was a clear exception, in that it demonstrated progress in moving to a more contextual approach as instructors began to emphasize interactive, hands-on strategies and incorporate activities to provide real-life applications in their GED preparation classes. For example, participants were involved in a community service project to remove lead paint, and the instructor connected science instruction (environmental issues) to lead paint removal. Similarly, the social studies teacher taught about immigration while helping students trace their own family histories, and the English teacher initiated a range of literature discussions based on a published autobiography along with the students' own life stories.

The project's approach to scheduling also seems to have contributed to its ability to incorporate non-traditional instructional strategies. In JAS, students alternated weekly between full-time classroom activities and full-time work-based assignments during the year-long program. The weekly alternation between class-based and work-based activities gave students a break from academic studies, which was often most welcomed. More importantly, classroom teachers and work supervisors were able to coordinate lesson plans to some degree, to reinforce learning. Coupled with the life skills, leadership development, and vocational classes, which were also offered by this program, this approach took advantage of numerous opportunities for integrating instruction and learning in context.

Even with its innovations, JAS found that the need to gear instruction to the GED tests was limiting and restricted the opportunity for further change. Teachers described the time and energy that "teaching to the GED test" takes away from linking career planning and other activities with academics in the classroom. Accordingly, as discussed in Chapter II, JAS established as one of its goals during the grant period the establishment of an external high school diploma program. At the time of the first site visit, the realization of this goal seemed distant. JAS was concerned that the Cambridge school district would be unreceptive to JAS's initiative, or would at best authorize the establishment of an adult or evening diploma. However, JAS's persistence and its good reputation for providing high-quality training won the school district over. Although the diploma program was not yet fully in place as of the time of the return site visit, in May 1999, prospects were quite favorable. JAS was working with a consultant to develop a competency-based high school curriculum that would be meaningful academically yet manageable within a single calendar year (which is the duration of JAS's training). Enthusiastic staff and teachers described becoming a diploma-awarding program as "liberating," and they look forward to the opportunity to develop more intentional and systematic problem-based learning.

But being a diploma-granting institution did not guarantee innovation. Often, in fact, academic classes at adult or alternative high schools, geared as they were to requisite state graduation standards, were quite traditional in content. Thus, students were required to take and pass courses in the usual academic subjects (English, math, social studies, science, etc.).

Two programs appeared to have had the most success in structuring academic coursework to integrate instruction in an applied context. At the American Institute for

Learning (AIL), most of the instructors were fully engaged in either a team-teaching/multi-disciplinary approach and/or a project-based learning strategy. The inclusion of both of these strategies resulted in hands-on instruction, active learning, and the consistent involvement of students in decisions about projects, processes, and procedures. Student/teacher ratios were normally kept below 10:1, which provided opportunities for individualized attention.

Students could take one or several courses each term, depending on the number of credits needed for graduation. For students who needed just a few courses, instruction was usually delivered through "seminars," which are one-hour classes for students closer to graduation that used fairly traditional instructional strategies but had small student/teacher ratios and were individualized to student needs.

However, for students needing many credits for graduation, instruction was provided through PODs, which are thematic, team-taught, multi-disciplinary and multi-level classes. PODs cover different levels of a subject, as well as structured coursework, so that students can meet requirements for several subjects through the same project-based activity. For example a student could obtain both an English and Communications credit through activities in the Communication POD, and also earn credit in History, Art, or Desktop Publishing, depending on how the project s/he was working on was structured. Additionally, the project-based nature of many of the PODs provided numerous opportunities for the student to practice and demonstrate SCANS skills, which were embedded in the learning objectives of each POD.

Lancaster County Academy (LCA) is another degree-granting program that exemplified important innovative features. This program is based in a regional shopping mall, and the proximity to worksites provided consistent opportunities for contextual learning and the practical application of academic skills. Students attended either a morning session (from 9 a.m. to 12 noon), an afternoon session (from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.), or an evening session (5 p.m. to 8 p.m.) Mondays through Fridays during the regular school year; summer hours for July and August were 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. This structure accommodated students' needs to meet other responsibilities and/or work in jobs with different shifts.

The LCA program consisted of an academic component in which students were required to achieve 21 credits for a variety of courses. These included standard English, math, science, and social studies courses (four credits in each discipline), a

one-credit Effective Reading for Work & Leisure course, and one credit in a variety of ¼ credit physical education/health courses. Additionally, all students enrolled in skills classes, relating to work readiness, career choices, on-the-job essentials, and employment essentials. Finally, each student was also required to complete 60 hours of community service in order to graduate, along with a number of work-based learning hours determined by the students' previous background and experience. A grade of 80% or higher was required on all tests in order to demonstrate mastery and obtain credit for each subject.

The classroom-based activities at LCA were comprised primarily of self-paced individualized instruction, supplemented by group activities and projects that linked academic subjects and incorporated workplace skills. For example, the applied communications course (for which one earns a credit in English) implemented a unit on teamwork in which students observed a video, wrote about teamwork and then applied the lesson to a project. Other projects included helping with job fairs at several middle schools and working with merchants to develop a brochure for the shopping center.

Milwaukee's HY-TECC II also worked hard to introduce contextual learning for some of its academic courses, but met with limited success. As part of the activities proposed under the OSY grant, Milwaukee Area Technical College (the grantee) was attempting to facilitate the extensive use of Analyze and Apply by at least five teachers. This curriculum provides lesson plans for academic subjects that infuse the workplace into the instruction. Each plan outlines competencies to be taught, including the SCANS skills to be covered, and includes tools for assessing whether those competencies were achieved. Stiff resistance from teachers prevented the adoption of this curriculum, but the grantee has plans to try again using a different approach.

Teaching Vocational Skills

Eight of the eleven projects provided opportunities for students to receive vocational training.[3] There were two primary design strategies for vocational training, those programs with "in-house" vocational training in a single vocational area, and those providing training in a range of vocations by referral. A third group of programs provided vocational training through a diverse mix of strategies.

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[3] One other program was in the process of finalizing an industry-specific curriculum in customer service as the grant drew to a close

The first strategy is exemplified by three projects, Phoenix YouthSkilled (manufacturing technology), Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild (construction trades), and Memphis Youth Fair Chance (computer applications). These programs conducted vocational training "in-house" and focused on one particular occupation/cluster.[4]

There is typically a natural connection that occurs between academics and workplace basics in vocational training courses, as well as opportunities for hands-on, active learning. The vocational offerings provided by these programs were not exceptions. The small scale and internal control afforded by this design strategy appeared to provide clear connections between content and context, and encouraged scheduling innovations to further these connections. One disadvantage to this model, however, is that participants typically had little choice with respect to the vocational training that they pursued, except by self-selection into the program to begin with.

An example of effective integration is provided by the Memphis Youth Fair Chance Computer Applications class. The instructor used career exploration as a context to structure a lesson on PowerPoint™. Students identified and researched individual short- and long-term career goals and then developed a PowerPoint™ presentation for the rest of the class. This activity effectively integrated technical skills (PowerPoint™ applications), basic skills (reading, spelling and writing), and workplace basics (communication, collecting/analyzing information), all in the context of career pathways.[5]

Different approaches to scheduling were evident in the Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild and Phoenix YouthSkilled programs. As described previously, the Just-a-Start project alternated classroom-based activities and worksite-based experiences on a weekly basis, encouraging the work/learning connection. There appeared to be effective communication between both the academic and vocational classroom instructors and the worksite supervisors that linked curricula with worksite projects whenever possible. Other classroom training activities (leadership development and life skills) provided an additional forum for these connections.

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[4] The Memphis Youth Fair Chance project also initially offered vocational training on a referral basis in Hospitality and Health (mostly certified nursing assistant or licensed practical nurse), but later discontinued training in these occupations due to low enrollment.

[5] One limitation, however, is that this program generally required students to first complete their GED before undertaking the sequence of courses in computer applications.

Phoenix YouthSkilled incorporated another interesting scheduling option to integrate instruction. The program provided training in manufacturing technology through a sequential combination of classroom instruction and work-based experiences, structured in four phases. Once participants obtained their GED, they were eligible for assignment to the work-based activity for 100% of their time. The phases included:

- An initial classroom-based component that operated daily (8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.) for approximately 12 weeks, with morning and afternoon vocational classes supplemented with a one-hour "academic synthesis" class focused on GED preparation and basic skills development, and connected to the vocational training;
- A six-week period where students spent mornings in vocational training and life skills/leadership development, and afternoons at paid, entry-level training positions with local employers;
- A 10-12 week phase that was a split between continued work-based learning opportunities and a focus on academic remediation/GED preparation. Some flexibility as to the time for each activity was planned, based on individual student needs; and
- A fourth phase of 80% of a student's time at the worksite and 20% in classroom activities that included continued life skills training, leadership development, and a focus on job-related competencies. Time could be restructured, again on an individual basis, for college-level courses if students were interested and academically ready.

As the project evolved, however, timeframes and activities in the school-based component became compressed and students often moved into 100% work-based activities early. This was primarily due to the students' need for the income they would receive during the work-based activity. As a result, students often left the academic and vocational training activities before they had mastered requisite skills or obtained their GED.

The second primary design strategy, which offered vocational training by referral, was demonstrated by two projects, the Ohio School Studies Council and Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Council. These sites utilized linkages with their local vocational-technical colleges for classroom-based vocational training. Each institution offered training in the wide range of occupations typical of most vocational-technical institutions, affording a variety of options as well as opportunities for matching training with the youths' interests and aptitudes. However, because the vocational training was provided through an institution that served the community as a

whole, programs did not have the same benefit of being able to structure classes, modify schedules, or influence instructional strategies, as with the internally-driven strategy described previously. Therefore, while the institutions offered vocational classes that typified sound vocational teaching strategies (hands-on, practically applied, and incorporating occupational-specific basic skills), it did not necessarily relate specifically to other project activities in which students were involved.

The three other projects that offered vocational training demonstrated three distinct design strategies. Milwaukee HY-TECC II was designed as a project of the Adult High School at the Milwaukee Area Technical College. It was intended to be part of an overall effort to provide services to out-of-school youth by tapping into practices already implemented, and infusing additional school-to-work strategies. HY-TECC II students began their participation with a career overview class and then enrolled in academic or GED classes and, at their option, vocational courses. Vocational classes were provided in sequence (Food Service I, II, etc.), and were offered in two-hour blocks every day. Students determined the number of hours they could attend daily, and there was some flexibility in the order in which courses could be taken. In addition to teaching specific occupational skills, courses were structured to meet the Wisconsin Employability Skills Standards core abilities (aligned with the SCANS). Instructional strategies appeared to be consistent with the applied and contextual nature often associated with vocational-technical training

The Austin American Institute for Learning did not provide vocational courses per se, but instead used vocational areas as the context for learning a range of academic and other skills. Thus, the project has integrated many vocational components into its academic courses and PODs (discussed above). For example, the Business Marketing class, which allowed students to earn 6½ credits, combined math, social studies and business. The curriculum involved career preparation, introduction to business, marketing education/dynamics, and math modules. Students created personal budgets, developed business plans, researched occupations on the Internet, created resumes, completed job applications and interviewed for jobs. Similarly, the grant-funded Principles of Technology curriculum, an applied physics program developed for this grantee by the Center for Occupational Research and Development, was implemented as an integrative course that focused on basic mechanical, fluid, electrical, and thermal systems found in technological devices. This course of study was designed to help prepare students for the vigorous high-tech labor market by providing training that

would be applicable to postsecondary training and a range of employment opportunities in the technology industry in Austin.

Classroom vocational training at the Lancaster County Academy was available through an initiative called "Diploma Plus." Students received assistance with diploma requirements and academic remediation, career exploration activities, and work skills from LCA. The Lancaster County Career and Technology Center provided technical training and career exploration activities, and coupled this training with work experiences. This option was open to students who needed seven or fewer credits to graduate and who had demonstrated an 80% attendance rate. The number of students who actually enrolled in this component, however, did not meet expectations.

Teaching Workplace Basics

During our site visits respondents again and again pointed to weak work maturity skills as an important impediment to the youths' employment success. Many young people displayed low self-esteem, poor social skills, inappropriate ways of resolving conflict with others, weak job search skills, and a general lack of knowledge about proper behavior in the work place. To address these needs, therefore, all programs included pre-employment/work maturity skills training as an explicit component of their designs.

Typically, this training took the form of specific classes with work maturity or other personal development themes as a central focus. For example, in Milwaukee's HY-TECC II program, a career education course was required of all vocational students. These courses seemed to be applied and contextual, and emphasized teamwork, critical thinking, decision making, problem solving, etc. Participants in Baltimore's Youth Opportunity program meet for 6 hours once each week to discuss life skills issues, including personal and social responsibility. These classes were very interactive and involved much class discussion in an easy, relaxed atmosphere that demonstrated that the case managers—the facilitators for these classes—struck a good balance between the role of caring adult and authority figure.

Similarly, part of students' progress towards attaining the Rhode Island Commerce Academy's Certificate of Workforce Readiness (CWR) involved their ability to demonstrate competency in personal management skills (motivation, problem-solving and time management), communication skills (communicating in the workplace, effective listening), teamwork skills (through a team project), and employability skills

(including resume preparation, interviewing skills, career exploration, and job search skills).[6]

Overall, however, work readiness classes offered by grantees were often stand-alone from other school-based learning activities. If connections were made, they were often associated with work-based activities rather than academic skill development. For example, one program provided a separate, daily class that taught pre-employment and work maturity skills, leadership, and life skills, but explicit efforts were rarely made to infuse these classes with academic learning, or vice versa. Similarly, another program held weekly life skills classes that used situations that arose at the students' work assignments to generate discussion, but did not connect these experiences and concepts to the optional GED preparation classes. Another project's skill certification course focused heavily on workplace basics, including modules that parallel the SCANS. Their GED preparation class, however, used a standard approach and did not formally tie the two classes together.

Nonetheless, a few programs made more concerted efforts to reinforce work readiness themes throughout all the students' classroom-based and work-based activities. For example, in Rhode Island's Commerce Academy, as part of everything that they do and are exposed to as they complete their CWR, learners are expected to develop good overall work readiness skills. These are formally assessed during each student's periodic performance reviews, as Career Coaches note the extent to which the learner:

- Takes pride in his/her work.
- Shows proper respect for property/equipment.
- Has an attendance rate of at least 90%.
- Has a punctuality rate of at least 90%.
- Notifies staff prior to lateness or absence.
- Works productively, efficiently and effectively.
- Has a clear, well-groomed appearance.
- Has pleasant, supportive relationships with others.

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[6] In addition to these areas, attaining the Certificate of Workforce Readiness required competence in academic skills (completion of the GED), workforce literacy skills (job-related math and verbal skills), and technology skills (computer applications).

- Completes assigned tasks in a timely manner.
- Seeks clarification and assistance as necessary.
- Adapts to changes willingly and successfully.
- Puts in extra effort when needed.
- Is able to handle frustration and stress.
- Is willing to admit mistakes and try again.

POSTSECONDARY LINKAGES

Seven of the demonstration projects had at least some provision for linking students with postsecondary institutions. However, our examination indicated that, rather than focusing on formal postsecondary connections that included full articulation and dual enrollment arrangements, several sites opted for less formal linkages. Thus, several established procedures to refer individual students to postsecondary educational opportunities and provided assistance in applying for admissions and financial aid. Similarly, linkages at several sites included orientations at the community college and/or guest speakers to acquaint students with courses and campus life. One program worked with the local community college to organize GED and basic skills classes for program participants on the college campus, with an additional intent of introducing students to the possibilities of taking college courses. Another site worked with the local community college to develop a partnership to assist in the recruitment of minority students.

Two programs attempted something more ambitious, but their efforts did not bear fruit, for various reasons, highlighting the importance of good coordination and communication. For example, one of these programs had in place a collaborative agreement for students to take GED classes and enroll concurrently at the local community college, yet we did not find evidence of students taking advantage of this agreement. This was largely due to a lack of communication between the individual who wrote the proposal and staff whose job it was to implement the project—staff appeared to be unaware that this particular strategy was part of the overall design. Similarly, the design for one other program included the potential for students to be granted advanced standing at the area vocational/technical college if they completed courses for which articulation agreements were in place. This, too, did not materialize as planned, owing to turnover of individuals in key leadership/planning positions and the higher level of student interest in working as opposed to continued education.

Three of the demonstration programs were successful in establishing more formal connections, however. At Milwaukee's HY-TECC II, this was relatively easy to arrange, since the adult high school is located within the Milwaukee Area Technical College. But students at the Austin American Institute for Learning were able to tap into an existing articulation agreement with Austin Community College in Building Construction, and efforts were continuing at the end of the grant period to develop similar agreements for the AIL Principles of Technology and the multi-media programs. Also, the Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild program, although stymied in its efforts to build a strong inter-institutional relationship with Bunker Hill Community College, developed formal links with postsecondary institutions, particularly around dual enrollment. Participants were able to take courses at Bunker Hill Community College, the University of Massachusetts-Boston and the Harvard Extension School to fulfill YouthBuild requirements. Efforts to expand these linkages were continuing at the end of the grant period.

ORGANIZING LEARNING AROUND CAREER PATHWAYS

One of the key concepts of school-to-work is the development of career pathways—a coherent sequence of courses designed to prepare a student for further learning and work careers. As specified in the Act, career pathways integrate academic and occupational learning, establish linkages between secondary and postsecondary schools, and prepare students for employment in a broad occupational cluster or industry sector and, thus, are a critical focus of a school-to-work system.

However, the demonstration programs entered the grant period with very limited career pathway opportunities available to their students: at the outset, only four had a formal course of study with much or some classroom learning organized around a career theme and designed to result in preparation for employment in a career cluster. Three of these projects hoped to establish a second specific career pathway (two related to technology and one to business); the other planned to develop opportunities for career exploration in occupations other than construction. Of the remaining seven projects, five planned to develop one or more pathways through the grant.

Most sites struggled with their attempts to expand career pathway opportunities, for a variety of reasons. One program, which hoped to tap into a system of career clusters available to in-school students, was unable to do so when a key position with this responsibility went unfilled for over seven months. Another program planned to add seven pathways through expanding the variety of work-based employers involved in

the program; a booming economy and labor shortage, among other factors, contributed to employers opting for full-time employees rather than committing to mentoring and training part-time students. At yet another site, the focus was on developing a certificate program in telecommunications. Again, the staff person who was to take on this responsibility left the program, and the project did not have the in-house expertise to pursue the development. Coupled with concerns from the union about students taking jobs away from union members, the certificate program in this field was thus abandoned. (However, the grantee shifted focus to another pathway, customer service, and staff were finalizing the curriculum at the end of the grant period.)

Two grantees—Phoenix YouthSkilled and Milwaukee HY-TECC II—were more successful in creating an additional pathway. The YouthSkilled project identified a high demand industry (manufacturing technology) in the local area and then structured training and education similar to its existing YouthBuild effort in the construction trades. The project aligned itself with the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce Employer Manufacturing Task Force, resulting in the engagement of local employers in the development of curriculum and skills standards, the provision of work-based activities (training and mentorship), career exploration opportunities, and job placement. Academic courses were similarly structured around this pathway. The effort was not without its share of issues. Because of students' impatience to get to the worksites, classroom training was telescoped and employers ended up feeling that students in some cases lacked sound academic skills, basic vocational skills, and the maturity levels required for successful work-based experiences and, ultimately, employment. The program, however, received high marks from employers for its case management emphasis, its ability to respond quickly to employers' concerns, and its commitment to provide support services to students.

Milwaukee HY-TECC II built on a successful cooperative education model in Wisconsin to provide a Business co-op for out-of-school youth, in addition to an existing food co-op. Co-ops utilize a state-certified curriculum developed by industry members and include a planned, year-long sequence of classroom-based and work-based activities, leading to a skill certificate upon successful completion. By definition in Wisconsin, cooperative education offers students a course of study that integrates academics, work-site learning, and paid work experiences (480 hours), as well as postsecondary options and further preparation for the world of work—fully consistent with school-to-work principles. Overall, it was anticipated that 36 students would

receive certificates in either business or food co-ops as a result of services through the grant.

CHALLENGES AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Our case study analyses emphasized a number of challenges that the demonstration programs faced in developing school-based learning consistent with school-to-work principles, but also revealed a number of noteworthy successes from which replicable lessons might be drawn.

Challenges

As we discussed in Chapter I, there are a number of generic challenges inherent in working with out-of-school youth in a school-to-work framework (e.g., shortened time frames to develop career pathways and attain credentials, the young person's overall dissatisfaction with school, the frequent narrow focus on particular occupations, etc.). These generic challenges hold true for school-based learning implementation specifically. In particular, innovative instructional strategies and the traditional, narrow focus of GED preparation classes appear to be at natural odds: typically, GED preparation is a focused, short-term process designed to allow students to obtain a needed credential in as short a time as possible. The teaching strategy for GED preparation often concentrates on "teaching to the test" by developing discrete reading, math and writing skills. The emphasis on this "quick credential" (which is often student-driven) does not encourage the modification of instructional strategies and creates a very real challenge to providing opportunities for students to think critically, problem-solve, and apply learning in context. At least, program administrators deem it too risky to depart very far from traditional GED instructional approaches, in the absence of knowing about sound, well-tested alternatives.

Additionally, making connections between academics and work can be challenging when students enter the program with low basic skills, as is often the case in working with out-of-school youth. Students need to have a solid foundation of basic skills to be able to learn specific skills in vocational training and/or to perform tasks at a worksite. At one program, although participants received some academic and vocational training prior to being placed at trade-related worksites, employers often found that these students were unable to read and use basic quality control measurement tools or blueprint drawings. These vocational skills required specific math and reading skills that students did not bring with them. While other causative factors were in place, such as the duration of vocational training and student-driven pressure to move

into the work-based component very quickly, mechanisms were not in place for the instructor to be able to step back and address the needed remediation or to make the appropriate work/learning connections. Yet these connections between academic skills and their relevance to work can be powerful strategies, making learning relevant and meaningful for the student.

Several sites also intimated that they believed many students that came to the program with learning disabilities. Typically, mechanisms for assessment of these suspected disabilities were not in place, nor were there resources to access either assessment or specialized instructional assistance.

As a consequence of these problems, we found that many programs struggled with developing new ways of learning that were in closer conformance to school-to-work principles. As a result, the use of integrated curricula and alternative teaching strategies (such as project-based learning, team teaching, etc.) was typically limited. It was apparent that developing new teaching strategies required a new way of thinking about how skills are taught, lessons structured, and skill development processed, with which staff were not always able to cope. It clearly requires a high level of effort to develop new curricula, while obtaining the needed "buy-in" from teachers and training instructors in a new pedagogy. The ways in which projects were structured—limited budgets for staffing or staff training, the lack of time for upfront strategic planning, the lack of planning periods for teachers—often presented very real barriers to this development and implementation.

Developing articulation agreements and opportunities for dual enrollment with postsecondary institutions also seemed problematic. While many projects developed a process to assist students with applications for admissions and financial aid, this assistance was mostly on an individual student basis rather than a systematic effort to engage all students in planning for postsecondary education. Contributing to this, students often seemed more focused on the shorter-term goal of obtaining full-time employment, driven by their very real need to work to support themselves and their children.

The students' weak motivation was also reported as a challenge to implementing school-based learning activities. Students' negative feelings about past school experiences, prior failures, conflicting priorities, and a lack of confidence that they could learn effectively often resulted in self-imposed barriers to successful participation

in and completion of an academic program. Projects that provided multiple opportunities for students to experience small successes, actively encouraged students to recognize their achievements, and made learning relevant and interesting through work and learning connections appeared to be able to motivate students more effectively.

Effective Implementation Strategies

Our analysis suggests that the programs that seemed to be most successful in implementing effective school-based learning activities were those that were further along in the process at the beginning of the grant. The importance of a strong starting point may seem like an obvious conclusion, and was certainly reflected in DOL's desire that grant applicants should demonstrate conformance to many of the threshold criteria as a precondition for being awarded a grant. It is consistent as well with findings from other STW evaluations that developing high-quality school-to-work systems takes time and is thus relatively uncommon in the early stages of implementation.[7] Our evaluation of the OSY demonstrations clearly reinforces these conclusions—integrating work and learning and developing applied/contextual teaching strategies involve intense effort relating to curriculum development and instructor training, and require as well time to adapt, modify, and refine new materials and approaches. The degree to which programs can effectively do so within a 15-month grant period is thus very much limited. Those that were further along at the outset, such as Austin's American Institute for Learning, were thus able to build on their prior success to enhance their system building in incremental but important ways. By targeting their efforts carefully, other projects, such as Cambridge Just-a-Start (described earlier), also made substantial headway. Similarly, Yakima Valley OIC, whose teachers are developing formal curricula and strategies through intensive training sessions with Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, began showing promising possibilities by the end of the grant period.

Formal connections with postsecondary education and training institutions also take time to build, to nurture and to finalize agreements for articulation. Higher education institutions must be convinced that the project's curriculum is sound, and that students will bring with them the requisite skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for

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[7] For results from the national STW evaluation, see Haimson, et al., *Partners in Progress: Early Steps in Creating School-to-Work Systems*. For similar conclusions from a state-level evaluation, see D'Amico, et al., *Baseline Impact Findings for an Outcomes Evaluation of School-to-Work Transition Initiatives in Washington State*.

a rigorous academic and/or vocational training program. Again, projects that had already started this process prior to receipt of the grant appeared to have greater success in finalizing additional formal agreements.

It also seemed that, if they had a solid foundation from which to build, small, autonomous programs could make more rapid change in implementing school-based activities that were aligned with effective school-to-work practices. They usually did not have a larger, often cumbersome, institutional process and inherent systemic barriers of a larger institution to work through, and therefore, enjoyed the flexibility to respond to student needs and quickly alter strategies that were not effective.

More generally, programs with smaller and focused goals appeared to make the greatest strides in implementing school-based learning activities that were consistent with the intent of the threshold criteria. By concentrating on a particular career pathway, they were able to concentrate on coordinating the many complex activities associated with developing curricula, integrating academic and vocational instruction, and incorporating active, applied and contextual instructional strategies.

Flexible scheduling and structure also contributed to effective implementation. Out-of-school youth often are not willing or able to commit to the time it takes to make up credits with traditional school schedules, especially if they are older. As well, many out-of-school youth need to work while attending training, which limits their opportunities for training. For these reasons, programs with less traditional structures and those that included multiple times during the day when students could attend school-based activities experienced a greater degree of student involvement. Especially successful was the multi-disciplinary approach utilized by the Austin American Institute for Learning, whereby students could earn several credits for a two-hour class, providing them with an opportunity to compress the timeframe in which a diploma could be earned.

Programs that established high expectations, clearly articulated those expectations to participants, and then involved students in taking responsibility for their learning also appeared to experience more success in developing effective school-based activities. Young people, in general, respond positively by knowing what is expected of them and a feeling that they have some control over various aspects of their lives. This is particularly true of out-of-school youth, given their disenfranchisement with traditional education. At one site, for example, an instructor was having difficulty engaging

students in a particular lesson and, in fact was experiencing some resistance from students as she presented them with the state requirements for graduation. The instructor then inquired of students as to how they might learn these competencies most effectively. Students responded with a request for greater involvement, and the teacher modified her approach accordingly. Subsequent student evaluations indicated that they recognized and responded positively to the new approach.

CONCLUSIONS

As the above discussion makes clear, the OSY grantees achieved mixed success in achieving their objectives with respect to school-based learning. Some, especially those with clear and narrowly focused objectives, made important strides, but others met with limited success. As a way of summarizing their experiences, we discuss their progress with respect to the key threshold criteria.

1. *There is a commitment to high academic standards for all out-of-school youth participants.*

All sites but one made academic skills instruction a high priority for learning. All of these very consciously geared their instruction towards attainment of the GED or high school diploma. Some additionally offered skill certification. For example, four provided vocational training leading to a skill certificate that conformed to state occupational skill standards. One of these (the Rhode Island Commerce Academy) additionally developed a Certificate of Workforce Readiness, which was developed with input from the private sector, and which it aggressively marketed to the business community as a way of ensuring that the Academy was recognized as producing graduates who could be hired with confidence. By these measures, then, the OSY demonstration programs can be said to have clearly focused on generally accepted high standards of achievement.

At the same time, tailoring instruction around GED and high school diploma requirements in many cases could be said to have stifled innovation towards the adoption of high-quality STW principles, because it sometimes led to a rigid conformance to established curricula and testing procedures. With so much at stake and short timeframes within which to accomplish their objectives, many grantees thought it was too risky to depart substantially from established curricula, at least without knowing about alternatives models that they were sure would work just as well or better. Even so, the experiences of several of the grantees, such as Cambridge Just-a-Start and Austin's American Institute for Learning, demonstrate that adherence to

high standards is not incompatible with quality, integrative learning experiences. Although its efforts were just starting to bear fruit, Yakima Valley OIC similarly seemed to have a good vision for what needed to be accomplished.

2. *Workplace basics and learning occur in an applied context integrated with academic learning.*

All of the demonstration programs covered the teaching of workplace basics to at least some degree. Often this took the form of workshops or classes designed to address life skills, leadership development, work maturity skills, and the like. As such, this instruction typically was provided in isolation, and connections to vocational classes, and especially academic classes, were limited. Thus, training in workplace basics often became a standalone activity rather than fully integrated into all learning activities.

Again, however, there were noteworthy exceptions. Austin's use of PODs—its team-taught, multi-disciplinary courses—comes to mind. By locating its classroom instruction in a shopping mall, Lancaster County Academy took advantage of opportunities at hand to provide a meaningful context for learning, and was able to reinforce workplace basics through its use of project-based learning and service learning projects. Rhode Island Commerce Academy's emphasis on its Certificate of Workforce Readiness also spoke of its efforts to have the teaching of workplace basics permeate learning on site, although it found it more difficult to transform its teaching of academic skills. Cambridge Just-a-Start also demonstrated effectiveness in linking workplace basics with academic learning, as instructors for various courses and work supervisors conferred regularly about how to integrate curricula.

3. *Opportunities for post-secondary education are provided.*

Given the weak basic skills of many enrollees and the short time during which it was expected they would be enrolled in the demonstration programs, it is perhaps not surprising that most sites did not focus very heavily on promoting options for post-secondary education. At best, most sites made information available about college programs, provided tours of college campuses, or counseled students about their post-secondary enrollment options on a one-on-one basis. A few sites went further, however, and developed articulation agreements with colleges to award their enrollees advanced standing or preferred admission.

VI. WORK-BASED LEARNING

Work-based learning activities are described in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act as "a planned program of job training and work experiences (including training related to pre-employment and employment skills to be mastered at progressively higher levels) that are coordinated with learning in the school-based learning component…and are relevant to the career majors of students and lead to the award of the skill certificates." Also included as permissible work-based learning activities are job shadowing and school-based enterprises. The threshold criteria included in the SGA provided additional focus by identifying three key elements of this component. These included the requirement that work-based learning should include: 1) a variety of different types of high quality work experiences and on-the-job training tailored to the individual needs of each out-of-school youth served; 2) adult worksite mentors; and 3) attainment of skill certificates and academic credits.

To provide a context for our examination of the degree to which the demonstration sites were able to effectively implement work-based learning activities, we will begin this chapter with a description of the variety and types of activities included by the various programs, with a particular focus on worksite activities. Next, we will examine the critical first step in implementing work-based activities – employer recruitment – and the challenges sites experienced in involving employers in the process. Third, we will discuss the challenges associated with implementing work-based learning activities. Last, we will highlight strategies and practices that appeared to lead to effective implementation of activities included in this component.

VARIETY AND TYPES OF WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

During our site visits and subsequent review, we observed and noted a wide range of activities designed to promote an awareness of the work world. All programs included classes, workshops and/or instruction related to pre-employment and/or employment skills. These were often stand-alone classes or workshops that served to supplement other learning activities. Typically, they included training on job-seeking skills (e.g., interviewing, completing applications, and resume development) and work maturity, or job-keeping, skills (the importance of consistent attendance, punctuality, demonstrating appropriate attitudes and behaviors, etc.). Students appeared to display a high degree of interest in these classes/workshops, as the topics covered often had a

direct relationship to students' immediate goals (employment), or to the worksite experiences in which they were participating. Most classes that addressed "work maturity" skills included interactive discussions that encouraged students to think critically about how to respond appropriately to situations that occurred (or might occur) in a work situation.

Apart from these class-based activities, most programs also included job shadowing and guest speakers in their array of work-based learning activities to help students learn about the demands of the workplace. Job shadowing was usually arranged with specific employers for one or two students, although there were some instances where small groups "shadowed" a particular employee or groups of workers at a business, which made the shadow come to resemble an industry tour. Typically, program staff attempted to match shadowing experiences with the students' interests, although in some cases job shadows were arranged to provide a more general overview of the work environment. Programs also utilized guest speakers from various industries who came to the school-based site. Speakers usually provided information on their occupation and/or industry—discussed workplace requirements, compensation, working conditions, etc., and responded to questions from the students. Additionally, several programs held job/career fairs to expose students to a wider variety of career fields. These, however, were not generally well attended.

Two programs utilized school enterprises as a work-based strategy. Students were involved in producing items such as math kits, key chains, and ornaments in one of the programs, and they also operated the school store. In addition to providing a context for learning through planning the production of goods and the operation of the store, students were able to raise funds for future enterprises that would provide similar learning opportunities to others. Another program, Rhode Island's Commerce Academy, created a boutique-style second-hand clothes store to provide work-based experiences for its participants. Students operated and ran all aspects of the store, beginning with marking, sorting, ironing, and preparing the clothing for sale. Later on in their experience, students worked the retail end of the operation—setting up displays, cashiering, customer service, etc. The grantee intends to eventually integrate these work-based experiences more closely into classroom activities by having various vocational clusters associated with the clothing store serve as career paths for learning (e.g., retail trade, accounting, etc.).

Service learning was included as a work-based learning strategy by two programs. Students developed, planned, and implemented projects within their communities as a requirement of their participation. The service learning projects were tied to academic, vocational, and/or career-related courses, and included a structured process whereby students reflected on what they learned during all phases of the project.

The last type of work-based learning activity included work experience. These were often paid experiences in the private sector, designed to provide exposure to a particular occupation/career and/or general requirements of the world of work. We found that while each program's original plan included work experience or on-the job training opportunities, only eight programs were able to implement either of these activities to any degree by the end of the grant period.

The structure and focus of worksite-based experiences were generally driven by whether or not students were also participating in vocational training. Typically, work experiences that were tied to vocational training in a specific occupation/career field consistently demonstrated more high quality characteristics[1] than those that did not have vocational connections. We believe there are several factors that contribute to this. First, the work experiences were matched to the student's vocational training. Therefore, the experience was relevant to the student's career major and naturally connected to the vocational component of his/her school-based learning activities. Opportunities for the work experiences to provide a context for related academic instruction also existed, again providing relevance for academic learning. Second, the work experiences included specific learning objectives that were consistent with those of the classroom vocational training, and which were intended to be practically applied at the worksite. Both students and supervisors were aware of the training plan, and employers evaluated participants on their mastery of the specified skills and knowledge, resulting in the attainment of a skill certificate upon successful completion. Progress

[1] As the threshold criteria specified that work-based learning activities included "high quality work experiences and on-the-job training," our examination of these activities first required us to develop a sense of "high quality" in order to establish a basis for our assessment. We referenced the Act and found several terms and phrases included by the crafters of the legislation that provided clear quality indicators. These included: experiences tailored to individual needs, coordinated with school-based learning activities, relevant to career majors, involvement of worksite mentors, and the teaching and mastery of skills and knowledge. These indicators are reflected in the conceptual framework we presented in Chapter I.

was reported to program staff who, in turn, provided (or arranged for the provision of) additional classroom training, as needed. Last, the ties to a specific vocation also seemed to encourage supervisors to assume a stronger mentoring relationship with the participant. The common ground of a particular trade or occupation provided numerous opportunities for communication around work quality, work habits, career options, and skill development.

Three of the programs incorporated this connection between vocational training and work experience and are described here to illustrate how the work experiences were organized and their relationship to the threshold criteria. The Milwaukee HY-TECC II program undertook the development of a cooperative education program in business to supplement an existing "co-op" in food service. This co-op, which served a relatively small proportion of the students served by this grantee, was structured as a year-long sequence of classroom vocational training and work-based activities that included an industry-approved and state-certified course of study. The curriculum integrated academics and vocational training, and included a structured, 480-hour work experience organized around specific learning objectives. Students were matched with appropriate training opportunities and their progress toward achieving required competencies was measured by mandatory state evaluations. Supervisors mentored students; provided training, guidance and feedback; worked closely with vocational instructors; and regularly communicated about students' progress, strengths and needs.

The Phoenix YouthSkilled site provided vocational training in manufacturing technology and then arranged work experiences within the manufacturing industry. One of the employers distinctly defined skills and competencies associated with the students' work experience. The vocational skills that participants developed during the worksite training had to build on a solid understanding of mathematical concepts of measurements; thus, the integration of academic and vocational skills was evident. Students rotated work assignments through all departments in the company, providing exposure to all aspects of the industry. Youths' progress was closely monitored, as final products had to meet strict quality standards for the industry. Supervisors actively worked with students toward specific training goals, consistently communicated with school-based staff, and rated youth on mastery of clearly defined competencies at the site. Program staff visited the worksite bi-weekly; youth submitted weekly attendance records; and supervisors evaluated youths on attendance, attitude, work habits, quality of work and technical skills every six months. The fact that not every employer used

by this grantee demonstrated the same high level of quality in the training it provided to participants draws attention to the difficulty that STW systems in general have in overseeing and promoting training quality consistently across multiple employers, even when the worksite coordinator fully understands what quality means in the context of work-based learning.

Another illustration of high quality involves the Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild program, which provided vocational training in the construction trades and assigned participants to construction and building rehabilitation projects at various sites in the community. At the worksite, students were assigned to five- to seven-person work crews, led by professional supervisors who served as worksite mentors. Students learned specific job skills as well as work habits, attitudes, and employer expectations. They applied academic skills such as measuring and estimating, and learned to work under supervision, to work as part of a team, and to exercise leadership skills. Worksite supervisors emphasized basic skills training to help students develop and apply their classroom learning to construction work and their construction skills to their classroom work. Supervisors also provided on-site workshops on topics such as job safety and tool use. Additionally, because the worksites were "real" jobs, both students and worksite supervisors had incentives to perform high quality work.

Placement of students at specific worksites varied across each of these three grantees. In the YouthSkilled program, staff developed training opportunities with local manufacturing firms that were interested in providing training and potentially hiring the student following successful completion. Staff then assigned students to employers. At the Milwaukee site, vocational instructors were responsible for developing training opportunities for individual students, drawing on the instructors' connections with businesses in their field. Just-a-Start YouthBuild identified and negotiated rehabilitation and/or building projects in Cambridge and neighboring communities and assigned work crews of 5 – 7 students to each project.

Apart from these three grantees, programs that arranged work-based experiences as part of the service package typically did not connect them to specific vocational training and, with one exception, did not appear to include as many high quality characteristics. We observed limited focus on establishing clearly defined learning/skill development expectations that went beyond fairly standard employability skills or job-related tasks to be performed. Programs often struggled to develop and adapt experiences to meet individual students' interests and needs, and, too often as a result,

they were not conducted as part of a comprehensive and cohesive strategy for skill development. Work experience activities not tied to vocational training typically did not have effective connections to the full range of school-based learning activities.

Sites attempted to match students with experiences in the students' area of career or occupational interest, typically through student-specific worksite development or by accessing a pool of interested employers, but these efforts were not consistently successful. Many work experiences were thus designed to be an initial exposure to the world of work rather than exposure to a particular career path in which the student was interested or as a training opportunity for specific skill development.

Once at the worksite, structuring the work experiences to meet individual student needs appeared to be isolated and coincidental, based as it was on the commitment of individual worksite supervisors and/or program staff. Often, the requirements of the job drove the arrangement rather than a negotiated plan that took into account the assessed needs of the participant. Most of these work experiences included a "training plan" or agreement that essentially reflected the nature of the work to be performed and laid out acceptable work habits, although there were some modest attempts to define specific skills and knowledge to be mastered. For example, staff at one program would ask employers to identify five to ten skills the supervisor would expect the student to demonstrate and include these in the agreement. The supervisor would then evaluate work performance, along with work maturity skills, about three times during the work experience period.

Using worksites to apply academic skills in context also was not a commonly used strategy at these programs. Most, by contrast, connected work experiences to a more general job readiness, life skills, or leadership development class or workshop, as described earlier in this chapter. One program that viewed its work experience component as an initial exposure to a working environment also used it as a context for discussions on generic workplace skills, and as a means to connect students to caring adults. This approach, while based on sound youth development principles, did not encourage a focus on the full range of STW quality indicators.

There did, however, appear to be consistent, scheduled communication between worksite supervisors and program staff. This communication consisted primarily of interactions to assess how the work experience was progressing, the student's performance, and the student's demonstration of work maturity skills. Typically, if

employers were experiencing problems with participants, program staff responded quickly to intervene. Many supervisors indicated that this responsiveness and the support received from program staff were welcome and beneficial.

Overall, once students were placed at worksites where employers were willing to provide training and supervision, supervisor/student relationships tended to take on many of the characteristics of mentoring. This was often due to the commitment of the supervisors and his/her interest in working with young people rather than a formal process organized by the program. A number of programs, however, focused explicitly on developing a mentoring strategy. At one site, workplace mentoring was designed as a critical piece of the work experience. Mentors were usually worksite supervisors who also served as role models for participants placed at their business or organization. They received orientation and coaching from a program staff person, as well as a mentoring handbook for reference. Supervisors often participated in additional activities with the students, such as field trips, either arranged by the grant recipient or organized on their own.

Another program envisioned a pool of trained and ready mentors to be matched with out-of-school youth, and connected with a large employer in the area to affect this activity. The site arranged for potential mentors to be trained in how to mentor, qualities of effective mentors, and characteristics of effective mentor/mentee relationships. Two circumstances occurred that precluded full implementation of the strategy: 1) mentors were ready before the youth were available and some mentors lost interest, and 2) the participating business experienced layoffs, which slowed the overall process. There were also several occurrences where youth signed up for a mentor, but did not follow through with his/her responsibilities to complete the process. In reflecting on this issue, grantee staff felt that youth were frequently unfamiliar with their roles and responsibilities as mentees, and believed that improvements could be made with a more formal orientation and training provided to the students.

The worksite experience provided by the Lancaster County Academy appeared to demonstrate a higher degree of consistency with quality indicators than other programs that did not provide specific classroom vocational training. The Academy, located in a regional shopping mall, offered students internships in retail trades at the mall. These opportunities were somewhat related to students' immediate employment goals, but not necessarily to long-term career interests. An employer-validated curriculum (Training for Retail and Commerce) was used for both instruction and internship activities.

Employers received training in youth development principles and how to supervise youth, and were actively involved with students as worksite mentors. There was consistent interaction between supervisors and program staff regarding students' progress, academic needs, and job-related competencies.

EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT

Programs utilized two primary strategies to recruit employers for work-based experiences. One approach involved linking with other organizations whose principle focus was to establish and maintain effective employer relationships within the larger school-to-work or workforce development system, either through a contractual relationship or collaborative agreement. Identifying appropriate work experiences for students became problematic for the two programs that relied on these external sources when these relationships did not work out as expected. Program staff did not have the internal capacity or program resources to "pick up the slack" to the degree of effectiveness they anticipated through the planned linkages.

The other strategy took the form of hiring an individual to broker work-based experiences or assigning this responsibility to one or more existing staff. In some instances, this included vocational teachers who had existing ties to employers in their field of instruction. Typically, programs that used this approach developed linkages with trade associations, Chambers of Commerce, workforce development programs, and/or individual businesses, and often had an existing employer base from which to draw. This approach demonstrated potential as an effective strategy, but it was very much dependent on the skills and contacts the staff person brought with them. Also, at several sites, it appeared that internal staff assigned to develop work-based experiences often had numerous other responsibilities, or the grantee experienced turnover with staff responsible for this function. This circumstance usually resulted in erratic efforts due to the burden of multiple responsibilities or an interruption in worksite development activities, and therefore, limited the development of work-based experiences in which students could participate. We learn from these situations that employer engagement must receive priority if initiatives are to develop effective work experiences for students, and that employer involvement demands a high level of effort to develop and nurture relationships. This will often require staff who have a specific set of skills and knowledge, and who are dedicated wholly to this function.

Generally, programs experienced a greater degree of success in recruiting employers for activities that required a lower level of involvement, such as job

shadowing and furnishing guest speakers. Employers were less inclined to commit to activities that demanded a higher level of involvement, such as providing specific training, mentoring, or curriculum development. This is consistent with early findings from the national evaluation of School-to-Work implementation, which found that workplace activities are usually of low-intensity, such as short-term exploratory experiences, especially at the start.[2]

On the surface, it would seem that the robust economy and the shortage of qualified workers would bode well for employer engagement to occur. However, many sites reported that employers' perceptions and previous negative experiences with youth often led to a reluctance to work with students enrolled in the program. Convincing employers that they should reconsider and devote high levels of time and effort was thus difficult, and employers—even when they agreed—often maintained a level of skepticism that carried into their subsequent dealings with the students. Some employers were also hesitant about having youth in the workplace due to insurance, liability and safety issues, and the unwillingness of employers to commit the time and energy required to supervise, or mentor, participants was also cited as a factor. One site that experienced difficulty in recruiting employers to provide work-based experiences indicated that many employers were not interested in working with the "lowest skilled workers."

CHALLENGES AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

The above discussion suggests some of the challenges that sites encountered as they endeavored to put work-based learning in place, which caused implementation to be incomplete or otherwise short of the ideal. But it was also clear from our site visits that some programs were able to circumvent these challenges and succeeded in developing high-quality work-based activities for their participants.

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[2] *Building Blocks for a Future School-to-Work System: Early National Implementation Results* (Haimson et al., 1998) reports that, while employer engagement with schools is common, the most frequent type of employer involvement (53% of schools reporting) is in "long-standing practices—having them speak to classes and participate in career fairs". The study also indicated that community service, worksite visits and job shadowing were available in 29 to 49 percent of partnership schools, compared to 19 to 29 percent of schools that reported offering more intensive paid work experiences that were linked to a career major.

Challenges

As we have just described, employer recruitment presented a significant challenge to establishing effective work-based learning opportunities for students in the OSY demonstration programs, just as it is for STW implementation more broadly.[3] While employers' perceptions of the youth served by these programs certainly played a role, sites appeared to underestimate the time and level of effort required to develop and maintain high quality work-based learning experiences. Programs that planned major efforts to identify and engage employers generally met with disappointment. Illustrative of this was a unique approach planned by the Lancaster County Academy program. The Academy hoped to use the Work Keys job analysis (a technical analysis of the skill requirements of entry level positions) at local businesses to assist students, employers, and staff plan meaningful work-site learning experiences, help employers identify critical skills that were needed, and support the match between curriculum and employer needs. Employers did not seem at all interested in the Work Keys process and in committing the time and human resources required for a company-specific profile, even though the cost of the profile would be paid for by the grant. This reluctance on the part of employers contributed to the program's inability to expand the number of industries in which work-based learning would be offered.

Grantees that relied on other organizations to provide links to employers for their employer recruitment also experienced obstacles to implementation. In one program, the grantee contracted with a labor-management consortium to identify specific work experience opportunities and workplace mentors for a significant number of students. A change in personnel at this organization resulted in less understanding of the intent and process previously agreed upon, and the specific connections and arrangements anticipated during the planning stage did not materialize. A similar situation occurred in another program that linked with a non-profit, industry-led organization that brings employers and schools together for internships, guest speakers, industry tours, etc. The non-profit was to solicit employers for tours, guest speakers, and curriculum support, and assist in obtaining industry partners to provide opportunities for work-based learning experiences. While there was a high level of involvement with regard to guest speakers, connections for work-based experiences did not develop as expected, owing, to a degree, to a misunderstanding on the part of program staff regarding the

[3] See, for example, *Experiences and Lessons of the School-to-Work/Youth Apprenticeship Demonstration* (U.S. DOL, 1997).

type of connection the non-profit organization could provide (the non-profit viewed its role as to connect program staff to employers, not to specific work-based opportunities).

Another significant issue was the gap that often existed between employer expectations and the youths' skills. For example, one program found itself in a position of placing its participants in work experiences far earlier than intended, because participants needed the income that paid employment would provide (even though they were earning a stipend for classroom training, participants needed more income than the stipend was providing, and staff had every indication that youth might quit the program without it). However, this decision to let youth start work early compromised the program's standards of GED obtainment, work maturity skills, and academic attainment prior to placement at the worksites, and resulted in employers' dissatisfaction with the skills youth brought with them to the experiences.

There was also the reality that many youth served by the programs were already working. Participants sometimes came to the program with existing jobs, usually unrelated to their career interest, but which provided income to support themselves and their families. A number of sites indicated that these students were naturally unwilling to switch to lower-paying, temporary internships or work experiences because of their financial responsibility, which precluded structured work-based experiences related to career pathways for these participants.

Several sites reported that substance abuse was a significant issue related to placing students in worksite experiences. Employers frequently required drug testing prior to placement, and current or recent drug use by participants resulted in positive drug tests, which negated placement. Day care arrangements for participants who had children was cited as a barrier to consistent attendance at worksite experiences, and lack of reliable transportation was also noted.

Finally, the characteristics common to many out-of-school youth presented a very real challenge to developing and maintaining work-based learning experiences. In addition to demonstrating many of the developmental characteristics common to adolescents and young adults as a whole (e.g., exploring their values and identity, a fickle nature, a natural distrust of adults and authority, recklessness, a sense of immortality, etc.), youth served through these programs were frequently disenfranchised, often had limited basic skills, demonstrated social skills that were not

commonly accepted in the workplace, and were perceived as having a lack of motivation and commitment. Many had been (or were currently) involved with the justice system, had a history of (or current problems with) drug use, were either custodial or non-custodial single parents, had temporary living arrangements, and experienced many other issues that limited their opportunities for healthy development. These issues require more intensive services before the youth are ready for placement in a worksite situation, and many programs postponed or modified their original plans and timeframes for this component as a result.

Effective Implementation Strategies

The Food and Business Cooperative Education (co-op) implemented at Milwaukee HY-TECC II demonstrated a high degree of consistency with the quality indicators specified in the threshold criteria. The program utilized a standardized, state-certified curriculum that was developed by industry members, and that was part of a statewide system of co-ops funded by the state Department of Public Instruction. During the year-long program, students received trade-related instruction, instruction in SCANS-type competencies and other pre-employment/work-maturity skills, and were assigned to a paid work experience for a minimum of 480 hours.

Co-op teachers identified work experience opportunities and set up interviews for students with employers. Employers were made aware of the level of commitment that was expected of them if they agreed to work with a co-op student. Once students were chosen by an employer, they were assigned a mentor at the worksite. Co-op teachers checked in weekly with the student, mentor, or supervisor to assess how training was progressing. Teachers also ensured that employers/supervisors completed the mandatory state evaluations measuring student success at achieving statewide competencies in the field. There was a strong connection with the academic institution through the co-op instructors' follow-up with employers. Employers responded well to this level of teacher involvement, as it made them feel that there were supports available throughout the student's assignment.

The success of this approach to work-based learning can be attributed to a number of factors. First, there were clearly-defined learning objectives and expectations, which were understood by both the students and the employers. Additionally, the co-op instructors ensured that the learning objectives were the driving force behind worksite activities through regular evaluations and site-visit follow-up. Second, the co-op design integrates academics, vocational training, and work-site learning, and includes a focus

on SCANS and job readiness skills. These connections serve to add relevancy to the learning and provide a range of opportunities to build, practice, and demonstrate skills in a variety of settings. Third, the duration of training (one year) that includes a paid work experience of 480 hours strikes a balance between a sufficient amount of time to learn, develop, practice and demonstrate a variety of skills, and the need for many students to work to support themselves and their families. A fourth factor is the consistent connections and interactions with competent, caring adults through employers as worksite mentors and co-op teachers as school-based mentors. These connections provide the support and encouragement many out-of-school youth need in order to persist and succeed. The engagement of the co-op instructors as the primary contacts with employers—through development of worksite-based opportunities, establishing expectations and maintaining regular contact—also promotes consistency throughout the work-based experience and encourages integration.

The Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild program developed a promising approach to recruiting and working with employers. Because "you never know how youth will respond when they get to the job," staff carefully screened youth before assignments and referrals, monitored their progress, and followed up if the placement did not work out. The focus was on ensuring the best possible match between the youth and the employer, providing support for the placement, and not allowing a less than satisfactory experience to "burn bridges" with employers. The staff found that the more communication and "customizing" that could occur, the more likely the work-based experience would be appropriate and beneficial to both the student and employer.

Similarly, staff found that "marketing" to employers required a high degree of customization. In general, staff felt that they could generate a great deal of excitement among employers about helping youth at risk by packaging the appeal differently for different employers, depending on their interests and motives. Staff discovered, for example, that many employers identified with those who follow unconventional paths. Some would remember their own or friends' problems as young people, others wanted to share their luck. But in any case they understood what out-of-school youth were going through and respected their efforts to transform their lives. Some employers were interested in the unusual nature of the Just-a-Start program and wanted to support its efforts, leading to a different marketing approach. The Just-a-Start strategy to engage employers involved first approaching employers in a business-like and professional manner, explaining the program and the benefits to the business and to the

youth. Eventually, as trust built and experience was shared, the relationship tended to become collaborative, as staff and the supervisor worked creatively together to customize the experience to address both the needs of the employer and to develop experiences that were of high interest to the students.

With regard to identifying employers interested in providing worksite placements, staff utilized a variety of resources and strategies. Some employers would hear about the program and initiate the contact. In other cases, job development staff would hear about community-minded or otherwise appropriate employers and approach them. Sometimes teachers, counselors, or students would have ideas for a match between student interests and abilities and an employer's resources, and referrals would then made.

Another effective strategy to involve employers was demonstrated by the Phoenix YouthSkilled program, whose relationship with employers was one of the strengths of the program. YouthSkilled capitalized on something that was already in place, the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce's Employer Manufacturing Task Force, a group highly concerned with the need to grow the qualified labor pool in manufacturing, where the demand far outstrips the supply of labor. The Task Force, based on data that indicated a shortage of skilled workers in high tech manufacturing that is only expected to increase, identified several areas where they should place their focus. These included school-to-work programs, to increase appreciation of employment opportunities in manufacturing and increase the labor pool available to the manufacturing industry, and apprenticeship programs, to increase the skilled labor pool. The grantee took advantage of both the anticipated labor shortage and the Task Force's focus areas in originally designing their program around manufacturing technology.

This employer-driven strategy and design holds promise to address many of the challenges that programs experienced in engaging employers. Working closely with leadership from an employer Task Force, this grantee targeted a specific labor market need, thus creating a demand for their students and encouraging industry involvement. This involvement went beyond providing training/mentorship and job placement opportunities by engaging employers in providing input in curriculum design, development of skills standards, and provision of career exploration activities.

Building on this foundation, Phoenix YouthSkilled developed a highly structured mix and sequence of services and supports to create an environment for students to

succeed. Two staff members—a case manager and a job developer—were essentially devoted to ensuring the youths' success in all aspects of the program. Specific to work-based learning, this translated to directly providing life skills and employment readiness training, assisting the vocational instructor during classroom training, communicating with the employer during the youths' work experience, and resolving problems that arose during the worksite placement. This continuity provided a beacon for the students as they navigated the often uncharted waters of academic, vocational, and personal development.

CONCLUSIONS

Below we reflect on the OSY demonstration programs' experiences as they pertain to DOL's threshold criteria for this program component.

1. *There are a variety of different types of high quality work experiences and on-the-job training tailored to the needs of each out-of-school youth served.*

Programs that began with sound work-based learning experiences integrated into their service designs were able to build on this foundation and could enhance or expand this program component during the grant period. Thus, we saw evidence of their effective use of school-based enterprises, service learning, and work experience, which were used in conjunction with job shadowing and workplace tours to provide an array of high quality learning experiences for young people.

However, many of the programs that had weak or non-existent work-based learning components to begin with struggled with the difficult tasks of recruiting an adequate number of employers and ensuring that worksite training was sound and well integrated with classroom components. Although providing for tours, guest speakers, and opportunities for job shadowing was relatively easy for them to arrange, developing high quality paid or unpaid work experience opportunities was much more challenging. Some programs that, previous to being awarded the grant, had used work experience merely as an opportunity for youth to gain exposure to the work world found it difficult to transform these experiences into high quality learning opportunities linked to classroom activities. Thus, they remained primarily opportunities for youth to develop fairly broad employability skills, although occasionally, due to the special skills and attentiveness of a particular work site supervisor, something more enriching developed. Others programs, which had never used work experience before but were attempting to do so during the grant period, found it more challenging than they imagined to recruit employers and engage them in developing high quality training plans. Only one

program that did not have a strong work-based learning component to begin with was able to make substantial strides in this direction during the grant period.

2. Adult worksite mentors are available.

Although employers' motivations for providing work-based learning opportunities varied widely, many did so because of a deep-seated commitment to their communities and due to a desire to help young people in need of guidance and direction. This motivation no doubt explains why such strong relationships between work supervisors and students frequently developed. In fact, although programs' efforts to develop mentoring relationships through a formal process were uncommon and met with mixed success where attempted, the interactions that developed often seemed to take on this quality naturally.

3. Work-based learning entails the attainment of skill certificates and academic credit.

There were some clear examples among the demonstration programs of work-based learning that was associated with the award of a skill certificate or academic credit. For example, the Milwaukee HY-TECC II program had developed several co-ops that adhered to rigid state certification standards. In Phoenix YouthSkilled, youth received one-half of an academic credit for every six weeks of job training, and some employers used by this program (but not all of them) awarded various certificates of completion as youth demonstrated mastery of progressively more difficult machinist skills.[4] Beyond these examples, however, the awarding of certificates or academic credit for work-based learning was not a usual feature of the programs we studied. Partly this lapse can be traced to the fact that most programs used work experience to impart general employability skills rather than specific vocational or academic skills.

[4] Rhode Island's Commerce Academy similarly awarded skill certification, but these were earned through classroom-based rather than work-based learning experiences.

VII. CONNECTING ACTIVITIES

Connecting activities are those functions that support the implementation of school-based and work-based learning activities and aid in achieving the intent of the school-to-work initiative. The SGA specified six criteria in this element. One criterion was that programs should provide *on-going professional development* for worksites and school-based staff. The emphasis on this activity recognized the importance of having program staff and worksite mentors who fully understand the purpose and intent of the school-to-work focus and have skills in effective strategies and approaches that would lead to high-quality services to out-of-school youth. Another criterion was to develop a range of *strategies that would effectively connect school-based and work-based learning activities*. Dedicated staff to link these activities, such as school-based and work-based liaisons/coordinators, was highlighted as a specific strategy that would encourage integration. The SGA also emphasized the importance of involving individuals with a vested interest in service provision to out-of-school youth by including the conduct of *outreach and public relations for all stakeholders* as one of the threshold criteria. The focus appeared to be on encouraging active engagement, and went beyond traditional "stakeholder" definitions by specifically listing parents and the youth themselves, in addition to the commonly-recognized stakeholders such as community-based organizations, local elected officials, school boards/school administrators, employers, and alternative schools and adult high schools. Linkages that would enhance the resources available to address the multiple needs of out-of-school youth were addressed through two criteria: *linkages between human resource service organizations and academic institutions* to meet the needs of individual youth; and the *provision of transportation and other support services* specific to the needs of out-of-school youth. Finally, recognizing the importance of interpersonal skills in the changing labor market and the tendency for out-of-school youth to have poorly developed skills in this area, the SGA included strategies to *develop the interpersonal skills of students* (such as personal responsibility, teamwork, and conflict resolution) as another criterion for high-quality connecting activities.

This chapter will detail how programs addressed the organization and structure of the various connecting activities and how they were used to link to and enhance other school-to-work activities. We will devote a section to each connecting activity. Within

the sections, we will discuss how programs implemented the respective activity and identify effective and interesting approaches.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Efforts at professional development appeared to be as diverse as the programs were themselves. Several programs provided specific, structured opportunities for staff development—some as "up-front" or one-time opportunities, and others on a more consistent basis throughout the program's duration. For example, Phoenix YouthSkilled held an annual two-day retreat to re-focus on the program's vision and to emphasize team building. It also identified a workshop for the program's case manager to attend that would provide information on supportive services that were available in the community and how they could be accessed. Similarly, the Austin American Institute for Learning (AIL) held an up-front "student-free" week in August for staff to receive training and jointly plan for the coming year. The program also provided a structured, on-going opportunity for teachers to be trained on their new Principles of Technology curriculum. Additionally, the larger AIL program requires all staff to attend a minimum of four days of professional development activities, and supports teachers and other program staff in their continuing education (e.g., some teachers are pursuing ESL or special education certification).

In many programs, staff development activities were focused on a particular topic. For example, case managers in the Baltimore Youth Opportunities program attended a two-day training at the start of the program that focused on available resources for participants and how to access them, record-keeping requirements, and the use of the life skills curriculum that was a part of the students' learning plan. Memphis Youth Fair Chance provided professional development activities on training methodologies, the use of PLATO (their computer-based instructional package), and test-taking skills for participants. Similarly, the Yakima Valley OIC program provided initial training on their computer-assisted instructional system, the Comprehensive Competencies Program.

The Yakima Valley OIC program implemented an interesting approach that combined staff development with curriculum development. Teachers have attended regular training sessions provided by one of the program's partners, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, on how to integrate school-to-work principles and strategies. The emphasis in this training is to utilize existing curricula and teach instructors how to customize their own. This approach appears to have fostered a sense

of ownership among the teachers, three of whom plan to develop a formal curriculum for the school and provide training to new teachers on its use.

Most programs held regular "in-service" or staff meetings. The majority of these were focused on continuous improvement in providing services and were often informal in nature. These meetings generally served as a forum to discuss specific concerns about students or worksite situations, with staff drawing on collective skills, knowledge, and experience to identify approaches to resolving problems. A few programs used staff meetings to provide specific capacity-building activities, such as training in school-to-work principles, supportive service networks, health issues, etc. Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild brought in local experts during their staff meetings to provide training on school-to-work principles and substance abuse, and also provided on-going training on the curriculum that was being developed with the local school district. The Lancaster County Academy program's staff meetings were structured as information and strategy exchanges around school-to-work themes.

The staff development focus for other programs appeared to be more informal and opportunistic. Typically, their approach was to access training opportunities that were available to the larger community, such as state school-to-work conferences, local workshops, and the like.

Most programs focused efforts on professional development activities for teachers and youth caseworkers. We found only three programs that had a formal system for professional development activities designed for worksite mentors or supervisors. The Baltimore Youth Opportunities program developed a manual for workplace mentors, and the "Business Broker" employed by the program and case managers from the contracting community-based organizations met frequently with worksite supervisors/mentors to discuss issues and strategies. Lancaster County Academy offered training on youth development to some employers, and the Milwaukee HY-TECC II program offered mentor training for the business and education community through one of its partners. The college also held regular forums for business and industry representatives, designed to provide information on school-to-work to the business community.

These grantees excepted, capacity-building activities for worksite mentors were generally fairly unstructured, typically taking the form of individual discussions between the worksite mentor and staff. The quality of these one-to-one sessions varied

greatly by program. Just-a-Start YouthBuild had strong staff/supervisor relationships that focused on how to effectively work with participants and school-to-work concepts. In most of the other programs, however, more general information was exchanged. Initial meetings usually covered the more technical aspects of the work-based experience, such as what training the student would receive and how work supervisors should complete student evaluations. Subsequent contacts were centered on assessing the youth's progress, identifying additional training needs, and/or resolving problems. There did not appear to be a strong emphasis on specific training on how to mentor or on youth development principles or school-to-work concepts in this approach.

Overall, while professional development opportunities were included to a certain extent in all programs, it was somewhat discouraging to note that only slightly over one-half of the programs had developed a more structured approach for staff capacity building, and that only three sites included a degree of formal training for worksite mentors/supervisors. Moreover, only a few of the programs accessed the Technical Assistance set-aside funds available to the programs through the School-to-Work TA Providers' Network. The reluctance of others to do so seemed to stem from several factors. To begin with, most programs began the grant period with some sense of what they wanted to accomplish and, at least in their own minds, an appropriate strategy for how to achieve their objectives; by the time they realized that their efforts were not yielding the results that they expected, the grant period was drawing to a close. Other factors that explain the reluctance to use TA funds include weak internal leadership, the grantees' lack of awareness of what assistance was available and how it could help them, an inability to perceive their own weaknesses, and a reluctance to admit that assistance was needed. Unfortunately, by not accessing the TA that was available, the OSY demonstration grantees missed an opportunity to strengthen their implementation strategies. To increase effectiveness, staff and mentors need to be well-versed in school-to-work principles and practices. Good intentions and intuitive approaches to working with young people can be greatly enhanced through effective capacity-building efforts, and can result in a higher degree of quality in overall service provision.

STRATEGIES TO CONNECT SCHOOL-BASED AND WORK-BASED ACTIVITIES

Programs that were able to implement work-based learning activities generally assigned staff to serve as liaisons between school-based and work-based activities. In several cases, staff was dedicated wholly to this function; in others, case managers or instructors assumed this role as part of their overall responsibilities. In any event, of

the eight programs that implemented work-based experiences, each ensured on-going contact and communication between staff and work-based personnel in some way. This communication often was used to address a particular student's need through additional training or individual tutoring, or to suggest topics to cover as part of a life skills class.

Most commonly, case managers or instructors assumed the coordinator/liaison role. They typically made frequent, scheduled visits to the worksites to discuss student progress and obtain feedback from employers on training needs in a variety of areas, such as basic, vocational (as applicable), social, and work-related skills. In most instances, this feedback was used to provide appropriate remediation. One program also employed a Business Broker to assist in this process, placing additional emphasis on maintaining effective relationships and communication with employers. This strategy appeared to be most effective when work-based experiences were structured with clearly defined training objectives, thus providing a context for feedback and subsequent training. Consistent contact also served as a quality improvement tool. One program, through its communication with employers, discovered a degree of dissatisfaction with how well prepared participants were prior to their work-based assignment. This feedback was used to redesign pre-placement training and education services, including their duration and sequence.

Another strategy used to connect work-based and school-based learning was team teaching and on-site academic instruction. This approach was used with success by the Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild program. For example, in this program vocational and academic instructors worked together to develop and implement a math unit on measurement that was directly related to the students' worksite experiences. Additionally, worksite supervisors often provided instruction in related basic skills as students were working on-site and demonstrated during the work activity that they did not have the degree of academic skill necessary to complete a task

Several programs utilized input from employers to develop curricula. The Phoenix YouthSkilled program updated its curriculum in manufacturing technology based on recent revisions to employer-driven State standards. Implementation of the Principles of Technology curriculum at the Austin American Institute for Learning, although previously developed by an outside source, was a direct response to identified local labor market needs. Two of the programs that were unable to incorporate work-based experiences as part of the overall program were nonetheless able to develop or enhance their curricula based on local labor market needs. Another, the Rhode Island

Commerce Academy developed its Certificate of Workforce Readiness in response to employer-identified generic workplace competencies, and was working to develop a Certificate of Industry Readiness for Customer Service as the grant drew to a close. Additionally, Lancaster County Academy utilized Work Keys to infuse industry standards specific to local businesses into the program's academic curriculum.

These examples notwithstanding, most programs did not appear to closely coordinate lesson plans between work-based and school-based activities, especially with respect to the teaching of academic skills, as opposed to work readiness or vocational skills. As was discussed in the preceding chapters, four programs appeared to foster close coordination between classroom-based and work-based learning, but most others used work-based learning primarily to provide an exposure to the work world and thus did not establish clearly defined learning objectives that went beyond the teaching of work readiness skills.

OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

A variety of activities was used to engage stakeholders in the local programs. Some of these involved a continuation of strategies already in place with the foundation program; others built on existing activities to develop approaches focused specifically on the program and/or out-of-school youth. Many of the programs maintained a high profile within their communities through active involvement in the local School-to-Work Partnership, Industry Councils, Chambers of Commerce, etc., as well at attendance and representation at local job/career fairs and other state and local events. The focus appeared to be on continuing to be involved in the school-to-work system, advocating for inclusion of out-of-school youth, and developing interest among these stakeholders to expand their efforts for the target population. Several programs developed brochures, news releases, or newsletters that highlighted student accomplishments and benefits to the community to garner stakeholder support. A number of programs also continued to build on already strong relationships with local school districts. For example, Lancaster County Academy had agreements with area school districts that provided "slots" for students who dropped out of the area's high schools; AIL and Yakima Valley OIC maintained solid relationships with the local school systems that resulted in referrals of dropouts to their programs.

The Baltimore program used two distinct strategies to engage and involve different stakeholders. First, the program placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that services were community-based by contracting with neighborhood CBOs for service

provision. This served the dual purpose of involving neighborhood organizations as stakeholders and tying into connections that out-of-school youth already had with organizations located in the neighborhoods in which they lived. The program also employed a staff person who served as an intermediary between the community-based organizations working with the participants and the larger employer community. This provided consistency with regard to relationships between these two important groups of stakeholders, as well as a key management function.

The physical location and organization of two programs demonstrate interesting approaches to ensuring the involvement of stakeholders. The Memphis Youth Fair Chance program's Learning Resource Center served as a hub of providing information to the neighborhood in which it was located. In addition to program activities, it also provided a range of services and activities to all neighborhood residents, contributing to overall awareness and community buy-in. The location of the Lancaster County Academy in a large, regional shopping mall, contributed to outreach and the involvement of employers who had businesses in the mall.

In contrast to these examples of strong efforts at engagement with some partners, we found little evidence of outreach specifically to the parents and/or families of out-of-school youth. Other than the initial application process or attendance at graduation ceremonies, the involvement of this group of stakeholders was rare. Staff from the few programs that attempted to engage family members cited estrangement from parents, the sometimes transient nature of out-of-school youth, and problems that parents themselves were experiencing as contributing factors to the absence of their involvement. For these reasons, most sites did not have in place a clear strategy to reach out and include parents/families as part of the overall services to participants.

Attempts to engage the participants themselves as part of the stakeholder community were also very limited. Other than at the initial outreach and recruitment, programs generally did not appear to enlist ideas and contributions from students. However, there were some efforts in two of the programs to involve participants in program design and improvement. For example, one program, YouthBuild, actively sought participant input for positive changes in the program. Staff felt that this strategy would be a powerful way to expose students to the problem-solving and decision-making process, as well as to encourage ownership of the program. The students' ideas were valued, often resulting in quality improvements to service provision. Students in another program, AIL, would often suggest to individual teachers ways in which

instructional approaches could be modified to allow greater learning to take place. When teachers made these changes, students consistently demonstrated a higher degree of interest and involvement in their own learning.

In summary, most often sites approached outreach and public relations for stakeholders as an essential part of the overall program, and continued activities that were already in place. Missing from the list of stakeholders in the majority of programs were parents/families and the participants. In the two cases where programs reached out to students to involve them in program improvement, however, we saw increased interest and ownership on the part of participants. This finding is consistent with principles of youth development, which suggest that giving youth a sense of ownership and control can promote their sense of belonging and membership, improve their self-worth, and foster their independence.

POST-PROGRAM LINKAGES

As detailed in Chapter V on school-based learning, most linkages with postsecondary institutions involved occasional tours or guest speakers. Informal referral relationships were also common. Thus, if students indicated an interest in and readiness for education/training following program activities, program staff would assist students on an individual basis to access these services, generally through assistance with admissions and/or financial aid applications. These referrals to postsecondary education/training most often were to local community or area technical colleges.

There were three programs with linkages that were more structured. One of these, the American Institute for Learning in Austin, had existing articulation agreements with Austin Community College and was developing additional agreements to allow students to earn dual credit. The Milwaukee Area Technical College similarly had extensive articulation agreements in place. Finally, participants enrolled in the Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild program could take courses at one of three postsecondary institutions (Bunker Hill Community College, University of Massachusetts-Boston, and Harvard Extension School) to fulfill requirements of the YouthBuild program.

Connections to post-program employment opportunities were also very much individualized. Most programs incorporated non-structured, informal strategies that provided participant-specific job development as students neared program completion.

The majority of these referrals were to employers or industry groups with whom prior relationships had been established. Some programs also experienced a degree of success with participants being hired by their work-based employers. Two factors were usually present when this occurred: 1) the work-based experiences were structured with clear expectations, and usually with specific training objectives, and 2) program staff made frequent visits to the work-based site, communicated regularly with supervisors, and addressed issues, concerns, skill development, etc., with participants based on the supervisor's feedback.

As an additional or alternative strategy, some programs linked with existing employment service or workforce development programs for post-program employment opportunities for their participants. For example, at the Baltimore Youth Opportunities program, youth could access one of three local One-Stop Centers that were staffed with youth employment specialists. The One-Stop Centers typically provided the full range of job search assistance, such as assessment, training in job search skills, assistance with resume development, etc. Other programs accessed local JTPA programs or State employment offices for employment opportunities for their participants.

Two of the programs actively encouraged students to return for post-program services, if needed. One program had formal alumni activities that involved former participants as mentors, peer tutors, and role models. The short duration of the grant and of this evaluation prevents us from assessing the effectiveness of this strategy, but it would seem that continued, structured contact with young people beyond program participation would be a valuable approach to increasing successful transitions to post-program opportunities.

TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

As we have highlighted in our earlier chapter on providing support for training (Chapter IV), youth often brought with them a variety of characteristics and needs that required the availability of multiple supportive services. Many youth, without a support system that assists them in accessing resources, both during and following program participation, will not be able to participate fully, or complete programs designed to enhance skills and provide opportunities for self-sufficiency. Child care and transportation needs, health services, probation/parole issues, family/extended family concerns, housing, substance abuse, etc., all combine to present numerous barriers to program completion and labor market success.

Because they well understood the needs of this group of young people, the majority of programs offered interventions and referral resources for their participants to access a variety of supportive services designed to increase program retention. A common theme running through all programs was the persistent dedication of individual staff and their determination to address students' supportive service needs. In general, we found that supportive services were typically very individualized and were provided through an informal referral network – as needs were identified, staff would refer participants to appropriate services. Some programs also allocated resources for childcare, transportation, tuition assistance, and work-related clothing.

Structures to provide supportive services varied from program to program. Some sites employed case managers whose specific responsibilities were to identify and access supports; others tapped into existing case management structures within the larger program. One program included all staff in sharing the counseling/case management function. As one staff person from this program stated, "We handle what we can and we make referrals to community-based organizations when necessary. It's informal, but it works."

Several programs accessed services that went beyond the scope of traditional supportive services. The larger AIL program had a variety of specific supportive services available to participants on-site. Students had access to health services such as health and dental exams and vision and hearing screenings through a clinic that operated at the program's location. Additionally, students at AIL could access housing assistance—the organization owned 25 houses in the area that youth could utilize as long as they were in the program. Memphis Youth Fair Chance, through a relationship with the University of Tennessee, provided participants with classes in time management, stress management, how to talk to a doctor, parenting, etc. Another organization provided health screenings and held twice a month sessions on breast cancer, AIDS, STDs, and other health issues.

Overall, sites did not appear to design or implement supportive service systems beyond those that were already in place or that were utilized within the structure of the foundation program. As indicated previously, the provision of supportive services was very much individualized and relied heavily on an informal network of referral resources. While, as demonstrated, an individualized, "just in time" approach to providing supportive services can be effective, it would be interesting to compare this strategy with a more structured system of supports whereby services might be

coordinated among the multiple institutions with which participants are often involved (e.g., probation/parole, housing, family assistance, etc.).

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

The development of interpersonal and social skills was consistently cited as a critical need for the young people served by the demonstration programs. Employers often told of previous negative experiences with out-of-school youth that were generally focused around personal responsibility issues and an understanding of appropriate work-related attitudes and behaviors.

Two primary strategies were used to contribute to the development of these skills. One was an integrated approach, whereby activities were structured to include multiple opportunities for skill development, primarily through a process that included application and reflection. For example, the interactive, problem-based approach to academic instruction used by the Austin American Institute for Learning encouraged the development and use of these skills in multiple contexts over the course of the youths' participation. Teachers and students would discuss how skills were used and how they might be applied in different situations. Similarly, program-based learning activities in the academic component and community service programs at the Lancaster County Academy provided contextual opportunities for youths to develop, practice, demonstrate, and reflect on interpersonal skills. At Cambridge Just-a-Start, interpersonal skills were formally addressed through leadership activities (a significant aspect of the YouthBuild design) based on specific leadership competencies that emphasized interpersonal skills. These were contextualized through on-going emphasis of the competencies in all activities. Interpersonal skills development was integrated in personal management and teamwork components of the Rhode Island Commerce Academy CWR curriculum, and, on an informal basis, career coaches worked with learners to improve their interpersonal skills through positive confrontation, peer-to-peer problem solving, and modeling appropriate teamwork and communication skills.

Other programs appeared to address interpersonal skills development through separate classes or activities that were related to work/life situations. The weekly life skills classes held by Baltimore Youth Opportunities encouraged interpersonal skills development, as did the one-on-one worksite mentoring emphasis. The program had not developed a framework to define the skills specifically, but the life skills class addressed conflict resolution, problem solving, and decision-making in work and life situations. Memphis Youth Fair Chance provided Workplace Dynamics and Life Skills

classes, which provided opportunities for youth to develop and demonstrate interpersonal skills. In the New York program, there were formal workshops on anger and stress management, and students in Phoenix YouthSkilled attended life skills classes during a portion of the 6-week, Phase II vocational-education portion of the program.

Key to providing effective interpersonal skills development is a focus on application in context and consistent reinforcement of appropriate interpersonal skills. Thus, programs that provided participants with multiple opportunities to use these skills, coupled with opportunities to reflect on skill development and to apply them in different situations (e.g., at work sites, in classrooms), should generally be able to count on greater effectiveness in changing behaviors.

CHALLENGES AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

In every case, field researchers were impressed by the dedication and caring nature of OSY demonstration staff. Clearly, these were individuals who had the best interests of the youth at heart, served as a combination teacher and mentor, and were always willing to "go the extra mile" to help youth overcome their considerable barriers to success. They also were well experienced in serving out-of-school youth and, as such, were very familiar with the types of issues that participants were grappling with in their daily lives. However, they were not always very familiar with school-to-work principles and practices. Additionally, experienced instructors are often reluctant to depart from their "tried and true" methods of delivering academic instruction to try something new, and in any case do not necessarily have the skills to engage in curriculum redesign on their own. For these reasons, they could have benefited from regular opportunities for professional development.

Yet staff training and development is a key element of effective school-to-work system building, whether for in-school or out-of-school youth, that is often given short-shrift. In this, the OSY demonstrations were no exception. With so much to be accomplished for the young people who are being served, it was hard for programs to make time for their instructors and other staff to have professional development opportunities. Moreover, when staff did get together, there were always enough items demanding immediate attention to fill the agenda. Thus, although most programs did schedule regular staff meetings, they found that time was taken up dealing with specific issues surrounding the service needs of individual youth.

However, several grantees demonstrated more comprehensive approaches to professional development, and staff benefited by them enormously. For example, the Austin American Institute for Learning holds a "student-free" week in August for staff to participate in training and engage in joint planning and curriculum development, additionally requires all staff to attend a minimum of four days of professional development activities per year, and will support instructors who are pursuing continuing education. This approach not only ensures opportunities for staff to come together to plan jointly, but represents a serious commitment on the part of AIL to invest in staff development and skills upgrading.

Yakima Valley OIC similarly demonstrated a strong commitment to staff training, and did so by taking advantage of the STW TA line of credit. This grantee acknowledged the limitations of its curriculum from the standpoint of STW principles and was committed to making program improvements to address them. Accordingly, it used its TA funds to procure the services of Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, which provided regular training sessions to OIC's instructors on how to customize course materials to emphasize contextual instruction and active learning methods. Although these efforts were just starting to bear fruit at the time of our second site visit, the grantee's staff were invigorated by the experience and were excited by the prospect of developing new instructional materials. Furthermore, several of OIC's instructors planned to take responsibility for engaging in "train the trainer" activities so that they would be able to pass on lessons learned to new instructional staff.

Providing training for worksite supervisors and, more generally, linking work-based and classroom-based training were additional challenges faced by the demonstration grantees. Integration was difficult in the first instance because of the challenges grantees faced in recruiting employers to provide work-based learning opportunities, as we have discussed in Chapter VI. Once recruited, however, employers did not always appreciate the full range of their obligations as providers of training. Responsibility for this was two-sided. On the one hand, OSY program staff were not always clear in conveying to employers what was expected of them, and in some instances did not themselves have a view of work-based learning that transcended merely providing youth with work experience (highlighting once again the need for professional development). On the other hand, even where there was this expectation, employers were not often willing to devote the time and other resources required to

transform worksites into learning-rich training opportunities linked with classroom learning. Thus, in some instances program staff made the effort to visit worksites to see in what ways classroom instruction could be informed by, or could inform, what was happening at worksites, but employers rarely reciprocated by visiting classrooms. Doing so simply involved too great an effort on their part.

Among grantees that were more successful, the key proved to be engaging employers early, so that they took ownership of instructional objectives. It simply will not do to lay out learning goals and instructional strategies in advance, and only then approach employers to ask them to play the role they have been assigned. Instead, employers need to be involved *at the outset* in developing learning objectives and have the opportunity to ensure that their own needs and interests are build into the program design. Phoenix YouthSkilled demonstrates the payoff of this approach quite clearly. This grantee conceived of its program design as a response to employers' needs, and developed the curriculum and learning plan with the active involvement of employers at every step of the way. As a consequence, employers came to see that this was "their" program and thus felt that its success was something that they needed to take responsibility for.

Another important strategy followed by this grantee, and also exemplified by Cambridge Just-a-Start, is to build in time for work-site instructors and classroom teachers to meet with each other and develop lessons plans. These joint meetings need to go beyond dealing with "problems" or discussing an individual student's progress, as happened with so many of the grantees. While such conversations are important and surely need to happen, they are no substitute for having regularly scheduled opportunities for worksite and classroom-based staff to inform each other of what skills are being covered and to use this information to develop joint lesson plans. At Just-a-Start, for example, worksite supervisors explicitly reinforced the teaching of the basic skills that students were learning in the classroom.

Engaging other key partners also proved to be an important challenge for the demonstration grantees. These partners included other service organizations, who could help the grantee meet the in-program service needs of the young people being served. Given that youths' needs for supportive services were so critical and so numerous, as Chapter IV has suggested, establishing these linkages was especially critical. Fortunately, most grantees had extensive networks in place, which they used to connect youth to available community services. Baltimore's Youth Opportunity

program provides a particularly good example of networking with community organizations. This grantee contracted with neighborhood CBOs to recruit youth and serve as their "homeroom" for life skills training, thereby taking advantage of the local connections that these agencies had already established. Memphis Youth Fair Chance also serves as a model, although its approach was very different. This grantee was interested in establishing a community hub, where a wide range of social services, targeted not only to young people but to the community at large, would be available. Thus, it arranged through its partnerships to provide access to athletic activities, health classes, and health screenings, among other things.

Ideally, parents and participants will themselves be engaged as key stakeholders. Grantees struggled to establish these connections. Parents were often perceived as a problem in the youths' lives and for this reason programs made little effort to involve them in planning and governance. Similarly, youth themselves were rarely involved, other than in their role as participants, or receivers of training and services. Yet, a few grantees were exceptions to this rule. For example, Cambridge Just-a-Start gave youth a voice in program design through its leadership classes.

Finally, efforts to establish post-secondary linkages were also undertaken by nearly all grantees, but with different degrees of emphasis. Typically, programs encouraged youth to consider post-secondary education as an option, and helped with financial aid applications or provided guidance and advice. College tours were also fairly common. However, more formal institutional linkages, such as articulation agreements, were in place at only a few sites, such as at Austin American Institute for Learning, Milwaukee HY-TECC II, and Cambridge Just-a-Start.

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VIII. MEASURING OUTCOMES

Education and training programs typically provide services that are intended to result in favorable outcomes for those being served. With respect to school-to-work systems, the intent in general is to prepare youth for their transition from school to subsequent careers or training. By providing contextualized learning experiences that emphasize the connection between work and learning and instructing students in critical thinking skills, STW tries to prepare youth for the needs of the emerging, high-performance workplace.

One way for programs to assess their progress toward reaching these goals is to track the outcomes of program participants. Through this process, programs can determine whether participants are achieving favorable outcomes. If outcomes are less favorable than expected, programs then have the opportunity to analyze how changes to their service designs may lead to greater benefits for participants.

In this section, we discuss the key outcomes that OSY demonstration projects set out to provide for their participants. We highlight the specific skills being taught, how programs track participant progress, and the ways in which programs use such information to improve their program design. As a way of demonstrating some of the successes that these programs may be having, we conclude the chapter with a vignette drawn from one of our participant interviews.

OUTCOMES OF OSY DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The ultimate aim of STW projects is to prepare program participants for employment, post-secondary education, or further training, and in general to prepare them for their subsequent careers. As a way of achieving these outcomes, STW systems have as intermediate outcomes helping participants acquire new skills. For the OSY demonstration programs, key intermediate outcomes include achievements of academic, vocational, job readiness, interpersonal, leadership, and life skills, as well as enhancements to youths' personal qualities. Below we discuss each of these intermediate and ultimate outcomes, the extent to which programs are tracking them, and their self-reports of how well they are achieving them.

Skills Being Taught

STW programmatic threshold criteria stipulate that school-based learning activities should include "a commitment to high academic standards," "workplace basics and learning in an applied context integrated with academic learning," and "opportunities for post-secondary education." In keeping with this, as was discussed in Chapter V, academic instruction was the most common service component across the OSY demonstration sites, and was a special priority among grantees that were alternative high schools. Nearly all of the demonstration programs offered GED preparation, and four offered instruction leading to a high school diploma (three of which offered both GED and high school diploma paths). Only one offered no specific academic component, but even here many participants were referred to other providers for GED preparation. Typical academic instruction in diploma-granting sites included math, English, social studies, science, literature, health, and some elective courses. Academic standards were typically defined by state graduation requirements, although one program required a passing score of 80% for all participants. Where GED preparation was the key academic component, courses covered the subjects on the GED test, but computer skills instruction was sometimes offered as well.

Comments made by participants we interviewed during our site visits suggest that youth in OSY demonstration sites enjoy learning in the programs' atmosphere, because of the ways in which the demonstration classes departed from traditional high school. For example, youth appreciated self-paced learning, small class sizes, more teacher attention, project-based methods, being treated with respect by teachers, being cared about by teachers, and being held to high standards. One of the students felt that learning was now "…low stress. You can go at your own pace." Another appreciated the high standards, saying, "They demand a high level of performance here on tests and everything. I learned to take pride in my work."

Providing youth with vocational skills was another key element of STW programs, offered by approximately half of the OSY demonstrations. Training in vocational skills included classroom- and/or work-based instruction in a limited number of fields. Some programs had one or two career paths for training, including construction, manufacturing technology, grocery and other retail trades, telecommunications, food preparation and/or business. Two programs provided vocational skills instruction through class-based learning only, one offered it through work-based learning only, and three offered it through a combination of class- and work-based vocational training. Some were designed with substantial input from local

employers in related fields, and several programs were driven by state occupational skills standards. In these cases, youth who successfully completed a program would earn a certificate.

Job readiness training was another important focus of the OSY demonstration programs, and was offered by most of them. The focus of job readiness curricula varied across programs but generally included employer expectations, workforce literacy, communications and teamwork, completing job applications, creating resumes and cover letters, interviewing for jobs, appropriate appearance and attendance, writing memos, completing W-4 forms, and employee rights.

In addition to teaching youth how to prepare for and find a job, many out-of-school youth are in need of basic instruction in life skills. Three programs were identified as providing such training, two of which also offered job readiness components. While there is some overlap between the range of topics covered in life skills classes and in job readiness classes, life skills were more focused on managing day-to-day personal life matters for one's self and family. Examples of life skills topics included personal time management, team building, anger management, communication skills, coping with family and marriage, and job seeking skills.

Programs serving youth are sometimes encouraged by DOL to teach SCANS foundation skills and competencies, which include thinking skills and personal qualities, and resource, interpersonal, information, systems, and technology competencies that are needed in the workplace. Only one OSY program explicitly identified providing SCANS skills as a goal. Its original plan was to use a new curriculum to deliver instruction in SCANS and then to assess student mastery of those skills. This program was unable to implement the curriculum as planned, however, because teachers were reluctant to adopt it. Some teachers nonetheless may have been providing instruction in SCANS but not in a systematic way. Similarly, other programs emphasized improving youths' interpersonal and leadership skills and/or self-esteem as important goals. Although they were not identified as such by the programs, all of these skills are a part of the SCANS framework and to this degree a range of SCANS skills and competencies was being covered. When commenting on the OSY programs, some youth highlighted the benefits they acquired from such instruction, remarking that the program helped them build their confidence and mentioning the pride that resulted from their achievements.

Post-Program Placement

Nearly half of all demonstration programs explicitly identified placement in employment or further education as desirable outcomes for their participants. When specified as an outcome, further education usually meant postsecondary education, but one program also added other types of training as a desirable outcome.

Because post-program outcomes would seem to be among the ultimate outcomes driving STW efforts, the fact that they are not specifically mentioned as goals by more demonstration programs is surprising. However, their importance was nonetheless underscored. With respect to promoting postsecondary school attendance, we have already mentioned in the previous chapter that many program had some sort of connection with a local community college, through which they arranged guest speakers or tours of college campuses. Many also helped individual participants with college and financial aid application procedures. An even stronger indicator of a focus on post-secondary outcomes was in evidence at three programs—Austin's American Institute for Learning, Milwaukee's HY-TECC II, and Cambridge Just-a-Start—that had formal articulation agreements in place. That these efforts sometimes bore fruit is evidenced by the comment of one participant in Just-a-Start, who remarked that "They pushed me to take the SATs and two college courses, and then to apply to college. So here I am about to start college."

With respect to employment, service designs utilized by the demonstration programs shed light on the types of post-program employment outcomes they were targeting. Several programs focused on fairly specific career pathways, including construction, food preparation, retail trade, and computers and high-tech manufacturing. Some of these pathways were developed as a way to address local industry needs. In Austin, entry-level workers in the high tech industry are in great demand, so the American Institute for Learning's Principles of Technology pathway filled an obvious need. Rhode Island's Commerce Academy designed its Certificate of Industry Readiness with substantial input from industry representatives. And the decision of Phoenix's YouthSkilled to implement a manufacturing pathway relates to the strong role played by the aerospace industry in the local economy. Many programs, however, lacked a specific vocational focus.

Programs also sometimes expressed a clear interest in the quality of jobs their graduates would obtain. For example, one of the goals of Rhode Island's Chamber Education Foundation was to "get participants in career pathways that will allow them

to grow and get off cash assistance." One of their participants said, "It gives you a set up for getting a job. And hope for the future." The Cambridge Just-a-Start program focused on a range of goals that they summarized as "give youth the support and skills needed for program success and transition into careers of their choice with steps following graduation being either full-time employment, additional occupational skills training, or post-secondary education."

Outcomes Related to Behaviors and Attitudes

While the above participant outcomes are important in providing youth with valuable skills and helping them transition from school to work or other training, demonstration programs often had other attributes that were also very important to the youth, but which were often unstated. For example, by virtue of their small class sizes, these programs seem to be meeting a need that many participants had to develop relationships with caring, supportive adults. This seemed to be a quality that set demonstration grantees sharply apart from regular high schools—they were able to serve youth in a way that the high schools were not. Although hard to quantify, connections with caring adults were highly valued by participants and may have facilitated the skill gains discussed above.

We know that caring, supportive staff were important to youth because, invariably, participants we spoke with mentioned program staff and faculty more than they mentioned any particular service they received or skill they were attaining. For example, one participant, describing how much he valued his interactions with a teacher, remarked that "I never knew what it meant for someone to care for me until her." The extent to which youth appreciated what adults were doing for them was thus a striking finding. Although these programs did not typically have case managers with responsibility for certain students, it seemed that all teachers, supervisors, and other staff fostered caring, nurturing relationships. As one teacher said, "We must demonstrate to these kids that they are loved. We must help them realize they're worth something, that somebody cares."

Some staff were known for being tough but were well liked by participants. Youths' statements about staff suggested that they appreciated having boundaries and expectations imposed. It was a source of pride for some to have been able to meet a high standard of performance. Along these lines, some youth commented that program staff helped them improve their self-confidence and discover that they have potential and could do things they never would have considered otherwise. As one student

remarked, "To them, it's a mission…They'll make you think anything is possible." Speaking with participants helped us to discover these largely unmeasured benefits that youth derived from program participation, and which would have been difficult to capture otherwise.

The demonstration programs may have had other positive effects on participants' behaviors as well. Out-of-school youth are often characterized by exhibiting at-risk behaviors such as truancy, promiscuous sex, and involvement in crime, gangs, or drug-related activity. We saw evidence that some youth changed these behaviors during their participation in the demonstration programs. For example, one student acknowledged that the program got him "off the streets." It was clear in this and other cases that program policies were helpful in mitigating gang involvement. Given attractive alternatives to gang life, some gang members were thus able to make positive decisions. And when gang members saw one of their own doing something that looked "cool" that could also turn into a legitimate career, they were more likely to buy-in to the program as well.

Program Completion

Whether youth complete their planned course of services provides another measure by which programs can gauge their success. Given the hard-to-serve nature of most youth participants, this may prove to be a daunting challenge. Out-of-school youth are characterized by a high incidence of substance abuse, family and domestic issues, and prior incarceration, as well as the need to earn a living and care for children. Just as these barriers can lead to poor academic attendance and performance in regular high school, they also affected students' completion rates in the demonstration programs. To mitigate these barriers, programs provided intensive counseling and support services, as described in Chapter IV. In addition, programs used targeting and recruitment techniques to select youth with at least minimal skills and motivation levels and possibly fewer obstacles to success. Despite these efforts, retention was still a major problem.

Comparing retention rates across the programs we studied is difficult, because they calculate retention differently. Some programs reported retention rates for their institution as a whole, while others did so for subsets of youth (e.g., those who were recruited for services under the out-of-school youth grant and for whom they kept attendance records). Similarly, some excluded from the base those who dropped out of the program before completing a probationary period, while others did not.

Nonetheless, retention was consistently problematic across programs. For the five programs that reported rates, retention ranged from 50% to 68%, meaning that roughly 32%-50% of their participants exited before completing the program.

There are several possible reasons for the low retention rates achieved by the demonstration programs. For those programs operating on a regular school schedule, retention may have been made difficult because of the challenge of meeting minimum "seat-time" requirements for students who work during the day. Programs operating with state funds are required to drop students who are not in class for the minimum required hours. Such requirements can be difficult to meet for students who work, especially if programs offer classes only on a daytime schedule.

An additional difficulty was, as mentioned in earlier chapters, that most programs offered limited career choices, which may have resulted in youths' dropping out of programs in which they lost interest. It is also possible that some programs failed to screen applicants adequately. For example, youth in one program reported that there were very few "hoops to jump through" when applying. Other programs may have screened too late in the process. For example, the "mental toughness" regime in one program weeded out youth during the first several weeks, but this was already after enrollment had occurred. Also important was the fact that, given the strong national economy, youth often could choose immediate employment over training, albeit usually at a low wage. The inducement to forsake training in favor of immediate employment is enticing for many out-of-school youth, especially those with families to support. Finally, personal barriers and a lack of motivation on the part of youth also led to their inability to complete programs.

Of the several strategies used by programs to address retention, the most common was calling the homes of students who were absent from class. Typically, this was done on a daily basis during first-period classes. One program waited until students were absent for two consecutive classes before calling. The purpose of these calls was to determine why the students were absent and offer assistance with any problems that may have prevented them from coming to class.

A different approach to retention involved creating an extra hurdle for students who wanted to re-enter a program after dropping out. In this strategy, the program required students to explain how they have addressed whatever problem(s) led to their

withdrawal. Another approach that several programs found to be very helpful was the use of stipends during classroom training to motivate continued attendance.

Chapter IV described program staff's diligence in providing attentive and caring counseling, addressing barriers to success, conducting careful screening, and providing comprehensive services—all steps that are essential to promoting program completion among the young people being served. Despite these efforts, however, retention remained a substantial challenge in serving this population.

SYSTEMS OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A system of continuous improvement is a way in which programs continually track progress toward various outcomes in order to make program improvements. The extent to which programs can utilize such a system would depend upon the types of objectives emphasized by the program and the fact that some outcomes better lend themselves to being measured than others. For example, we noted above that most programs emphasized the attainment of academic skills and educational credentials. These are outcomes that lend themselves to quantification, so most programs had in place a system for tracking skill gains and the attainment of academic credentials. For programs that themselves granted educational certificates, tracking these attainments was especially easy, but others had youth report back when they passed their GED test.

Many programs also tracked whether youth attained vocational skills, again because it was often a program emphasis and because it lent itself to quantification, especially where the attainment of a skill certification was involved.

Program completion, or retention, is another quantifiable measure of whether programs were meeting their participant goals. Although programs computed their retention rates differently, most were nonetheless able to track this element of program success and did so. Based on this evidence—and as mentioned earlier in this chapter—retention was problematic across the OSY demonstrations, with perhaps as many as half of all participants dropping out before completing their program goals.

In contrast to these examples, other outcomes were rarely tracked despite the fact that they appeared from the youths' perspective to be among the most valuable benefits of program participation. For example, improvements to self-confidence and other positive changes in attitudes and behaviors were rarely tracked in a systematic way, presumably because they are so hard for programs to measure.

Even outcomes that were tracked did not necessarily inform the question of how well programs were achieving their goals for participants, particularly in comparison to one another or to other programs in these communities. One difficulty was that it was ambiguous how to convert raw counts (e.g., as with those earning GEDs or high school diplomas), which programs typically recorded, into rates of success, because programs had different rules as to who to count in the base (e.g., those participants who received any services, received most services, completed a program component, etc.). Moreover, for programs using an open-entry and open-exit format, how long a participant needs to remain in the program before being considered a completer could vary widely. More generally, common definitions of who to consider served, completed, retained, etc. were scarce. Thus, for example, although many programs reported retention rates, these were not comparable across programs due to differences in what it meant to be "retained" and whether all enrollees or just those who made it beyond some trial period were counted in the base. Finally, programs could not readily determine whether a given rate (however calculated) was "good" or not, because there were seldom reasonable yardsticks for comparison.

For these reasons, none of the demonstration sites provided particularly rich examples of effective systems of continuous improvement. When asked how they perform continuous improvement, nearly three-quarters said they did so informally. Respondents indicated that Program Directors informally kept track of what was going on and brought problems to the attention of staff, suggesting changes when they thought it necessary. Some believed that, because their program was so small, they would not need anything more formal or systematic. And, indeed, such informal mechanisms did spur programs to make sensible and needed changes to their program designs, as earlier chapters in this report have suggested.

VIGNETTE

Interviews with program participants were a standard feature of each field researcher's schedule while conducting site visits. One interview, conducted with a young Haitian immigrant we will call Claude, illustrates both the challenges and some of the successes the demonstration programs realized. Claude, aged 22 when he applied, got married during his time in the program: "I have a lot of responsibility," he said, though not unhappily. At the time of his application, he was on probation for an offense involving a stolen car and had recently been acquitted on related gun charges.

He had left high school "because of a school fight" and had quit one job and been fired from two since then.

Claude wrote an impassioned application essay demonstrating his desire to turn his life around. He wrote, "I want to stay out of jail and make my father proud." On his application to one of the demonstration projects following the YouthBuild model, Claude said he was interested in further education and thought he might like eventually working in a bank or in computer programming. While in the program, his performance evaluations were excellent. His worksite supervisor noted more than once, "I'd hire him. He could become an apprentice in any construction-related field." Other comments included the words "smart," "careful," and "hard-working."

Claude described his experience as follows:

> "When I started, I knew nothing. Now I can do math really well. My reading and writing are much better. If I make a mistake I understand now how to do it. My brain is working. I know they'll try to help no matter what I need. The teacher figured out I needed a tutor for reading and writing and speaking. They got me one. She has really helped me. And the supervisors are very patient. They show you all the steps and make sure you understand."

He has just begun training to become an electrician, an area for which he has demonstrated aptitude. He said, "I didn't know about this possibility before. They helped me discover I'm good at it, I like it. They took me to a training school." He said it won't take him long to finish training. He might later go back to college, but thought he'd be happy as an electrician for a while. He had also mastered exterior and interior painting and other construction-related skills, but didn't want to paint or build full-time. A recent free-lance painting experience reinforced this decision: Claude and his wife agreed to paint a friend's house. He quoted her a low price, not understanding that she wanted them to paint every room, including three rooms in a separate apartment. When he learned that, he expected she would give them extra money. Instead, she hasn't paid them anything yet and they're almost done with the "extra" work. He feels they've lost a friend, but he's learned a lot about estimating and "getting it in writing."

CONCLUSION

Assessing the extent to which programs are achieving outcomes for their participants, absent consistently stated or defined goals and outcomes, is clearly a

challenge. In addition, open-entry/open-exit formats further complicate efforts to measure how well any particular "class" of participants has done. For these reasons, the demonstration sites lacked the performance measurement capacity necessary to accurately describe their successes.

However, based on our observations, we understand that programs are assisting youth with a range of academic, vocational, and work readiness skills. Beyond these, the most salient features of these demonstration programs were apparent positive changes in youths' attitudes and behaviors, stemming at least in part from the quality of staff-student interactions. Indeed, the positive outcomes that stemmed from the caring, supportive staff bode well for programs' abilities to positively impact the lives of out-of-school participants.

Still, low retention rates suggest that it is intrinsically difficult to engage these youth through an extended period of learning. Programs seem to recognize what types of services are helpful in meeting the needs of their target population. Thus, some offered youth the option of taking classes either in the morning, afternoon, or at night to address some of the employment and personal obstacles youth face in continuing their education and training. They also provided counseling and supportive services, smaller class sizes, more self-paced work, more personal attention, and more interesting and integrated curricula. Programs also established responsive and caring relationships between youth and adults to provide youth with a sense of connectedness and belonging. Unfortunately, even with these strategies programs still recorded modest retention rates, presumably because of the intrinsic difficulty of connecting with this population.

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IX. SUMMARY OF SUSTAINABLE ELEMENTS

The expansion and enhancement of school-to-work programs for out-of-school youths take time, resources, and a tremendous amount of leadership, planning, and skill. The experiences of all of the demonstration projects have shown us the challenges and rewards of trying a variety of different approaches to implementing systemic change. In this chapter, we summarize projects' accomplishments relative to their goals and identify areas that demonstration grantees were able to sustain successfully, the ways they were able to do so, and their projected evolution beyond the DOL funding period.

SUSTAINING THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS' ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Program components that grantees were able to attain and sustain were dependent on what they aimed to develop, enhance, or expand, which varied substantially across projects. As described in Chapter II, the most common *system-level* goals pursued by the projects included: (1) to create stronger partnerships; (2) to expand career path offerings; (3) to enhance the curriculum for school-based learning; and (4) to increase employer involvement as it pertained to work-based learning. The discussion below identifies what programs were able to achieve with respect to the goals they had established in these areas. The focus is on uncovering how the programs were made different by the infusion of grant funds and describing their success in implementing *systemic* improvements that were sustained as the period of their grant funding drew to a close. The major findings are summarized in Exhibit IX-1.

Creating Stronger Partnerships

As discussed in Chapter II, eight grantees had goals that related to expanding or enhancing partnership involvement, including developing a youth-services network and strengthening relationships with employers, post-secondary institutions, or existing school-to-work systems. Grantees had mixed success in achieving these goals.

Building and Sustaining the Involvement of Employers. Efforts to involve employers specifically in the development of work-based learning opportunities are discussed later in this chapter. Beyond these efforts, four grantees planned during the grant period to involve employers in a variety of other roles, including developing curricula and identifying skill needs. One of these, the Phoenix YouthSkilled program,

had much greater success than the others. In this instance, the grantee involved employers in curriculum design, career exposure activities, mentoring activities, work-based learning, and job placement, for the program's new career path in manufacturing technology. Employers even took on the role of recruiting other employers to participate in the project.

A few other grantees had strong pre-existing linkages with employers and these were sustained, without necessarily being enhanced, throughout the grant period. Among the most notable examples, the Rhode Island Chamber Education Foundation (CEF) could boast of long-standing ties with the employer community. Indeed, the grantee itself grew out of the Warwick Chamber of Commerce and has always solicited input from local area businesses in all aspects of its program operations. During the grant period, for example, CEF created an advisory committee to assist with the development of the competencies and curriculum for the Certificate of Industrial Readiness in telecommunications. Similarly, Milwaukee Area Technical College has over 120 advisory committees, composed of industry representatives, who review curriculum and help plan future directions for all occupational programs operated out of the college.

Linkages with School-to-Work Systems. As described in Chapter III, eight of the demonstration projects attempted to collaborate with the local or state school-to-work systems. The primary concern for most of the programs was the appropriateness of the existing school-to-work system that was primarily focused on serving in-school youths. By the end of the demonstration period, only two of the eleven projects reported that their involvement with the local or state school-to-work system had been enhanced. However, where involvement was closest, it tended to take the form of the demonstration grantee assuming a leadership role to help their school-to-work partners better serve the out-of-school youth population, rather than vice versa.

The Rhode Island Commerce Academy provided a good example of a grantee's taking on such a leadership role. This grantee organized a two-day planning meeting with the Rhode Island School-to-Work office and other key partners to develop an Out-of-School Youth Strategic Plan for the State of Rhode Island. The outcome of the meeting was that each region developed a preliminary action plan to implement the state's five major goals around out-of-school youth. It was evident, however, that this activity did not directly relate to or help this program's efforts in further developing its own program.

Exhibit IX-1
Summary of Program Goals and Accomplishments

Demonstration Program	Program Goals	Program Accomplishments
Austin American Institute for Learning	• Create model strategy for continued partnership between STW partnerships and organizations serving OSY. • Create opportunities for OSY to participate in high-tech STW pathway, through Principles of Technology (PT) course; develop PT curriculum. • Develop active role of employers in all career development programs at AIL through Industry Liaison.	• Partnerships resulted in guest speakers and articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions. • The PT Curriculum was delivered to students. • Connections with employers were difficult due to staff changes and limited resources.
Baltimore Youth Opportunities	• Complete the network of holistic services for youth; further develop the Youth Leadership Council. • Create a tutoring component at each "home room." • Enhance mentoring component. • Enhance life skills curriculum. • Build stronger relations with the private sector toward connecting youth with internships, job training, and education alternatives. • Strengthen the connection between the worksite and academics.	• In a continuance of previous efforts, holistic services were provided (counseling, support services, etc.), but had little direct connection to stw. • In a continuance of previous efforts, tutoring and life skills were provided through homerooms. • Additional employers were recruited and include mentoring components. • The work-based component remained primarily work experience, not directly connected with classroom learning in academics or vocational skills.
Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild	• Strengthen and formalize partnership with a local community college. • Develop career exploratory program. • Design a competency-based, accredited high school diploma program.	• The community college remains a strong partner, but plans for them to develop a career exploratory program fell through, due to lack of follow-through on the college's part. • Some success in developing career exploration options, but not as much as envisioned. • Substantial progress made towards becoming a high school diploma-awarding program, opening up new opportunities for integrated curricula.

Exhibit IX-1 (cont'd)
Summary of Program Goals and Accomplishments

Demonstration Program	Program Goals	Program Accomplishments
Lancaster County Academy	• Work with business and industry to accommodate academic needs of present and future employees. • Expand career paths to include manufacturing, industrial technology, electronics, building trades, transportation/distribution, medical technology, and computer software-specific training. • Provide links to other adult education training, employment, apprenticeship and post-secondary education programs. • Apply work-based academic competencies to Lancaster County Academy diploma requirements. • Perform a job analysis for one entry-level, career-track job at each participating employer. • Foster mentoring relationships for role modeling. • Accommodate childcare and transportation issues.	• Had difficulty getting employers to agree to use Work Keys to identify entry-level job skills and to match curriculum to the needs of employers. • Continuing refinements to program elements are made, but there has been no expansion into new career paths. • Continued linkages for post-program period. • Continuing refinements to high school diploma curriculum. • Strong employer linkages with a core group of employers, with some gradual expansion. • Transportation continued to be a problem for this countywide program.
Memphis Youth Fair Chance	• Provide a one-stop community-wide Learning/Resource Center. • Encourage comprehensive strategies that link education, employment, social services, and juvenile justice, as well as recreation programs and other community-based actions and by establishing new community-based governance strategies. • Expand career path opportunities to hospitality, health, and computer. • Develop new integrated curricula. • Integrate academic, vocational, and communication curriculum through extensive staff development. • Provide tuition support for participants to receive occupational skills training from other providers.	• Continued to provide an array of community services, in keeping with Youth Fair Chance initiative • Continued to provide tutorial services through Client Service Center on life skills and job readiness. • Continued strong linkages with community organizations. • Efforts to expand career path offerings did not work out as planned. • Efforts to integrate curricula did not work out as planned. • Provided tuition support for some students.

Exhibit IX-1 (cont'd)
Summary of Program Goals and Accomplishments

Demonstration Program	Program Goals	Program Accomplishments
Milwaukee HY-TECC II	• Develop and implement state-certified skilled co-op in business. • Assist students to develop career path. • Facilitate extensive use of Analyze & Apply (project-based) curriculum by 5 teachers. • Include work-based component in all occupational courses. • Enroll out-of-school youth in work-based learning and assign workplace mentors to 50 out-of-school youth. • Assist students to master SCANS competencies.	• Successfully implemented business co-op. • Continued to deliver career information to students. • Teachers resistant to implement Analyze & Apply curriculum. • Developed some new work-based learning opportunities by recruiting new employers. • Had difficulty establishing mentoring component, but some mentors were recruited.
New York Family Learning Institute	• Purchase additional computers for learning lab. • Provide computer literacy and GED training on computers. • Establish job shadowing and work readiness training. • Provide support for parents who are out-of-school youth; provide parenting skills training.	• Equipment was purchased. • GED and literacy instruction was provided, but ceased when grant period ended. • Some shadowing of program staff during grant period • Family support services and literacy training was provided during grant period, but institute ceased operation when grant funds ended.
Ohio Schools Study Council	• Help out-of-school youth utilize the local school-to-work's system of career clusters. • Enhance and expand existing STW professional development. • Facilitate transitional services and recruit/train mentors to help OSY make positive transition.	• Career cluster approach not utilized due to staff changes. • No major new initiative with respect to staff development. • Provided a tour of a local community college. • A very small number of mentors were recruited.

Exhibit IX-1 (concluded)
Summary of Program Goals and Accomplishments

Demonstration Program	Program Goals	Program Accomplishments
Phoenix YouthSkilled	• Establish linkages with manufacturing employers to help identify work-place skills, career exposure, work-based learning, mentoring, and job placement. • Build upon the YouthBuild model to expand to a second career path: manufacturing to produce precision products. • Develop participants' mastery of occupational skills in machining and/or welding and basic academic skills. • Place graduates in employment, entrepreneurial and/or post-secondary education.	• Through the Chamber of Commerce Manufacturing Task Force, YouthSkilled involved employers at various stages to help in the project design and service delivery. • A pilot program in manufacturing technology, YouthSkilled, was offered to 23 out-of-school youth. Plan to expand to additional pathways in the future. • Youth received integrated skills instruction in occupational and academic skills. • Upon their completion, some participants were placed in training-related jobs.
Rhode Island Commerce Academy	• Continue to work with employers. • Implement certificate program in Telecommunications. • Expand acceptance of the Certificate of Workforce Readiness (CWR) program among employers.	• Relations with employers continue to be strong. • The CIR in Telecommunications was canceled, but a new one is being created in retail trade. • Marketing of the CWR leads to possible outsourcing of CEF's training for employers.
Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center	• Relate course offerings to 5 career paths. • Infuse career pathway concept into curriculum. • Adopt school-to-work curriculum and infuse into existing school curriculum. • Develop work experience sites and program; infuse work experience to existing school program. • Integrate life skills and pre-employment curriculum into classes. • Alternative high school teachers to receive professional development training. • Train teachers in constructing and implementing portfolios.	• No development of new career paths or infusion of pathways into curricula. • After receiving staff training, teachers are beginning to develop new curricula and course materials. • Work-based activities include job shadows and work experience (for JTPA participants). Continued use of school-based enterprises (Entrepreneurship class). New work experience slots more limited than anticipated. • Life skills and pre-employment delivered in pull-out classes. • Staff received training from NWREL on infusing school-to-work into the classroom.

Thus, most grantees funded by this demonstration made efforts to engage the local STW partnerships, and, as a rule, they received little in the way of tangible support. Their general inability to benefit from local STW partnerships is troubling, because it suggests that emerging local systems are paying little attention to the problems of out-of-school youth.

Linkages with Post-Secondary Institutions. Although seven grantees forged collaborations with post-secondary institutions as part of their projects' work (see Chapter V), only one, Cambridge Just-a-Start, formally stated this as a goal. Interestingly, this grantee failed to meet its objective of establishing a career exploratory program with a local community college. Although the project had set aside funds to pay for the program and developed a contract of services, the staff at the community college failed to follow through. Nonetheless, it did pursue other strategies to establish opportunities for its participants to dual enroll.

Another grantee, Austin's American Institute for Learning, also had success in developing new articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions. These were sustained through the end of the grant period, and there were strong indications that the relationships would continue to be nurtured, as the grantee endeavored to establish a new agreement pertaining to its newly-established Principles of Technology curriculum.

Beyond this, the remaining programs continued their efforts to encourage post-secondary educational participation. Usually these proceeded on a very informal basis, as case managers provided enrollment and financial aid information to individual students who expressed an interest, but, in the case of one grantee, through pre-existing articulation agreements. There was no evidence that this represented a departure from practices before the grant period began, nor did it appear that much was changing as the grant ended.

Linkages with Other Service Providers. Projects that focused on promoting partnerships not directly related to school-to-work were somewhat more successful in sustaining them. Perhaps this was in part due to the fact that many of these partnerships were preexisting—and thus represented enhancements to existing relationships—rather than newly established partnerships around school-to-work expansion. The Memphis Youth Fair Chance and Baltimore Youth Opportunities programs, for example, already had strong community and interagency partnerships prior to the demonstration project that were focused on a broader set of goals to provide

comprehensive services for in-school and out-of-school youths. Both grantees continued and strengthened their partnership with community colleges, non-profit organizations, JTPA programs, employers, and others, but few of these partners contributed directly to their ability to expand learning opportunities for young people centered around school-to-work principles.

Expanding Career Path Options

One of the more ambitious goals set forth by the demonstration projects was to expand opportunities for the out-of-school youth population to take advantage of a new career path. As defined in the School-to-Work Act, the term career major or pathway refers to

> A coherent sequence of courses or field of study that prepares a student for a first job and that - (a) integrates academic and occupational learning, integrates school-based and work-based learning, and establishes linkages between secondary schools and post-secondary institutions; (b) prepares the student for employment in a broad occupational cluster or industry sector; (c) typically includes at least 2 years of secondary education and at least 1 or 2 years of post-secondary education; (d) provides the students, to the extent practicable, with strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of the industry the students are planning to enter; (e) results in the award of a high school diploma or its equivalent; a certificate or diploma recognizing successful completion of 1 or 2 years of post-secondary education (if appropriate); and a skill certificate; and (f) may lead to further education and training, such as entry into a registered apprenticeship program, or to admission to a 2- or 4-year college or university.

We found that whether projects were successful in meeting this goal depended on several factors, including how many career paths they were already offering, and the number of new career paths they planned to introduce.

At the beginning of the grant period, only four programs had a formal course of study with substantial amounts of classroom-based learning organized around a career pathway, and only one offered more than one pathway.[1] Given this starting point, the goals for career path expansion laid out by a number of the demonstrations may have been too ambitious. While four programs said they wanted to introduce one new career

[1] Even these pathways were incomplete in various ways. For example, one program that organized classroom learning around career themes lacked any work-based learning opportunities. Another offered a food co-op that displayed many of the characteristics of high-quality learning, but only a fraction of this grantee's out-of-school youth participants were enrolled in this co-op, as opposed to taking other academic or vocational courses offered by the grantee.

path to out-of-school youth, five others said they wanted to develop or expand to multiple career paths—up to 5-7 pathways in some cases. Because each career path required a complex set of activities in classroom, work-based, and connecting activities, plans to expand beyond more than one proved to be too ambitious with the amount of funds that projects received from the DOL grant. In fact, all of the projects that aimed to develop multiple career paths failed to accomplish their goal.

In contrast, three of the four projects that embarked upon a slower expansion path and chose to focus their resources were more successful in thoughtfully creating a new career path for their participants. For example, through this grant, the Milwaukee HY-TECC II program was able to successfully develop and implement a state-certified skilled co-op in the area of business. Similarly, the Phoenix YouthSkilled program will likely persist, through the grantee's success in securing additional funding from a private foundation, as will the Austin American Institute for Learning's Principles of Technology pathway. Indeed, Austin has plans to embellish its new career pathways still further in the months ahead, by finalizing its articulation agreement with a local community college. The fourth program that targeted just one new career pathway, Rhode Island's Commerce Academy, was not successful in achieving its goal of establishing a Certificate of Industry Readiness in Telecommunications, for a variety of reasons. However, it has made strides in establishing a pathway in a different field.

Enhancing School-Based Learning

Of the grantees that were successful in building an additional career pathway, one factor that led to their success was the strategic focus of grant resources on both the career path expansion along with the development of a classroom curriculum specific to it. For example, the American Institute for Learning (AIL) chose to develop its new high tech career path through adoption of the Principles of Technology (PT) curriculum. Through AIL's expert curriculum development department, they identified curricular needs for students who might wish to chose this as a career field. AIL staff purchased the curriculum and set up the accompanying labs. Moreover, AIL's curriculum designers were creating "bridge" courses to bring youth who needed remediation "up to speed" in basic academic skills, before they entered the PT course sequence. Finally, the grantee was working on developing an articulation agreement so that PT students could accrue credit for Industrial Electronics at a nearby community college.

Six programs took a more generic approach to implementing their goal of curriculum development. All of these grantees had curriculum development goals that went beyond the career path(s) that they designated for expansion, and some of them had curriculum development goals that were unrelated to any career paths or school-to-work skill development. These six projects met with mixed success. As an example of one of the more successful projects, Just-a-Start YouthBuild in Cambridge experienced substantial progress in attaining and sustaining its goal of developing a competency-based, accredited high school diploma program. This project encountered multiple barriers, such as an initial lack of cooperation from a school partner and staff turnover. However, a person in a leadership position, the director of curriculum, became personally invested in the idea of this curriculum development effort and established credibility and demand for Just-a-Start's diploma program within the community. As a result, the teaching staff developed a new level of enthusiasm and energy towards this effort and was looking for creative ways to link career planning and other integrative activities to the classroom-based learning component.

Other programs were less successful. Partly this might be attributed to the fact that the goals of some of them were vague and were not associated with a clear action plan. For example, one grantee proposed during the grant period to design integrated instructional curricula, but did not articulate a clear strategy for doing so. As a consequence, it made limited progress during the grant period. By contrast, another grantee with similarly diffuse goals, Yakima Valley OIC, made a concerted effort to access technical assistance in how it might revamp its curricula and began to show some progress as the grant period drew to a close.

But even tightly defined goals for revamping curricula, along with a clear strategy, did not always guarantee success. For example, Milwaukee's HY-TECC II aimed to facilitate the extensive use of a project-based curriculum by five teachers. However, it was able to make little headway due to a lack of buy-in from teachers. Similarly, the New York Family Learning Institute was unable to sustain its young parent literacy training program. Although demonstration funds were used primarily for a one-time expense (buying computers for the computer lab), lack of continued financial support made it infeasible for services that were begun under the DOL grant to continue.

Expanding Work-Based Opportunities

A number of programs had a history of moderate to strong linkages with employers at the outset of the grant period, which served to provide adequate numbers of work experience slots for students. Cambridge Just-a-Start, Rhode Island's Commerce Academy, and Baltimore's Youth Opportunities programs come readily to mind. These relationships were sustained, but were not appreciably enhanced, during the grant period.

A number of other programs with weak employer linkages to begin with attempted to use their grant funds to develop work-based learning opportunities for students, where none, or few, existed previously. These efforts met with mixed success—programs that did not have strong employer linkages to begin with found it very difficult to involve employers on an ongoing basis by the end of the grant period. Moreover, by tracking the evolution of projects' partnerships with employers over time we learned that *sustaining* employer involvement during the course of the project was as challenging as *initiating* it. Thus, several programs appeared to have had the buy-in of employers or employer groups in the early stages of the project, but reported that they were unable to build on these linkages throughout the grant period. For example, Austin's American Institute for Learning had some difficulty making connections with employers, despite its partnership with a non-profit, industry-led organization, whose charter was to bring employers and schools together. During the course of the DOL grant, the project staff continued to go to meetings to network with employers in hopes that this would eventually result in more work-based learning and employment opportunities for students. However, these failed to materialize as planned, partly due to the lack of time for staff to follow through on initial connections with prospective employer participants. Milwaukee HY-TECC II's experience was similarly disappointing. Although one of its partners was a labor-management consortium of local manufacturing firms, this partnership was less successful than anticipated in securing the active participation of employers or in ensuring an ample number of slots for work-based learning opportunities for students.

As discussed in Chapter III, a number of factors interfered with projects' ability to create two-way partnerships with employers, including inadequate staffing resources and the lack of expertise to attract, train, support, and monitor employers to ensure that the work-based experiences were rich and integrated with classroom instruction. An added difficulty was that employers were often focused on the "bottom line" and were reluctant to invest effort in working with students who lacked adequate skills to be

productive workers. These difficulties, in common with many STW systems that attempt to develop good relationships with employers, were compounded by the special needs of the out-of-school youth population. One project summarized the challenges they faced in the following manner:

> There is often a gap between youths' skills and training on the one hand and employers' expectations on the other. The more communication and "customizing" that occur, however, the less problematic this is. Second, youths' self-esteem and related issues hinder their job success. They have trouble envisioning themselves in a serious job in an unfamiliar environment. They have a strong edge of fatalism. Another thing is that the right employers for these kids are not easy to find—someone who shows a willingness to be a mentor, provides a good and supportive atmosphere, and has jobs with reasonable skills.

For these reasons, the demonstration programs as a whole could be characterized as having had great difficulty in following through on their grant plans to build new employer linkages during the grant period, and, thus, sustainable elements were hard to find.

The successes and failures of the grantees along these lines reveal some successful strategies for building strong employer partnerships, however. First, partnerships should be viewed as reciprocal; that is, most partnerships with employers failed because they were usually formed on the basis of how employer partners could contribute to the demonstration program without also attending to how employers could benefit. By contrast, successful programs found it very important to appeal to employers in a way that would resonate with them. Because employers' motivations were varied, this meant using different appeals for different groups of employers (e.g., civic responsibility, filling labor shortages, etc.).

Second, it was important that project staff establish credibility with the business community through an awareness of issues that businesses face or an extended contact in having worked with them in a variety of capacities. For example, grantee leaders observed that staff with backgrounds in having run a business, with consequent knowledge of business fiscal systems, budgeting, marketing, etc., were better able to establish and maintain stable linkages with employers throughout the life of a project.

Third, it helped if employers were involved in helping to plan the project early on, rather than being asked to provide assistance when the curriculum and service designs were already well established. For example, the genesis of the successful Phoenix YouthSkilled was a task force established by the Phoenix Chamber of

Commerce charged with developing strategies to address labor shortages in high tech manufacturing industries in the area. Task force members approached education institutions to enlist their cooperation and assistance in this endeavor. When the OSY grant announcement was issued, training professionals in the community saw it as an opportunity to address the needs of out-of-school youth for career opportunities, while satisfying the business community's labor shortfall. From this beginning, business representatives and YouthSkilled staff worked hand-in-hand not only to develop work-based learning opportunities, but also to develop the curriculum.

By contrast, despite their very strong relationships with employers overall, Rhode Island's Commerce Academy was unsuccessful in establishing employer acceptance of the career pathway in telecommunications that it wanted to develop. Its strategy in developing this pathway was, first, to develop the idea and begin developing the curricula, and then to seek employer buy-in and assistance. Difficulties arose when employers failed to provide the support that was anticipated. This grantee has since decided that it is important to be more flexible and work on obtaining employer buy-in first. Thus, in the future it plans on drawing on its good relationships with employers to elicit ideas for additional pathways from them and thereafter, with their assistance, establish the program design.

EVOLUTION OF PROJECTS BEYOND DOL'S GRANT

The out-of-school youth demonstration grant was doubtless a rich source of learning for all of the eleven grantees that participated. All these grantees were able to reflect on their experiences under the grant and have culled lessons learned from their collaborations and implementation experience. As a consequence, all have considered ways that they might improve their program designs in the future.

However, each grantee came away with a very different experience in terms of tangible improvements to its STW system that it was able to implement and sustain as a result of its grant funding. Each also can point to program elements that seem to be effective and should be replicable in other contexts. These sustainable and replicable components are summarized in Exhibit IX-2.

In our assessment to determine if the projects had been made better off for the future as a result of the OSY funding it received, we concluded that, for five of the projects, the demonstration grant funding had not made a substantial difference in what was previously offered to youth by way of school-to-work learning opportunities.

These five grantees either were not able to implement their original project goals or they made no system-level improvements to their projects' designs that could be sustained once funding ceased. Thus, with minor exceptions, their participants were offered basically the same sets of activities as they were before the DOL grant was awarded. In these cases, little remained from the demonstration program that made these programs distinct from what they looked like before the funding.

However, we observed that six of the eleven projects evolved in important ways beyond their initial starting points to an enhanced system of school-to-work services for out-of-school youth. Thus, some developed a new career pathway, developed new integrated curricula for classroom-based learning, and/or forged important new partnerships with employers or postsecondary institutions around school-to-work.

The evolution of these projects beyond the DOL demonstration grants has also taken many forms. The majority have already tapped into existing funding or raised the funds to secure support to continue the school-to-work components that began under the DOL grant. Some had thoughtfully extracted important lessons learned and were in the beginning stages of planning program improvements based upon them. Others were planning to continue what it was that they accomplished under the DOL funding. Yet others took the original concept that was tested under the DOL grant and have already begun to implement variations or develop new program elements. We give examples of some of these evolutionary trajectories below:

- *Extraction of lessons learned*. All of the eleven projects have presumably learned important lessons from their participation in the demonstration. However, Yakima Valley OIC stands out in this regard. At the outset of the grant period, instructors and curriculum planners were unsure what the integration of academic and vocational skills could or should entail. After having received extensive technical assistance about how to proceed, staff were described as "excited" and "invigorated" and were making plans to put new-found knowledge to the test in the classroom.
- *Continuance of demonstration components*. As noted above, several grantees had already executed plans to continue or expand the school-to-work components that they began under the DOL grant. The American Institute for Learning, for example, continued implementation of the Principles of Technology curriculum through the hiring of a new teacher, while the Milwaukee HY-TECC II project continued to implement its business co-op. The Cambridge Just-a-Start (JAS) program was continuing energetically to become a diploma-granting

program (one of its original goals); in addition, during the course of the grant period, JAS staff developed a vision of transforming their program into a two-year project (not one of its original goals).

Exhibit IX-2
Sustainable and Replicable Components of the DOL Demonstration Projects

Project	New Sustainable Components	Unique Replicable Components
American Institute for Learning	Principles of Technology curriculum; new articulation agreements.	PT curriculum; use of team-teaching and multi-subject courses involving contextual learning; use of project-based learning; one-stop approach to services.
Baltimore Youth Opportunities	Additional employers recruited.	Use of neighborhood CBOs to recruit youth and provide training; youth-oriented case management approach; linkages with One-Stop Centers for recruitment.
Cambridge Just-a-Start YouthBuild	New high school diploma program with promise of allowing substantial innovation in curricula; additional partnerships with postsecondary schools.	YouthBuild model of alternating weeks in classroom and worksites, coordination between worksite supervisors and classroom instructors, integrated skills instruction.
Lancaster County Academy	Some expansion of number of employers being used; continuing gradual refinement of program model.	Location of classroom component in shopping mall allows ready oppty for work-classroom connections; high expectations for students; use of project-based learning; service learning as required program component; use of state Average Daily Attendance dollars as source of funding.
Memphis Youth Fair Chance	Continued program refinements.	Holistic nature of services (e.g., health, recreation activities, etc.); close links with community service organizations.
Milwaukee HY-TECC II	Co-op program in Business; development of some work experience slots with mentorships.	Co-op model of close links between classroom instruction and practical application of skills; state certification of co-ops to ensure high standards.
New York FEGS	Family Learning Institute ceased operation at end of the grant period.	Targeting a population with special needs, and developing services around them.
OH School Study Council	Continued program refinements.	Identifying contributions that can be made by a variety of partners.
Phoenix YouthSkilled	Development and establishment of YouthSkilled, which expands YouthBuild model to pathway in high-tech manufacturing.	Use of YouthBuild model to expand to new pathway; early involvement of employers to plan program components; clearly defined partnership roles.
Rhode Island Commerce Academy	Progress towards developing a Certificate of Industry Readiness for retail trade; establishment of First Impressions (a boutique, second-hand clothing store).	Certification process for work readiness (CWR) and vocational (CIR); strong connection to the employer community; First Impressions (clothing store) provides training opportunities.
Yakima Valley OIC	Extensive professional development to build capacity; began efforts to develop more integrative curriculum.	Importance of attention to capacity building; entrepreneurship training; use of school-based enterprise to provide training.

- *Modification of the original project design to offer participants greater choice*. The more successful programs displayed a high level of adaptability to unanticipated circumstances during and after the demonstration project. For example, when the Rhode Island Commerce Academy realized that it could not secure high quality internships and did not have the in-house capacity to create an effective pathway in telecommunications, it altered its emphasis to create a career pathway in retail trade, supported by establishing a boutique-style second-hand clothing store ("First Impressions"). Similarly, based upon an assessment of its demonstration project's weaknesses and strengths, Phoenix YouthSkilled decided that, beyond the end of the grant period, it would lengthen the classroom-based component from three to six months, infuse a more rigorous standard of achievement and behavior for youth participants, increase the stipend level, and, most significantly, increase the number of career paths offered. This last move was based upon the confidence that the staff gained through successfully adding a second career path from the DOL demonstration project and reflected staff's concern about offering youths greater choice that met their interests.

REPLICABLE PROGRAMMATIC COMPONENTS

A number of the projects appeared to have school-to-work programmatic components that are worth replicating by other programs across the nation; these are identified in Exhibit IX-2, which was referred to above. The components identified in this exhibit were gleaned from the observations of grantee staff during our site visits.

Similar to our discussion in the last section, curricular, certification, or diploma programs tend to be less context-bound and can be more easily transferred. Some of these components were in existence before the demonstration grant and made a particular project especially strong or unique. For example, the Lancaster County Academy has a strong academic and vocational training program that included strict entrance requirements, high standards, individualized instruction, and the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and participate in community service and work-based learning opportunities. This combination of integrated academic and vocational training resulting in a diploma rather than GED appeared to be in high demand by the participating school districts and employers.

Some of the factors that made the projects successful, however, were less amenable to replication, such as strong project leadership, dedicated staff, existing partnerships, and long-established relationship with employers.

FACTORS INFLUENCING PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

It is apparent that implementing and sustaining school-to-work partnerships and projects for the out-of-school youth population created difficulties for the majority of these demonstration projects. The experience of the demonstration grantees provided substantial information about the process of forming a school-to-work partnership, assembling necessary resources, developing appropriate career pathways for the out-of-school youth population, and sustaining these efforts. Lessons learned from these experiences suggest that some crucial design elements, contexts, and critical conditions that were weak or missing could have helped some of the projects to better meet and sustain their goals.

First, for a number of grantees, there was a *lack of fit among the project design, investment of project resources, and project goals*. When we compared project design and actual project expenditures with project goals and accomplishments, it was apparent that there was sometimes a clear mismatch. We found, for example, that although six projects articulated goals around curriculum development, only two projects actually invested grant resources in hiring a curriculum writer or coordinator.

Second, some projects *did not use their limited funds in a strategic manner*. While most of the projects attempted to devote the DOL funds to implementing systemic change, others used their funds as part of general operating revenues, without a specially targeted purpose. In such cases, system-level program improvements were hard to identify and sustainable elements were entirely absent. Thus, programs that hope to make lasting project improvements can do so only if they target resources to start-up or capacity-building activities, such as designing program elements; negotiating working relationships among schools, employers, and youth-serving agencies; developing new curricula; defining career pathways; investing in professional development; and so on.

Third, project staff *needed increased knowledge around the creation of school-based curricula and the development and integration of high-quality work-based learning opportunities*. Developing new curricula around career themes and integrating academic and vocational learning does not come easy. Thus, even programs that enthusiastically embraced the ideas behind school-to-work learning methods struggled in implement meaningful change. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter VI, developing enriched work-based learning opportunities has been one of the most challenging aspects of implementing the school-to-work projects as part of this demonstration.

There was a large gap in knowledge and experiences that staff needed to work with employers to create an integrated work-based curriculum. Yet very few projects invested demonstration funds in providing their staff with training in school-to-work planning and integration, and only two projects used the technical assistance line of credit to supplement grant funds in the area of staff development.

Fourth, some of the projects *lacked a clear vision of what it was that needed to be accomplished to implement enhancements or expansions to school-to-work systems*. Although some programs used their demonstration grant to implement a new school-to-work element, others lacked a good understanding of school-to-work as a system for learning and, instead, fell back on separate program components that were not well integrated. Thus, some thought of work experience in very traditional ways or did not integrate the teaching of academic, vocational, and work readiness skills. Because there was usually not a well-established local system of school-to-work programs in place from which to gain ideas for the development of career pathways and curricula for out-of-school youth, the grantees often designed their projects to provide specific program services for youth rather than to affect systemic changes.

Fifth, some grantees *specified goals for the demonstration period that were very vague*. Grantees whose goals lacked specificity found it difficult to develop effective implementation strategies with clear action steps. As a consequence, their efforts under the grant sometimes seemed aimless without clear direction and sense of purpose.

Last, some grantees were *too ambitious with regard to what they hoped to accomplish*, given available resources and the duration of the grant. Programs that had multiple, far-reaching goals were hard-pressed to mobilize and implement all of them equally, and tended to concentrate their efforts on enhancing elements that had more advanced starting points. For example, projects grounded in the model of adult/alternative high schools typically devoted their energies on enhancing their school-based component. They generally had considerably more difficulty developing a weaker or non-existent work-based learning component, most often resulting in their not achieving their original goal.

On the other hand, if the goals were more limited, focused, and clearly defined, corresponding activities seemed to be intimately connected to the goals, and to each other. This connection most often resulted in a coordinated and purposeful approach to

goal attainment and movement closer to the desired outcome sought by the Department of Labor.

CONCLUSION

The ability to sustain many of the demonstration program enhancements or expansion efforts requires a combination of vision, leadership, staff capacity building, successful collaboration with businesses and other partners, resources, and a clear plan for what needs to be accomplished. About half of the grantees participating in this demonstration did indeed demonstrate substantial system improvements during the grant period that show every indication of being sustained and built upon in the future. Typically, these were grantees that had a clear vision of school-to-work at the outset, already had well developed school-to-work systems in place, and were using their grant funds strategically to focus on some specific system improvement.

Others, despite their grand articulation of the expansion or enhancement of existing school-to-work efforts, were not able to achieve or sustain their project goals and accomplishments. These grantees needed more time, more resources, and more assistance from a larger system that could help them focus their goals, train their staff, involve employers, and exchange ideas on how to develop a package of services that went beyond traditional academic training, vocational training, and work experience as disconnected program elements. In the absence of this, accomplishing and sustaining the ambitious goals that they laid forth became a task of trying to do too much with too little financial and training resources in too short a period of time.

X. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

School-to-work represents a potentially important improvement in the nation's efforts to fully prepare its young people for successful and productive careers. By teaching academic skills in a career context using active learning methods, youth may become more meaningfully engaged in the process of learning, develop a broader array of SCANS skills and competencies, and see how the skills they are acquiring can be applied. Moreover, including work-based activities makes it possible for them to learn skills in authentic, real-world settings, while familiarizing them with the demands and rigors of the work world. Based on this promise, partnerships around the nation have been responding to the challenges and opportunities afforded by the School-to-Work Opportunities Act by revamping their curricula and pedagogy.

Typically, secondary schools have been the focal point for these efforts. As a consequence, too often high school dropouts and recent graduates with weak skills, who are disconnected from the traditional academic environment, are left out of these emerging systems. This omission means that our most vulnerable young adults, who might most benefit from the learning principles embedded in school-to-work, lack access to the opportunities the Act has created.

The OSY STW Demonstration funded by the Department of Labor represents an effort to overcome this limitation and identify effective practices in reaching this population. The grantees began the demonstration from very different starting points—operating in different contexts with different organizational features. They also tried to accomplish very different things during the grant period, with some trying to enhance a school-based curriculum, others adding a work-based learning component or mentorships, others providing for staff development, and so on. Not surprisingly, therefore, their efforts during the grant period unfolded very differently. Nonetheless, their experiences reveal important lessons about the difficulties of implementing systemic reform for programs serving out-of-school youth and suggest promising approaches and practices.

THE IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE

The grantees funded under the OSY Demonstration were a mixed bag from the outset. Some were adult or alternative high schools, with a clear focus on helping young people achieve their high school diploma or GED in a classroom setting. Other

grantees were based on the YouthBuild model, which alternates periods of time in classroom academic, vocational, and work readiness skills training, with time in work-based learning at a construction site, where youth learn an array of skills while building or refurbishing housing for low-income individuals. A third group of grantees had their genesis as workforce development programs, often with a strong connection to JTPA and a focus on employability development.

Although this categorization clearly demarcates important differences, the groups were themselves internally heterogeneous in a way that makes generalizations about them difficult. Nonetheless, at the risk of glossing over important nuances of individual programs, the very different starting points defined by the groups generally positioned the programs very differently with respect to the threshold criteria and gave rise to unique implementation challenges. Thus, the nature of the lead agency that secured the demonstration grant made an important difference in defining pre-existing strengths and weaknesses and consequent action strategies for change. For example, the alternative and adult high schools typically had broad experience in providing academic instruction to young people in a classroom setting on an ongoing basis. Most were large institutions serving large numbers of participants, and they typically adhered to a regular school semester as the schedule for learning. However, in a concession to the greater flexibility that out-of-school youth require, enrollees could typically vary their course load or opt for morning or afternoon sessions to meet their other obligations.

In keeping with their status as alternative high schools, grantees in this group had prior experience in using classroom teaching methods that departed from the traditional high school in important ways (e.g., more flexible scheduling, more individualized attention, etc.), but not always in conformance with school-to-work. For example, some showed prior experience with using project-based learning and integrated curricula, but others did not. Similarly, although most do make vocational course offerings available, some have little experience with organizing academic classroom learning around career pathways. With one exception, they also had little prior experience with using work-based learning. In fact, all grantees in this category identified the development or expansion of work-based opportunities as among their goals for the grant period. As well, they mentioned in their grant applications wanting to build stronger partnerships, expand the use of career pathways, and revamp their class curriculum to make better use of contextual learning.

In contrast to them, the two grantees based on the YouthBuild model had always used work-based learning as a fundamental part of their teaching strategy. Moreover, the close connection with a single career cluster makes the integration of all learning around a career pathway very feasible for them. However, precisely because of this close connection, students have limited options with respect to choosing a career pathway to guide their learning and even have limited exposure to different career options, facts that both grantees in this category were attempting to address with their grant funding.

The final group of grantees displayed a clear emphasis on developing youths' work readiness skills, and thus made career counseling, life skills training, pre-employment work maturity, and the like, a prominent feature of their service offerings. They also displayed a strong case management culture and tended to have extensive linkages in place with community service organizations to handle youths' needs for supportive services. Given their relative lack of special expertise in teaching academic skills, they typically used off-the-shelf instructional packages to prepare youth for passing the GED test. Three of the four grantees in this group made little use of work-based learning. The fourth, by contrast, arranged for all youth to undertake paid employment while enrolled, but it was typically not well integrated with classroom activities and was viewed more as a vehicle for giving youth an introduction to the work world rather than as a means for imparting a range of skills. Grantees in this group expressed a range of goals as part of their grant plans, including expanding work-based learning opportunities and revamping classroom curricula to make more systematic use of integrated skills instruction.

Partnerships and Partnership Formation

Grantees in all three of these categories typically had strong community-wide partnerships in place on which they were trying to build. These partners included secondary schools and school districts, postsecondary institutions, local governments, community service agencies, and employers or employer groups. Members of the partnerships contributed substantial in-kind or financial resources that enabled grantees to greatly expand the range of services they could offer, or they provided specific services to support the grantees' efforts.

Usually, each partner had very distinct roles. For example:

- Schools and school districts quite commonly served as a very effective source of referrals for the out-of-school youth program. Indeed, where

schools did not provide this function, some grantees had difficulty meeting their recruitment targets. Where the grantee was an alternative or adult high school, financial contributions based on average daily attendance dollars were also important.

- Community service agencies provided an array of supportive services.
- Post-secondary institutions offered college tours and, in a few cases, provided advanced standing or college credit to demonstration participants through articulation agreements.
- Employers offered opportunities for work-based learning, such as through job shadows, workplace tours, or internships.

Although these contributions were always important, partners did not always share a common understanding of school-to-work principles, nor did they always grasp the role they were expected to play as part of a broader system. Where these elements were present, a much stronger partnership developed in support of school-to-work system development. For example, work-based learning opportunities were more likely to be learning rich and integrated with classroom activities when employers fully understood the grantees' learning objectives and participated from the outset in the design of the school-to-work service strategy.

Noticeably absent as strong partners were existing STW systems, which most grantees found paid little attention to meeting the needs of out-of-school youth and lacked a good sense of how to go about doing so. Thus, grantees typically served as a resource and lent their expertise to existing STW systems, rather than the other way around. Their general inability to merge their efforts into local STW partnerships is troubling, because it suggests that emerging local systems are paying little attention to the problems of serving out-of-school youth.

Recruitment and Counseling

Drawing on referrals from schools or from other sources, most grantees could count on a steady stream of applicants; this was especially true for alternative or adult high schools, which had stronger referral linkages with existing school systems. Given a pool of applicants from which to draw, many grantees established a screening mechanism to ensure that those enrolled met at least minimal levels of basic skills and expressed a modicum of motivation and commitment. But, despite whatever screening did occur, participants could surely be considered to be hard-to-serve, with most showing evidence of multiple barriers to success, including problems with substance abuse, low self-esteem, very poor academic skills, and a lack of understanding of the

demands of the work world, all of which gave rise to myriad and complex service needs.

If there was one common strength across OSY demonstration grantees, it was their appreciation and understanding of these needs. Thus, all grantees had strong case management systems in place and developed supportive and nurturing relationships between adults and the young people being served. Indeed, participants identified these caring relationships as among the features of the programs that they valued the most. All programs also made provisions to meet youths' needs for an array of supportive services, including counseling, transportation assistance, health screenings, and the like. In these respects, the programs we studied demonstrated conformance to sound youth development principles.

School-Based Learning

With respect to school-based learning, all programs but one provided basic skills instruction and were geared towards preparing youth for the high school diploma or GED, and all offered training in workplace basics; eight offered training in vocational skills, either by referral or directly, in some cases as an optional activity.

Programs found that there was a tension between developing innovative, integrated instructional strategies while still gearing students for meeting the requirements of the GED or, to a lesser extent, the high school diploma. For example, to prepare youth for passing the GED in as short a time as possible, preparation courses were often focused on developing competency in the discrete reading, math, and science skills covered by the test. The emphasis on this "quick credential" does not encourage the modification of existing instructional strategies and creates a very real challenge to providing opportunities for students to think critically, problem-solve, and apply learning in context. At least, program administrators deemed it too risky to depart very far from traditional GED instructional approaches, in the absence of knowing about sound, well-tested alternatives. As a consequence, many programs found themselves falling back on off-the-shelf instructional packages, including computer-aided instruction. Similarly, for attaining the high school diploma, each out-of-school youth needed a unique set of course credits required for graduation; i.e., the number and types of courses that each student needed typically varied. This diversity created a very real challenge in designing innovative course materials that integrated learning across multiple subject areas. Finally, for both GED and high school diploma programs, the open-entry/open-exit nature of instruction, which many of them adopted,

meant that different youth were participating in training for potentially greatly varying lengths of time, which further made it difficult to plan coherent and cohesive programs of study.

As a consequence of these constraints, we found that some programs struggled with developing new ways of teaching academics that were in closer conformance to school-to-work principles. In these cases, the use of integrated curricula and alternative teaching strategies (such as project-based learning, team teaching, etc.) were typically limited.

Perhaps because of the structured way that teaching academics was approached, the teaching of workplace basics was usually viewed as a discrete, modular classroom activity. Thus, most programs taught life skills, work maturity skills, job search techniques, etc., in separate class periods with these personal development themes as a central focus. Although alternative teaching strategies were more likely to be used for this content area (e.g., role playing, group discussion), the integration with academic skills development was typically very limited.

These observations notwithstanding, about one-third of the demonstration grantees were quite innovative in their approach to school-based learning and demonstrated consistent and high conformance to DOL's threshold criteria for teaching academics and workplace basics. Thus, these grantees routinely relied on team-teaching, deliberately designed curricula to organize the teaching of academic skills and workplace basics around a career pathway, and made extensive use of project-based learning for skills development. For example, one grantee developed multi-disciplinary thematic courses that could earn students academic credit in multiple subjects simultaneously.

High-quality design principles were more consistently in evidence in the teaching of vocational skills, which was provided either directly or by referral for some or all students by eight of the eleven demonstration grantees. There seem to be natural opportunities that occur in vocational training courses to integrate academic skills (at least the skill set that applies to that vocation) and workplace basics, as well as opportunities for hands-on, active learning. These opportunities were generally used to full advantage.

The focus of the vocational training varied greatly across grantees, however. In some cases, it was geared towards preparing youth for entry into specific occupations

(i.e., resembled traditional vocational education). In other cases, the goals were broader, youth were more likely to be exposed to all aspects of an industry, and the vocational learning became a vehicle for teaching an array of skills. The latter was more likely to be the focus when the vocational training was provided in-house, rather than by referral, because in these instances grantees had direct control over instructional strategies and thus could modify them to advance broader program goals.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning activities were also to be provided by demonstration programs and, in order to follow high-quality design principles identified by DOL, should provide for a variety of work experiences integrated with school-based activities, be organized around a career theme, offer worksite mentors, and give youth the opportunity to earn academic credit and/or skill certificates. As with school-based learning, about one-third of the grantees consistently provided a range of high-quality work-based learning opportunities to all or most program participants being served. In these cases, the work experiences were closely tied with classroom activities and were used as a natural context for teaching an array of academic, vocational, and SCANS skills, as well as workplace basics.

Another third of the grantees utilized paid work experience as part of their service offerings, but these were not focused on a clearly defined training plan that went beyond fairly standard employability skills. Many work experience slots were thus designed to provide an initial exposure to the world of work rather than exposure to a particular career path in which the student was interested or as a training opportunity for specific skill development.

A final third of the grantees restricted their work-based service offerings primarily to job shadowing or guest speakers from local businesses, and thus could not offer the range of work-based learning opportunities that would have been desirable.

Part of the problem that grantees experienced in developing high-quality work-based learning was the challenge they encountered in recruiting employers who were willing to invest the time and resources to develop quality training opportunities for young people. Grantees utilized two primary strategies to recruit employers, neither of which worked well for grantees without strong employer partnerships to begin with. One strategy involved linking with intermediary organizations whose principal responsibility was to establish and maintain effective employer relationships; neither of

the two grantees that used this approach was entirely satisfied with the results. The other strategy took the form of hiring an individual to broker work-based experiences or assigning this responsibility to one or more existing staff. This approach demonstrated potential as an effective strategy, but it was very much dependent on the skills and contacts the staff persons brought with them.

In explaining their reluctance to participate, employers cited their lack of staff resources to devote to training, their need to focus on "the bottom line," and their reluctance to take responsibility for what they perceived to be troubled youth. In overcoming these objections, programs found, first, that a high degree of customization was necessary. Thus, different employers needed to be approached in different ways, and their concerns needed to be addressed individually. Second, and related to this, partnerships with employers needed to be viewed as reciprocal; that is, these relationships failed when they were formed on the basis of how employer partners could contribute to the demonstration program without also attending to how employers could benefit. By contrast, successful programs found it very important to appeal to employers in a way that would resonate with them. Third, it also proved important to involve employers in the initiative at the outset (for example, in helping design the program services), rather than asking them to provide work-based learning slots when the program design was already established. Finally, grantees were much more successful if they could build on strong pre-existing employer relationships; those grantees starting from scratch at the beginning of the grant period almost invariably ended up being disappointed if they planned on major employer involvement by the end of the period.

Another challenge in developing high quality work-based learning included the characteristics of the youth that made employers reluctant to work with them, including problems with substance abuse, limited basic skills, undeveloped workplace skills, and what employers perceived to be the students' lack of motivation and commitment. Also, many youth served by the programs were already working in jobs that often paid more (even if career and training options were limited) than the temporary internships or work experiences that programs could arrange.

Because of this array of challenges, only one grantee that did not have a strong work-based learning component to begin with was able to make substantial strides in this direction during the grant period, despite the fact that most grantees tried to do so. Overall, then, sites appeared to underestimate the time and level of effort required to

develop and maintain high quality work-based learning experiences. Clearly, employer involvement will demand a high level of effort to develop and nurture relationships, often requiring staff who have a specific set of skills and knowledge and who are dedicated wholly to this function.

Connecting Activities

A third key component of well-developed school-to-work systems include connecting activities, including efforts at building staff capacity and linking students to employment and postsecondary training options in the post-program period. With respect to capacity building, about half of the grantees resorted to single-day orientation sessions for staff at the beginning of a program cycle and/or took advantage of the occasional relevant training conference that was offered in the community. Most programs also made provisions for periodic staff meetings, but often these were focused on specific problems or issues or served as a forum to discuss specific concerns about individual students.

The remaining half were more deliberate in encouraging or requiring classroom instructors to undertake periodic intensive professional development. For example, one alternative high school had all teachers meet at the beginning of the school year for a "student-free" week devoted to professional development; it also required all staff to attend a minimum of four days of professional development activities per year, and supports teachers in their continuing education (e.g., for those pursuing ESL or special education certification).

Although staff at all of the demonstration grantees clearly were dedicated and hard working, and generally had long experience in working with out-of-school youth, concerted efforts at capacity building seemed to pay off in terms of a program's demonstrating greater conformance to DOL's threshold criteria. Thus, the fact that more grantees did not concentrate much attention on intensive and deliberate capacity building was unfortunate. Especially noteworthy was the fact that only a few grantees accessed the Technical Assistance set-aside funds available to the programs through the School-to-Work TA Providers' Network. The reluctance of others to do so seemed to stem from several factors. To begin with, most programs began the grant period with some sense of what they wanted to accomplish and, at least in their own minds, an appropriate strategy for how to achieve their objectives; by the time they realized that their efforts were not yielding the results that they expected, the grant period was drawing to a close. Other factors that explain the reluctance to use TA funds include

the grantees' lack of awareness of what assistance was available and how it could help them and an inability to perceive their own weaknesses.

Developing strategies to link classroom and work-based activities is another important connecting activity. Four grantees did indeed foster close coordination between these two learning components. In doing so, they arranged to have classroom instructors meet with worksite supervisors on a regular basis to discuss ways of integrating learning and work on the development of joint lesson plans. In other programs, by contrast, although classroom instructors might have met periodically with work supervisors, it was usually to discuss the progress of individual students or address problems that were occurring at the work sites.

Finally with respect to connecting activities, all grantees developed some strategies to link students with postsecondary training options. Usually these operated on an individual referral basis. Thus, students who expressed an interest might have been counseled about how to apply to college, request student aid, etc. Guest speakers and tours of college campuses were also common. More formal linkages with postsecondary institutions were infrequent, as only three grantees had formal articulation agreements with community colleges. The fact that more programs did not do so might be attributed to the preference that most youth expressed for immediate employment.

Developing a System of Continuous Improvement

Tracking youths' progress and developing a system of continuous improvement represents a final area in which DOL had developed threshold criteria. Clearly, based on the programs' designs, as described above, these grantees were focusing on imparting academic skills, work readiness and life skills, and, in some cases, vocational skills. By holding youths to high standards of conduct and achievement, programs were also endeavoring to favorably impact the participants' motivations and behaviors and boost their self-esteem. Grantees were able to track these attainments to some degree, especially those that were more quantifiable, through periodic performance appraisals. Similarly, youths' post-program outcomes and program retention rates were also monitored to some extent. On the latter score, it appears that in many programs from one-third to one-half of those enrolled had exited before completing their program objectives (e.g., attaining a high school diploma or GED), attesting to the difficulties inherent in serving this population. Partly because these data collection and tracking systems were rudimentary, systems of continuous improvement were quite informal,

with program administrators learning from instructors, case managers, and partners what program improvements might be desirable.

Challenges in Adapting the STW Model to Out-of-School Youth

Sound STW principles are sound in any context. Thus, we are struck by how comprehensive DOL's threshold criteria are for the OSY Demonstration and how appropriate they would be for STW system development for in-school as well as out-of-school youth. At the same time, serving out-of-school youth in a school-to-work context gives rise to unique issues and challenges that are daunting in their complexity. These are summarized in Exhibit X-1, along with strategies that the demonstration grantees used to overcome them.

To begin with, engaging out-of-school youth in a training program of any sort can itself be very difficult. These youth, unlike their in-school counterparts, are typically disconnected from institutions for learning and disaffected with structured learning environments. This lack of connection can make it difficult for training programs to identify and enroll prospective participants. Strategies adopted by the OSY grantees included using strong referrals from partners, especially school systems and neighborhood organizations, along with the innovative service design features that held out the promise to youth that this program represented something different.

Enrollment and retention are challenges too because out-of-school youth often need to earn an immediate income, due to family responsibilities or for other causes. For this reason, it is difficult for many of them to undergo training if it means forgoing the opportunity to accept a paid job. Similarly, they have other responsibilities that make regular attendance in a training program difficult, and have substantial barriers to successful participation—including problems with substance abuse, involvement with the criminal justice system, low self-esteem, uncertain motivation, family problems, etc.—all of which have been emphasized throughout this report.

School-to-work in and of itself offers the prospect of addressing some of these obstacles. To the extent that programs adopted active learning methods and used contextual instruction in a way that made learning seem relevant, out-of-school youth became engaged in a way that they had not experienced before. Beyond this, the demonstration programs that we studied adopted additional strategies, including using flexible scheduling to accommodate youths' other obligations and providing strong case management and supportive services to address an array of their other needs. It also

proved important for programs to be clear about their expectations for young people at the outset, so that youth would have an accurate idea of what it was that they were committing to. Other programs found it important to provide stipends for classroom learning and move youth into paid work-based learning as quickly as possible, to provide them with a steady source of income.

Exhibit X-1
Summary of Challenges and Strategies in Serving Out-of-School Youth

Challenges in Serving Out-of-school Youth	Potential Strategies
• Difficulty in recruiting out-of-school youth, because they are: – Disconnected from institutions for learning – Wary of traditional training programs	• Rely on strong referrals from partners, especially school systems. • Use neighborhood organizations for recruitment, which can build off their existing connections with youth. • Offer innovative program design features.
• Difficulty in retaining out-of-school youth once enrolled, due to their: – Disengagement/lack of motivation – Low self-esteem – Other responsibilities – Substantial barriers to continued program participation (e.g., due to substance abuse, family problems, etc.) – Need for steady income to support self and family	• Use STW principles, to increase motivation for learning • Clearly lay out expectations for youth at the outset. • Offer a variety of career pathways from which to choose. • Offer flexible scheduling, so youth can balance program participation with their other responsibilities. • Provide strong case management and individual attention from caring adults • Provide for a broad array of supportive services, either directly or by referral • Involve youth in project design or governance, to impart a sense of ownership • Provide paid work experience and stipends for classroom learning, to provide youth with needed income.
• Out-of-school youth typically begin with an array of skill deficits, including: – Weak basic skills – Lack of vocational skills – Poor work readiness skills – Lack of credential • Shortened timeframe for services compared to in-school youth (programs for out-of-school youth last no more than one year, and often much less)	• Integrate the teaching of an array of skills. • Provide multi-disciplinary courses that award credit for multiple subject areas simultaneously. • Award academic credit for work-based learning.

Finally, although it was not demonstrated commonly among the programs we studied, involving participants in planning and governance gave them a sense of ownership that increased their motivation for learning and their engagement with the program's objectives.

Adapting school-to-work for out-of-school youth also presents problems and issues in program design. The structure of most in-school school-to-work efforts provides for many elements to be addressed throughout a young person's school participation. In well-developed school-to-work initiatives, schools have developed curricula to incorporate career exploration, establish career pathways, link school and work, etc., as a sequence of activities and services that spans the K – 12 years. At the minimum, school-to-work activities are emphasized during the last several years of secondary school.

By contrast, programs for out-of-school youth rarely plan on more than a single year of participation, and are often even much shorter than this. This fact gives rise to a struggle to telescope within a shorter length of participation the overall mix and sequence of services that would be desirable from a school-to-work standpoint. Aggravating the problem, most program participants will lack the basic skills and work readiness skills required for competence in the labor market and thus will need extensive remediation before being made ready for the demands of the high-performance work world.

Again, STW principles intrinsically offered a way of addressing these challenges. By integrating the teaching of an array of skills, programs ensured that skill building could proceed on multiple fronts at once, and through both school-based and work-based components. Similarly, in an effort to help youth achieve educational credentials quickly, multi-disciplinary courses were developed that offered credit for multiple subject areas simultaneously.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on what we saw while we were on site, we come away convinced that all programs were making important progress in reaching an extremely hard-to-serve population of young people, who are typically disenchanted from traditional educational institutions, have very poor academic skills, and a host of barriers to success, including problems with drug use, criminal records, poor self-esteem, and lack of a good understanding of what it takes to succeed. All programs we studied displayed a firm grasp of these realities that was reflected in their program designs. Thus, all

demonstrated a foundation in sound youth development principles, including an attention to skill building, fostering self-confidence, promoting one-on-one relationships with caring adults, and the like.

Their conformance to school-to-work principles, on the other hand, was mixed. About half showed compliance with all or most of DOL's threshold criteria, and thus organized learning around career pathways, integrated academic and vocational skills instruction, linked work-based and school-based learning, promoted connecting activities, provided exposure to all aspects of an industry, and so on. By contrast, other grantees, however strong they were by some standards, failed to come to grips with school-to-work as an integrated system for learning. Thus, while many of the individual program components may have been in place (e.g., teaching academic skills, teaching workplace basics, providing opportunities for work experience, etc.), these were not well integrated into a cohesive whole.

It was also clear that the grantees' ability to implement meaningful system reform during the grant period varied. The ability to affect systemic change requires clear vision, strong leadership, and adequate resources. It also requires a clear sense of what needs to be accomplished, as well as a deliberate and well thought-out action plan. About half of the grantees participating in this demonstration did indeed demonstrate substantial systemic change during the grant period. In these cases, some key element of the grantees' service strategy was noticeably changed in a way that aligned its project design in closer conformance with DOL's threshold criteria. Moreover, these changes represented true systemic reform and showed every indication of being *sustained and built upon* once the OSY grant funding ended. Examples of the types of changes that were implemented included adding an additional career pathway for students to choose or enhancing classroom curricula to further integrate the teaching of an array of skills in context. In contrast to these, the remaining half of the grantees were not able to achieve their project goals in ways that led to sustainable program accomplishments. In these cases, the grantee's service design at the end of the grant period looked little different than it did at the outset.

Typically, grantees that were able to achieve sustainable goals already had well-developed school-to-work systems in place. To this degree, it could be said that grantees that made the most progress were those that were farthest along to begin with. Typically, these grantees had a clear vision at the outset of what school-to-work should entail. They were thus able to think strategically about what they wanted to achieve

during the grant period, and they used their grant funds accordingly, to focus on some specific system feature that they wanted to implement or enhance. At the same time, they were flexible and adaptable, and thus could reformulate objectives and strategies in response to external constraints that impeded their implementation efforts.

In contrast, grantees that were less successful lacked a clear vision of school-to-work and what it was that needed to be accomplished during the grant period to enhance their STW system. As a consequence, they tended to formulate vague and broadly defined goals, were too ambitious in what they hoped to accomplish, and specified action steps that lacked focus.

OBSERVATIONS ON EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

It is apparent that implementing and sustaining school-to-work partnerships and learning strategies for the out-of-school youth population created difficulties for many of the demonstration projects, while others were quite successful in building important new systems for learning. Nonetheless, the experience of all of them provided substantial information about the process of forming school-to-work partnerships, assembling necessary resources, developing appropriate career pathways for the out-of-school youth population, and sustaining these efforts. Lessons learned from these experiences suggest that some crucial design elements, contexts, and critical conditions need to be in place for programs to affect lasting change. Based on these experiences, we can draw attention to a number of practices or strategies that may help guide subsequent efforts. Some of these echo themes central to sound STW system development; to this degree, our findings with respect to innovative practices in the OSY demonstration grantees reinforce principles that were developed more generally. Other recommendations reflect adaptations that programs need to make for meeting the needs of out-of-school youth or how they can most effectively implement change.

1. *Grantees attempting to implement systemic reform should focus narrowly on a small number of clearly defined goals, especially if they are small organizations with limited resources. Additionally, action strategies and financial and personnel resources must be adequately aligned with the organization's goals and objectives for change.* Implementing change takes time and concerted, focused effort. Organizations hoping to transform their service delivery structure to achieve greater conformance with school-to-work principles need to be strategic. They are better off focusing at any one time on a smaller number of clearly specified objectives, rather than attempting to implement a wholesale transformation in a short period of time. Similarly, goals should be interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Thus, for example, programs attempting to establish a new career pathway might specify

the adoption of this pathway as a goal, as well as goals pertaining to school-based and work-based learning that would support it. Grantees should also be sure that action steps are clearly laid out and are closely tied to their goals and objectives. By implication, organizations should resist the temptation to espouse broad and sweeping goal statements, with vague action plans, however sensible the end objective or laudable the intent.

2. *To be effective, all members of the partnership serving out-of-school youth must be clear about their individual responsibilities and must share a common understanding of school-to-work principles. Moreover, adequate resources must be devoted to coordinating their efforts.* Effective STW efforts for out-of-school youth will require contributions from a number of different actors and agencies, including secondary schools, employers, and community service agencies. However, to ensure that they work in concert and in support of the system goals, all partners must have a clear understanding of what they will be expected to contribute, and, just as importantly, must fully understand and embrace how their role contributes to school-to-work system development. Moreover, these partners can work in concert only if the lead organization devotes adequate resources to coordinating and overseeing the partners' efforts.

3. *Strong relationships with local school systems and neighborhood organizations will be especially important in recruiting out-of-school youth for program participation.* Grantees participating in the demonstration project that had strong linkages with the local school district(s) or neighborhood organizations were ensured of a ready source of referrals of out-of-school youth appropriate for program services. By contrast, grantees without such linkages often had difficulty achieving their recruitment objectives.

4. *Organizations serving out-of-school youth must be cognizant of how the needs of this population differ from those of in-school youth and they must be prepared to address those needs.* Out-of-school youth will be difficult to engage in a structured learning environment, will often need a steady income flow, and will have multiple barriers to successful program participation, including other responsibilities that make their participation difficult and personal or family problems. To address these issues, grantees should embrace innovative instructional methods that make clear the relevance of learning, offer flexible scheduling, offer strong case management, and provide opportunities for paid work experience. Strong linkages with community service organizations will also be important to ensure that youths' needs for supportive services can be met.

5. *Upfront assessment should be reciprocal, giving the grantee organization the chance to learn about the youths' needs and capabilities, but, just as important, providing the youth with a realistic picture of what will be expected of him or her and what opportunities are available.* Grantees must identify the youths' diverse service needs early on in program participation, so that an appropriate training plan and service strategy can be developed. But, in focusing on what the grantee needs to learn about the youth, grantees sometimes ignore the fact that the youths in turn

need to know about the grantee organization, including what services can be provided and what training choices are available. Grantees that provide this information will help ensure that enrollees have a clear and accurate sense of what is being expected of them and what they in turn can expect. Such an information exchange will also ensure that youth have an appropriate interest in whatever vocational training is provided or what career pathway the grantee will be using to structure learning, potentially helping the grantee minimize problems with high rates of participants' dropping out of the program prior to completion.

6. *Grantees serving out-of-school youth, especially smaller organizations that lack economies of scale, may find it advantageous to form networks with similar organizations, to broaden training choices.* Some grantees serving out-of-school youth as part of this demonstration project were quite small. Their size made it difficult for them to offer an array of career pathways from which enrollees could choose and similarly limited the options with respect to vocational training. Although none of the grantees that we studied adopted this strategy, one potential solution to broadening training choices for participants would be for similarly situated organizations to form loose networks that could foster cross-referrals.

7. *Grantees should involve students as important stakeholders and elicit their input regarding program design and services.* Out-of-school youth want a voice regarding what services will be provided to them, and how those services will be structured. Moreover, giving them input into important decision-making can be empowering, helping them overcome feelings of helplessness and lack of control over their lives, and giving them a sense of ownership of the program in which they are participating. Involvement can be at several levels, including program improvement and design, peer "discipline," student governance, and input into instructional approaches or learning goals. Thus, grantees should actively elicit the input of program participants with respect to major program features.

8. *Grantees should not allow the requirements of the GED (or high school diploma) to stifle the use of innovative classroom-based instructional methods that integrate the learning of academic and workplace skills. Information about promising alternative approaches should be widely disseminated.* Out-of-school youth participants will typically want to focus on achieving their training objectives, including attaining the GED or high school diploma, as quickly as possible. Given the rigidity of the GED (and, often, diploma requirements), grantees can thus be tempted to "teach to the test" to ensure that youth quickly get the academic credential they need. But the success of several of the demonstration grantees makes clear that GED or diploma requirements need not come at the expense of promoting innovative instructional strategies that are consistent with school-to-work principles. Peer exchanges or other forums should be used to disseminate information about promising approaches, to help overcome grantees' understandable reluctance to depart from more traditional approaches.

9. *To the extent practical, vocational classroom instruction should go beyond preparing youth for narrow entry-level occupations but should instead promote*

learning in "all aspects of an industry." Realistically, most out-of-school youth are interested in attaining full-time employment as quickly as possible. For this reason, some demonstration grantees focused on providing youth with concrete vocational skills that would get them a job upon program completion. However, attention also needs to be paid to providing youth with exposure to all aspects of an industry and developing transferable skills. One way to do so is to use occupational skills as the context for learning an array of SCANS and other skills, rather than focus on vocational skills instruction per se. In this way, the opportunities for employment or further training in a range of occupations spanning a skill hierarchy can be enhanced, rather than constrained.

10. *Apart from its effectiveness as a training strategy, paid internships will meet the need that many out-of-school youth will have for an immediate income and thus should be included as a integral program component. Stipends for classroom training also might be helpful in promoting retention.* Unlike their in-school counterparts, out-of-school youth, especially those who are older, will have family or other responsibilities that make their need for an immediate income urgent. Thus, programs have an additional reason for providing youth with paid internships as part of their program participation. Providing them with stipends for classroom training also should be considered for the same reason.

11. *At the same time, in their haste to provide paid employment opportunities, programs must be sure that out-of-school youth have the fundamental skills they need to perform satisfactorily at the worksite and that employers have expectations that are in keeping with their role as providers of training. Problems as they arise need to be addressed quickly.* Grantees who neglect to adequately prepare youth for their worksite experiences or convey appropriate expectations for both work supervisors and trainees risk having employers be frustrated or disappointed with the youths' performance, potentially undermining the relationship for the future. Thus, while there may be a need to move youth to worksite opportunities as quickly as possible, meeting this objective should not come at the expense of ensuring that employers' expectations of the students' job performance can be met. Staff must also be poised to "trouble-shoot," as a way of identifying problems as they arise and addressing them quickly.

12. *Explicit training goals should be developed for work experience or internships that are provided as part of work-based learning, and they should go beyond merely providing youth with work readiness skills.* Out-of-school youth are generally interested in obtaining employment as quickly as possible, while employers are sometimes reluctant to invest the effort to develop clear training objectives for their work-experience slots. Given these twin pressures, OSY demonstration grantees sometimes settled for internships that resembled traditional work experience rather than work-based learning. But offering employment alone is not enough. Organizations should understand that work experiences provided as part of program participation are likely to be more rewarding, more motivating, and much better for the youths' skill development if explicit training plans are developed that go beyond

merely providing youth with exposure to the work world or developing work readiness skills. Thus, work experience should be viewed as an integral part of the overall training plan.

13. *To ensure that employers' concerns are addressed promptly and that training plans associated with work-based learning are linked to classroom activities, programs should ensure that a staff member serves as a workplace liaison. Such an individual will need to customize the program's interactions with each participating employer to some degree*. Identifying problems that arise on the worksites quickly will often be key to keeping both the youth properly motivated and the employer satisfied that the program recognizes and is responsive to his or her needs. Thus, frequent contact between the grantee and employers who are providing work-based learning opportunities for students is essential. Having a staff member serve as a workplace liaison is one way of ensuring that this contact occurs. Because different employers will have unique concerns, needs, and interests in participating, a workplace liaison can "customize" the way in which the employer is approached. The liaison can also work to ensure that work-based learning and classroom-based learning are integrated to the fullest extent practical.

14. *Grantees should involve employers early on, in the program design stage, rather than wait until the design is established and then merely recruit employers for work-based learning slots*. Employers are more likely to feel ownership and responsibility for the success of the program if they are actively involved in its design at the outset. Fostering their early involvement will also ensure that they can have a hand in shaping the training plan, so that students who complete the program will have skills that employers value. By contrast, employers who are approached late in the game to provide work-based training slots will generally be less responsive and less likely to perceive their role within the context of the larger school-to-work system. Plainly put, learning-rich worksite training opportunities that are integrated with classroom learning are simply unlikely to develop, however persistent the grantee's coaxing, unless the employers are involved in planning out the outset, have the opportunity to ensure that their interests and needs are understood and addressed, and come to feel ownership of the program's objectives.

15. *Efforts to promote the capacity of staff on an ongoing basis should not be ignored*. Developing curricula that integrate the teaching of an array of workplace skills is not easy. Field researchers were uniformly impressed by the dedication and long experience of instructors, and their knowledge of the needs of out-of-school youth. However, staff cannot be expected to intuit innovative learning strategies or engage in curriculum development consistent with school-to-work on their own. For this reason, deliberate and ongoing efforts at capacity building are essential. It is important that these efforts go beyond periodic staff meetings to discuss students' performance or problems as they arise. For the same reason, provisions should be made to provide training for work supervisors and mentors.

16. *Organizations attempting to implement systemic reform should develop a formal process for periodically reviewing project accomplishments, and modifying goals or*

action steps accordingly. For a number of the OSY demonstration grantees, goals established at the outset were not realized for a variety of reasons, including external constraints, the failure of expected contributions from partners to materialize, or flaws in the initial implementation strategies. Grantees that were successful in overcoming these challenges typically had a more structured process of review to support efforts towards continuous improvement. This process enabled them to assess progress towards project accomplishments and make modifications to either goals/objectives or strategies, accordingly.

17. *Organizations attempting to develop new program components should include plans for sustaining the initiative at the outset*. A number of the grantees participating in the OSY Demonstration developed or provided important services during the grant period that they were unable to sustain once grant funding ended. If the focus is on sustainable change, how the initiative can be sustained should be thought through at the outset and made a part of the program plan.

18. *State and local STW partnerships must re-evaluate their charge to serve "all youth."* Our evaluation has not entailed a study of STW partnerships throughout the nation, so we cannot say with certainty how typical the OSY demonstration grantees' efforts at engaging local STW partnerships have been. However, based on their experience, it appears that existing STW partnerships are devoting little attention to the needs of out-of-school youth. Additional focus needs to be directed at how STW systems can embrace this population, who surely desperately need and potentially can benefit so much from, what STW has to offer.

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Appendix:

Project Profiles

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AUSTIN AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING
AUSTIN, TX

PARTNERSHIPS

The American Institute for Learning (AIL) has formed a number of partnerships with labor and education groups that share a commitment to developing comprehensive school-to-work strategies for the Austin area. Most important in this project is AIL's partnership with the Capital Area Training Foundation (CATF), a non-profit, industry-led organization that brings employers and schools together. CATF is a local federally-funded school-to-work entity that coordinates a variety of highly active industry steering committees comprised of business community members committed to developing highly effective local school-to-work strategies.

Collaborative agreements exist with the Capital Area Workforce Development Board, Austin Community College, Austin Independent School District, University of Texas, VISTA, and the Parks Department. With Austin Community College (ACC), AIL is working on developing articulation agreements so that students completing the Principles of Technology (PT) class can accrue credit for Industrial Electronics at ACC, which is a pre-requisite for ACC's Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology Program. AIL regularly has VISTA volunteers and University of Texas School of Social Work volunteers doing internships, usually as student counselors. The city Parks Department has recently contracted AIL to provide 20,000 hours of park work through a one-third Parks Department and two-third AmeriCorps match.

AIL leverages funds and resources from a variety of sources, including the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency, the Commission on National and Community Service (AmeriCorps), HUD YouthBuild, and a broad variety of private foundations and corporations.

PROGRAM SERVICES

The past 20 years of serving high school dropouts in Austin has earned AIL a good reputation and a solid referral system with local CBOs and school districts. Following a three-year contract with the Austin Independent School District to provide drop-out recovery services, the District continues to refer students to AIL who are thinking about dropping out of high school. The charter school has a maximum enrollment of 250 students and currently has more applicants than spaces.

Individualized Career Path plans are developed in the careers courses, and students work with their counselors to plan services around these pathways. The plans identify students' career interests, the research, education and proficiency level required to enter each career, and what kind of work students can undertake now to develop the necessary skills.

AIL aims to integrate curricula and provide exposure to all aspects of an industry. For example, the Marketing Education class (since renamed Business Marketing) covers an introduction to business, marketing education, marketing dynamics, and math. Students are taught how to successfully enter the labor market and are taught a range of business skills, such as budgeting and developing business plans, that they can use to start their own businesses. Recently a work-based component was added to this class, enabling students to earn extra credits for employment if they complete various evaluations and exercises concerning the job.

School-Based Learning Activities

AIL's curricula combine academic, vocational, and career development educational experience through hands-on projects. Classroom-based activities generally fall into either PODs or seminars. Academic and vocational components have been thoroughly integrated through the use of the PODs, which are thematic, interdisciplinary classes through which multiple credits can be earned in a variety of academic areas. Students receive academic instruction in addition to performing hands-on projects in a variety of fields. PODs are taught by teams of teachers, with certification in different subject areas. Seminars are more traditional, small, one-hour classes that closely resemble public school classes and are good for meeting the needs of youth who are only lacking a few specific credits needed for graduation. Seminars include a variety of subjects from Math to Multimedia and Publishing. Through required careers courses, students also receive job readiness training, learn career planning, and identify connections between classroom learning and career development.

In addition, CATF has helped to implement a Tech Prep Career Pathway in Electronics which, combined with paid summer internships in high tech, provide a basis for effectively preparing young people to enter the semiconductor industry or other technical fields. This model includes two semesters of Principles of Technology (PT), along with two semesters of Industrial Electronics at ACC. As part of the OSY grant, AIL put the PT curriculum in place.

Work-Based Learning Activities

Work-based activities in AIL's school-to-work model include primarily guest speakers, tours, and community service, though some internships are available. Under this grant, AIL was planning to take a more active role in placing youth in internships in the high tech industry, particularly those undertaking the PT pathway. Towards this goal, they worked on fostering relationships with industry stakeholders through the partnership with CATF, but work experience slots have been slow to materialize.

Connecting Activities

Ongoing professional development is promoted by requiring all staff members to attend a minimum of four staff training days per year, plus a one-week, student-free training and planning period that occurs each August. AIL is committed to staff development and encourages and provides the means for staff to continue their professional development.

The Career Resource Center (CRC), open to all AIL students, provides work maturity and job readiness training, employment counseling, and job development services, in addition to arranging field trips to local One-Stop Centers and in-house recruiting by local businesses. Employment Specialists at the CRC work closely with students, area businesses, and instructors to match participants to potential internships and/or jobs, and to help ensure the success of students who are placed. In addition, CRC staff serve as liaisons for workplace mentors.

Supportive services are arranged by AIL's counselors. Under a new system, teachers provide academic counseling, and counselors who previously provided this service will focus their counseling efforts on personal and resource issues that are crucial to students' daily attendance, such as child care, transportation, and housing.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

Outcomes measured by AIL include attendance and dropout rates, and the number earning GEDs, earning high school diplomas, completing Career Prep, receiving services of the CRC, working, or participating in AmeriCorps. The number enrolled in the Principles of Technology (PT) class is the most relevant to this grant. While the goal was to enroll at least 24 in PT, over the course of this grant period, about 36 students were enrolled.

SUSTAINABILITY

Funding is the key to AIL's sustainability. As a charter school, AIL receives state funding to educate youth up to 21 years of age. Because this funding is based on the number of students in attendance, and AIL operates at capacity, they are able to estimate how much they have at a minimum for their operating budget. In addition, they receive funding for their AmeriCorps and YouthBuild programs, and from a broad variety of private foundations and corporations. They find that the more grants they receive, the easier it is to secure further funding.

The PT I course, developed under the OSY grant, will continue for at least the next year. The PT I curriculum and lab equipment were bought through OSY funding, and recently funding has been secured to sustain the PT teacher's position through the next year. AIL hopes to obtain funding to purchase the curriculum for PT II, which would complete the series. Other academic courses at AIL will continue, as they are funded through state average daily attendance dollars.

The CRC will continue to provide services to help students prepare for and find employment. In addition, the development of articulation agreements with Austin Community College will continue to move forward until the desired technology paths are in place.

BALTIMORE YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES
BALTIMORE, MD

PARTNERSHIPS

The Baltimore Office of Employment Development (OED) is the Baltimore arm of the state's school-to-work system, known in Maryland as "Career Connections." An established coordinating body—Baltimore City Career Connections Coordinating Council—governs the city's piece of the state school-to-work program. This council provides the formal linkage mechanism for partners involved in the local out-of-school youth project, Youth Opportunities (YO).

The Educational Alternative Options (EAO) Committee focuses specifically on the out-of-school population in Baltimore. Many of the community-based organizations on the EAO Committee are also service providers for the YO project. The YO project's connection to other school-to-work efforts is informal. However, YO participants can move easily into any other OED managed activity.

The project gets strong support from participating employers, CBOs, and the Baltimore City Community College's adult education program, although it does not seem to have employer involvement in planning. The local high school is not represented in the YO partnership.

Building on a history of linkages and cooperative relationships, the YO project has pooled resources from JTPA and five CBOs to greatly extend the level and comprehensiveness of services. For example, OED provides paid internships out of JTPA funds and finances full-time positions in three One-Stop centers to provide particular attention to youth that visit One-Stop centers. These youth specialists provide employability assessments and counseling, referrals to appropriate services, and follow-up attention. Additional leveraged resources provide opportunities for job development, case management, life skills training, paid work experience, GED preparation, and legal assistance.

PROGRAM SERVICES

OED operates the Youth Opportunity project for 125 at-risk, out-of-school youth in selected neighborhoods in the City of Baltimore. The DOL OSY grant funds five CBOs that cover five neighborhoods. These CBOs, or "homerooms," recruit youth and provide them with orientation and assessment services, case management, and life skills training (1 day per week). JTPA funds pay wages for 30 hours of work experience a week for these same students. OED lines up work sites and work-site mentors, and provides technical assistance to the CBOs.

OED has in place a two-prong recruitment strategy related to YO. First, the YO design calls for neighborhood CBOs to recruit from among their constituents. Second,

youth specialists are stationed in three of the One-Stop Centers to recruit youth who visit the centers looking for jobs.

To retain youth, YO has intensive case management and mentoring components, coupled with the incentive of 30 hours per week of employment in supportive worksites. This is the heart of the YO strategy—to entice youth with salaries and a positive relationship with a caring adult. For youth who are at-risk of dropping out of YO, there is a concerted effort to try other service strategies. Retention in the program or referral to another program is a well ingrained YO objective. Case managers, backed by their respective CBOs, take exhaustive means to hold on to the YO participants, including the provision of services via linkages within the CBO/OED network.

This YO project has a different goal than that of many school-to-work projects—to effect change in disaffected youth so that they are able to benefit from traditional education and training environments. The design does not include learning organized around a particular career pathway, nor is there a systematic effort to expose youth to all aspects of an industry. Moreover, classroom-based learning activities are not focused on traditional academic development; rather, the focus is on life skills. The work experience sites, or internships, are supportive laboratories where youth apply life skills learned in the weekly life skills class, and, in turn, work experiences inform the curriculum of the life skills class.

School-Based Learning Activities

School-based learning activities take the form of life skills training, a loosely structured series of group meetings with a case manager designed to reinforce and support skills needed for the work experience portion of the project. Incidents at work are frequently used as the basis for an extemporaneous lesson. Life skills training typically occurs during a six-hour session each Friday.

Participants may also elect to study for the GED on their own time and will be assisted and supported by the sponsoring CBO, but no attempt is made to integrate such training into other classroom or work experiences.

Work-Based Learning Activities

Work-based learning is the primary intervention of the YO project and consists of 30 hours of paid work experience at either private sector or public organizations. Wages are paid by OED's JTPA grant. Work-based learning is in the hands of the work-site supervisor who coaches the youth on the work duties. The supervisor also usually serves as the youth's mentor. Case managers interact with the work site to assist with any training or instruction needed to support good work skills and successful employment at the work site.

The work-based learning is intended to provide a positive experience and impart pre-employment skills rather than occupational skills. However, work sites make a concerted effort to expose youth assigned to them to all aspects of their business

operation, and youth are taken on field trips for career exploration purposes. There seemed to be a higher than usual rate of permanent jobs coming from the internships, suggesting that some of the youth were able to adapt to the work-site environment and acquire enough minimal skills to qualify for regular employment.

Connecting Activities

The YO project is considered to be a connecting activity in a very broad view of school-to-work; i.e., the whole project is a strategy to connect youth to work and prepare them for school, work, etc., as a project outcome. YO does not serve to integrate learning or educational objectives by integrating classroom and work-based learning opportunities, except in the case of using workplace situations as the basis for lessons and discussions for life skills training.

YO uses the case managers to connect the work-based learning with the life skills training class and youth to supportive services. Case managers also set up field trips for career exploration, provide career counseling, and help connect youth to education and training activities commensurate with youths' career goals.

Case managers visit the worksites several times a week and, from these sessions with the youth and mentors/supervisors, determine what basic skills need strengthening. These may include reading or math skills, or more likely, basic work habits. The case manager then constructs a lesson or else tutors the participant on the needed skills. Thus, the life skills training curriculum is constantly revised to address real life situations faced by the youth on their jobs.

Professional development activities have included regular meetings of case managers and other personnel associated with the YO project to discuss common problems and issues, locate supportive services needed by the youth, and, generally, find ways to improve their services. Case managers also receive two days of initial training.

OED provides mentors with a handbook to orient them to good mentoring practices. OED also oversees the worksites, and reviews, along with the case manager, work site evaluations of the youth. These evaluations focus on work habits and what job-related skills were being learned.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

Even though GED certificates were not a project goal, nine youth have attained their GED, and another 30 participants are attending GED classes. Thirty-four youth are employed in unsubsidized, permanent employment. Eighteen of these represent transitions into jobs with their former work-experience sites.

SUSTAINABILITY

The model just described represents the continuation of a strategy that OED had been pursuing for some time prior to OSY funding; no major modifications were made

to this strategy during the grant period. The project is being continued with WIA funds, following the same model, but with one modification. Each of the "homerooms," or subcontracted community-based organizations, will receive an additional $40,000 to provide special services to teen-age parents. These additional monies come from a State grant. Otherwise the model remains unchanged. However, the project was expanded from 5 to 6 communities with the addition of a community college as a site. Each homeroom will serve 35 students, 5 of which will be teen parents.

Presently, the revised project is just getting underway. Subcontract agreements are in place and CBOs are recruiting youth.

CAMBRIDGE JUST-A-START
CAMBRIDGE, MA

PARTNERSHIPS

Just-a-Start (JAS) benefits from longstanding relationships with many public and nonprofit organizations in the area. Partners include Bunker Hill Community College, proprietary schools, the Cambridge School Department (CSD), the regional DOL office, the Vocational Rehabilitation office (which shares its list of employers with JAS), the Cambridge Office of Workforce Development, and an increasing number of employers (see below). Other important partners are the community housing organizations with whom Just-a-Start contracts for building and rehabilitation work, and the organizations where participants fulfill their community service requirements. One major partnership—with a city agency, the Housing Authority, and the CSD—offers a college support program. Because of its emphasis on construction, the project has also made increasingly strong connections with local unions and a number of employers. To expand and strengthen its partnerships, Just-a-Start established an advisory board in January 1998. The board assists the project to network, share resources, and generate new ideas, as well as provides helpful political and community perspectives.

Just-a-Start has also participated actively in the City of Cambridge's Career Pathways Initiative, established in the early 1990s to link youth-serving agencies and programs, including CSD, city departments, community-based organizations, colleges and universities, and employers. The group coordinates citywide activities, promotes sharing resources, assesses needs, and reviews local proposals for use of STWOA funds. Just-a-Start, as the only local program serving out-of-school youth, advocates for including out-of-school youth in all school-to-work efforts.

Employers have become a more integral part of the JAS program of late. They serve on the program advisory committee; offer informational interviews, job shadowing, and company tours; present workshops at JAS on employability and specific career information; and provide internships.

The advisory committee has implemented “career exploratory programs,” introducing students to different careers by visiting job sites and learning what the work place looks like, what its culture is like, and what the workers are like.

Project funding comes from multiple sources, primarily a JTPA II-C contract, an AmeriCorps program grant, the DOL demo funds, HUD YouthBuild (when available), state YouthBuild funds, City of Cambridge CDBG funds, and revenues from construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance work performed by participants and supervisors. Additional funding is provided by the City and through foundation and corporate fundraising.

PROGRAM SERVICES

To recruit youth, Just-a-Start engages in the widespread distribution of flyers and in-person contact, including going door-to-door in public housing developments; visiting local youth hangouts, community agencies, adult education classes and programs, and churches; and coordinating with probation officers. It takes out newspaper ads, submits public service announcements, and offers a $50 reward to graduates or current students who refer successful recruits.

Before admission, applicants must reach the minimum age of 17, meet successfully with staff three times (bringing any requested documents and coming to the appointments on time), and pass an exam demonstrating a 6th-grade reading level. If applicants are accepted, the next challenge is to make it through "mental toughness," a four-week orientation that includes a more detailed introduction to the program and its requirements and exercises and activities (peer-peer and staff-youth) that help the participants build a sense of community, set goals (integrating education, career, and life skills goals), build confidence, and cultivate discipline, civility, and good communication. Throughout the application/orientation period, great emphasis is placed on attendance, punctuality, and attitude. The program starts with 50 - 55 students, anticipating that some youth will drop out during this period. Once past mental toughness, the dropout rate slows (about 50% - 55% make it through to graduation).

As a YouthBuild program, the project organizes learning around one career pathway—construction—and youth learn multiple occupational skills within the construction trades (carpentry, plumbing, electrical) through hands-on work-based activities and training. Youth alternate weekly between worksite training and classroom-based training. The program also emphasizes developing leadership skills and encourages peer-to-peer support. Time is also spent on career preparation, employability skills, and instruction/training for individual needs (SAT preparation, driver's training, etc.).

School-Based Learning Activities

The program provides GED preparation, leadership development, career preparation, and computer training within school-based learning activities. As of July 1999, JAS expected to become a diploma-awarding program in 2000, which will fulfill one of the goals it established for itself under the OSY grant. Instructors said that, while they have done less "teaching to the [GED] test" in the last two years, this change was inspiring them to use classroom time even better, develop more intentional and systematic project-based learning, do more team teaching, integrate school-to-work principles better, and have the flexibility to help youth who have a lot of potential but need extra time. In fact, because of its successful "alumni program," where JAS offers support and opportunities to graduates, JAS increasingly sees itself as a two-year program, improving its ability to help OSY overcome the challenges they face and get on a lifelong education/career track.

Instructors connect learning activities to work and other real-life situations. For example, a classroom science unit focused on lead poisoning as participants were starting a renovation at their worksites that required lead paint removal. A social studies unit taught about immigration through having students trace their own family histories. Math and construction work are often addressed together, and short-term project-based learning activities involve youth in interactive, hands-on projects that relate to real-life situations. Teachers and counselors were designing a team-taught ethics course for fall 1999.

The career preparation-development class is a key vehicle for exposing students to various careers, and also helps them assess their career interests (through surveys, discussions, and interactive exercises). Each student develops a vocational goal plan and participates in job search skills training (e.g., preparing resumes, interviewing), often via interactive exercises.

Through linkages with the local community college, youth can opt for transition to post-secondary education/training. Youth receive support to plan and prepare for post-secondary courses and obtain financial aid.

Work-based Learning Activities

Youth are involved in construction and building rehabilitation at various sites in the community, providing the opportunity for individualization within the construction trades (carpentry, electrical, and plumbing). At the site, students are assigned to five- to seven-person work crews, led by professional supervisors, and learn specific job skills as well as work habits, attitudes, and employer expectations. They also apply academic skills, such as measuring and estimating. They learn to work under supervision, to work as part of a team, and to exercise leadership skills.

Worksite supervisors emphasize basic skills training to help students develop and apply their classroom learning to construction work and their construction skills to their classroom work. They also provide on-site workshops on topics such as job safety and tool use. Additionally, because the worksites are "real" jobs, both students and worksite supervisors have incentives to do high quality work.

Worksite activities demonstrate links to school-to-work principles by integrating classroom and worksite learning. Successes at the worksite often translate into greater academic confidence, employability, and career interest (though not necessarily in construction-related occupations). Worksite supervisors are working more closely with classroom instructors to plan joint activities and integrate activities that help students understand how they can apply skills learned in one area to others.

Connecting Activities

Classroom and work-based learning have become increasingly integrated. Worksite supervisors plan joint efforts, confer with classroom instructors about projects and curricula, and communicate regularly about students. Similarly, classes and workshops address the integration of worksite and classroom activities. Academic units

on issues related to construction (lead paint removal, measurement, etc.) have been developed, and the math teacher and field supervisor have developed and co-led a project. Classroom staff visit worksites frequently to assess student progress.

For community service, JAS requires youth to participate in construction-related projects and an after-school program (where they learn more about employability, working with children, and what it is like to be role models).

Staff are also involved in a variety of networks available in the greater Boston area, and have opportunities to attend outside training sessions conducted by the local school-to-work partnership. Just-a-Start participates in a number of school-to-work and at-risk youth coalitions in the greater Boston area.

Participants are provided with stipends through the AmeriCorps and JTPA funding sources. As of July 1999, JAS had hired a counselor experienced in dealing with substance abuse, who was not only assisting students but also training staff on substance abuse and other issues. An informal system connects youth to appropriate services, as needed (food stamps, drivers' licenses, part-time work, financial aid for post-secondary education, counseling, childcare, etc.). Staff also help students deal with the courts and other bureaucracies.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

Among 1998 graduates, seven had jobs, five were going to college, five enrolled in occupational skills training programs, five were engaged in a job search, and two were continuing their education part-time. The 1999 site visit occurred before graduation, but it appeared that more students than in 1998 would be attending college or training programs.

SUSTAINABILITY

JAS has incorporated school-to-work into all aspects of its operations. Its major systemic change during the grant period was to move towards becoming a diploma-granting institution (rather than one focused on GED preparation), with the additional opportunities this allows for innovative curricula. Staff believe they can continue to improve and that school-to-work will endure at JAS. They described the grant and related technical assistance as pivotal—inspiring them to greater achievements, including becoming a diploma-awarding program and enhancing their effectiveness overall. At this point, they believe they have the foundation and resources to keep improving.

LANCASTER COUNTY ACADEMY
LANCASTER, PA

PARTNERSHIPS

The Lancaster County Academy (LCA) is a public alternative high school that serves dropouts. It is funded and supported by ten of the sixteen school districts in the county, each of which currently pays $17,500 for up to fifteen "slots" at the school. The superintendents of each district form the governing board, with one of them serving as the "superintendent of record." All superintendents of participating school districts approve the standards that are set out for the diplomas offered by LCA. The Academy is located at the Park City Center regional shopping mall, just outside of the city of Lancaster. The mall provides space at a greatly reduced cost, with an estimated in-kind contribution of roughly $50,000 per year.

LCA works closely with the county School-to-Work Partnership, JTPA, school districts in the county, and employers, among others, to promote quality school-to-work programming. The director of the LCA is an active member of the county partnership, having served as co-chair. Through these types of linkages, LCA is closely linked with local, regional, and statewide school-to-work activities. There are many agreements in place among partners, but, in general, they are neither formal nor written. Instead, there are working understandings about referrals and services, roles and responsibilities, that are accepted by all key partners. Individual employers play key roles in one-on-one relationships with LCA staff. However, there are no formal structures to promote their input or governance.

PROGRAM SERVICES

The Lancaster County Academy differs from many other out-of-school programs in that it offers a regular high school diploma, rather than a GED. The school admits students who are far enough along in their academic preparation to benefit from the self-paced approach and graduate with a high school diploma within a year or so of entry. Operationally, this criterion is generally interpreted to mean having an eighth-grade reading level.

Students are referred to LCA from the participating school districts (or GED and JTPA programs) and through word of mouth. Although the specific referral criteria differ somewhat from district to district, all stress the fact that the program is for dropouts who are willing to take another chance to promote their education.

To apply, students must come in person for an application and then return to take a four-hour entrance test battery, including standardized exams such as the TABE, the Stanford Achievement Test, and the Occupational Outlook Interest Inventory; more qualitative approaches are also used in assessment, such as reviewing an applicant's

writing sample. Additionally, all students are interviewed by the program director for at least 45 minutes and asked to describe their goals.

The next step in the admissions process is having students sign a contract that spells out rights and responsibilities. Staff take a detailed social history for each student during orientation and intake, and then use the results to help plan supportive services as well as develop plans for academic and vocational activities. The results of the testing and assessment are utilized to prepare an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that spells out which courses and which additional activities must be completed in order for the student to graduate.

There are roughly a hundred students active at the Center at any given time. Students attend either the morning session (9 a.m. to 12 noon), an afternoon session (from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.), or an evening session (5 p.m. to 8 p.m.), Mondays through Fridays.

School-Based Learning Activities

The LCA program consists of an academic component in which students must achieve credits for a variety of courses* and school-to-work and service learning components. Classroom coursework is completed on a self-paced, self-learning, individualized instruction basis. All students enroll in four employment skills classes: work readiness, career choices, on-the-job essentials, and employment essentials.

Each student is also required to work on a work-related project, typically involving three to five students. The topics are developed by the staff and, in all cases, represent real activity, rather than simulations. The projects are linked to academic subjects, such as English (communication skills), math, and/or social studies. For example, the applied communications course has a unit on teamwork in which students observe a video and write about teamwork, and then are able to apply the lessons in their projects.

Work-Based Learning Activities

Each LCA student must complete 60 hours of community service in order to graduate. These activities incorporate many of the commonly recognized quality measures of service learning, including requirements for regular journal entries, completion of a reflective essay, and regular feedback from service learning supervisors. In some cases, the service learning requirement is met by an individual's

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* English (grammar and writing, principles of writing, applied communications, business English, and advanced English topics); Reading; Mathematics (introduction to math concepts, consumer math, financial planning, algebra I & II, geometry, applied math, trigonometry, an introduction to calculus, probability and statistics); Science; Social Studies (American history, American government, world geography, economics, and psychology); Physical Education/Health (phys. ed., health, medical care, and parenting).

working at a non-profit organization. In others, groups of students work on one-time or ongoing projects for non-profit groups.

Students must also participate in work-based learning activities that are determined by the students' previous background and experience. These activities include job shadowing, workplace visits, and internships. As one might expect in a mall-based school, most of the work-based learning opportunities are in retail and related service-based businesses, thus defining the primary career paths available. Within the structure of the work-based activities, students gain exposure to many aspects of the industry, although the degree of exposure may vary from employer to employer.

There are classroom-based elements of the work-based and service learning components, including a workshop on appropriate workplace behavior and a personality and interest exploration through such tools as the Holland Self-Directed Search and the Meyers-Briggs Indicator Type.

Students earn academic credit through both the service and work-based learning activities.

Connecting activities

Co-location of the Academy at a regional shopping mall, integrated curriculum and activities, and the frequent interaction between employers and instructional staff provide clear connections between work and learning. Employers play an important, but informal, role in shaping the course offerings and programming at LCA. There are numerous examples of how feedback from an employer has been used to guide staff in modifying the curriculum to better meet their needs. In all cases, LCA staff meet with the employer/service agency before the students arrive to explain the program and the expectations of students and their supervisors. LCA staff then stay in touch with the employer/service site staff to monitor the progress of the students and provide support.

Lancaster County Academy staff regularly participate in in-service training sessions on school-to-work matters. All staff are cross-trained in all subjects and activities so that all can help any student with anything in the curriculum. Additionally, employers have also received training in youth development issues and how to supervise young people.

Academy staff assist participants in finding post-graduation jobs and in planning for post-secondary education. Staff also provide considerable support services to students, either directly or through referrals to community-based organizations and agencies. Stipends are not offered.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

Lancaster County Academy collects state-mandated data on its graduates. But the high rate of turnover at the Lancaster County Academy makes it difficult to develop meaningful performance data based upon information about non-graduates. For

example, for the last full fiscal year (ending June 30, 1998) the dropout/turnover rate was 40%. This fact, along with the open-entry, open-exit structure of the program and the widely varying amounts of time that people stay in the program, greatly complicate efforts to track how well members of a given "entering class" have done.

Perhaps the most meaningful data relate to the post-graduation activities of completers. In 1997-98, 38% of the graduates have gone on to some form of higher education, and the remainder have gotten jobs. This is consistent with previous years' data, where between 22% and 35% have pursued postsecondary education and no more than 10% were not involved in either employment or education following completion.

SUSTAINABILITY

The vast majority of funding for the Lancaster County Academy comes from "slots" that are purchased by a dozen nearby school districts and the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program. Representatives of several of these school districts say that they are pleased with the arrangements with LCA and there is therefore no reason to doubt that the LCA is on a firm footing.

The core LCA programs were not materially affected by the end of the Department of Labor funding, although some additional employers were recruited. There was a decrease of one grant-funded staff member who had specialized in school-to-career upgrading. LCA staff have tried to find ways to support this staff person using other funding sources, but were not able to do so. This loss will hamper, but by no means eliminate, their emphasis on expanding and upgrading their links with a wide range of local employers.

MEMPHIS YOUTH FAIR CHANCE
MEMPHIS, TN

PARTNERSHIPS

Memphis Youth Fair Chance (MYFC) has developed strong partnerships with a range of partners to provide a variety of services to out-of-school youth. Among these partners, MYFC worked closely with the school district, whose adult high school has provided GED teachers for MYFC's out-of-school youth program since the beginning of 1997. The schools worked closely with the MYFC staff, providing them with contact information for recent dropouts. MYFC also worked with the Department of Education at the University of Memphis to establish an Urban Wellness Center, which was open to all the youth in the target area and provided health screenings and classes and recreational activities. MYFC staffed this center with recreation supervisors, and the university funded five graduate assistants to run different programs in the center.

Several health and social service agencies provided weekly health education sessions, offered counseling on managing money and credit problems, and led drug awareness workshops for out-of-school youth enrolled in classes at MYFC. Several health organizations provided clinical nurse's assistant (CNA) training to out-of-school youth after they completed job readiness training and earned a GED from MYFC. YouthBuild accepted referrals from MYFC, and several employers, including Encore Training System, Federal Express, and Personnel Works, Inc., developed agreements to train young people after they graduated from MYFC.

Oversight for MYFC was provided by the Community Resources Board, which included school district members, community residents, CBOs, and employers. An Advisory Committee of employers and health and social service providers guided MYFC staff in their development of programs. No formal linkages with the statewide school-to-work system were apparent.

Since 1994, MYFC received $4 million through Youth Fair Chance from a JTPA Title IV demonstration grant and an expansion grant, and from matching funds from the City of Memphis. Smaller amounts came from collaborations with the University of Memphis, the Private Industry Council, various health organizations, the State Department of Education, and the Memphis City Schools. However, all these resources served both in-school and out-of-school youth. The resources were well integrated.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Memphis Youth Fair Chance is part of the federal Youth Fair Chance initiative and coordinates school-to-work programs for in-school and out-of-school youth. For out-of-school youth, MYFC offered GED preparation, computer applications and computer repair classes, job readiness training, job placement services, social services,

life skills training, and referrals to work-based training programs. It served between 80 and 150 youth each quarter per year, but not all youth participate in all activities.

Several staff members were current or former community residents, providing MYFC with an understanding of community issues that help with recruitment. The staff conducted many home visits, and they talked with each student weekly. Staff reported that the greatest challenge they faced was to change the mindset of young people who have spent their entire lives on public assistance.

At the outset of the Youth Fair Chance grant, opportunities existed for youth to pursue training in three career pathways, technology, medicine, and tourism, based on their interests. However, during the grant period only technology classes were consistently offered, in the subjects of computer applications and computer repair.

School-Based Learning Activities

All academic instruction was individually-paced GED instruction and was geared to each youth's skill deficiencies. The vocational instruction consisted of separate basic classes on computer applications and repair. The same students are not necessarily participating in both the GED and vocational skills classes. However, all are invited to participate in weekly workshops on health and nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, managing finances, and understanding workplace rules and norms. MYFC also began developing instructional programs in additional career fields beyond computer technology, including in the health and hospitality industries. However, these efforts were abandoned when it appeared that too few youth were interested in pursuing training in these fields.

Work-Based Learning Activities

Some but not all youth participating in classroom activities may be placed in a work experience position, depending on which work slots are available and the students' interest in working. For some students in the computer classes, the work assignments may relate to the classroom vocational skills training. However, typically there are only weak links between classroom and work-based activities. The MYFC staff have struggled to maintain long-term relationships with employers, because of changes in the economy and job market.

Connecting Activities

MYFC provided its staff with extensive staff development opportunities, including attendance at the Tennessee Conference on Children and Youth and in-house staff development on issues as varied as teaching methodology, test taking skills, and sexual harassment.

The executive director and the project director ensured that frequent communication occurred between all work-based and classroom-based instructors, to provide updates on youths' progress. In addition, an Advisory Committee provided the MYFC staff with feedback on the work-based competencies youth needed to succeed in

the workplace. However, the academic classes were not closely tied to work-based training.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

During the grant period, 300-400 people attended classes of some kind. As with other programs serving out-of-school youth, MYFC has difficulty having youth maintain regular attendance and attend through completion of their training goals.

SUSTAINABILITY

OSY grant funds were used to support general program operations. Activities and services provided by MYFC will likely continue in some form, but the exact mix will depend on what additional funding they are able to secure.

MILWAUKEE HY-TECC II
MILWAUKEE, WI

PARTNERSHIPS

Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) serves thousands of students annually in its Adult High School, and thousands more in the college itself, which offers two-year Associate Degrees and Technical Diplomas in dozens of vocational fields. The Adult High School (AHS) is the focus of its efforts for the out-of-school youth population.

In supporting its program operations, MATC relies on long-standing partnerships with employers, school districts, CBOs, and agencies. One hundred-twenty advisory committees, composed of industry representatives, review curriculum and help plan future directions of all occupational programs at MATC. A school-to-work Business Advisory Committee, composed of employers, participate in various school-to-work activities, and the STW Department at MATC is closely allied with a number of employee/employer organizations.

MATC also has important partnerships with local schools. As a result of a 1986 grant, MATC has partnered with school districts to develop hundreds of articulation agreements for the college. MATC also has contract agreements with the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to serve high school students at MATC's Adult High School who are not thriving in the traditional high school setting.

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) is another important partner. The WRTP is a labor-management consortium of 46 Milwaukee-area manufacturing firms employing over 40,000 workers and formed to endorse family-supporting jobs in a highly competitive manufacturing environment. Working with education and training institutions, they develop workplace education programs, improve skills of the current workforce, and provide training for future workers.

Beyond direct funding for the Helping Youth Through Education, Counseling, and Careers II (HY-TECC II) demonstration, MATC has other significant funding that allows the AHS to provide services beyond instruction. This includes funding from the Carl D. Perkins Technology Act, the Department of Education, Adolescent Parent Self-Sufficiency and Welfare Reform initiatives, and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE). Private/foundation grants provide funding for transportation, text books, and tuition. HY-TECC II students have access to a wide variety of resources, whether funded through the OSY grant or any of the above sources.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Services associated with the HY-TECC II grant include academic coursework leading to a high school diploma, career courses, vocational courses, and state-certified skilled co-ops in Business and Food.

School-Based Learning Activities

AHS offers a wide variety of academic courses for completion of the high school credential, as well as courses in vocational skills training and career awareness. Instructors are generally free to develop their own curriculum for these courses, and there is thus little effort to formally link academic and vocational skills training. Efforts to do so are hampered by the fact that each student requires a different set of academic courses to overcome skill deficiencies and/or earn credits for graduation, and each has different vocational interests. Each quarter, classes are offered in two hour blocks every day. Students decide how many hours they wish to attend and can take courses in an order that suits their needs.

Vocational classes are strong points of the HY-TECC II program. While the vocational classes may not depart much from traditional vocational education classes, they provide training in the latest technology related to each field and emphasize active learning methods. Moreover, career classes are available that provide youth with information on different occupations to help them make more informed decisions about what career path to follow, as well as teach them competencies that will help them to succeed no matter which path they choose.

Part of MATC's proposal included the plan to adopt a new project-based curriculum, Analyze & Apply, in a small number of academic courses. However, this curriculum was not adopted, due to resistance from classroom instructors. Thus, academic courses generally continue to be taught in a traditional manner.

Another goal for the grant period, which was successfully accomplished, was to develop a state-certified co-op in business, to complement an existing one in food services. The two co-ops serve a relatively small number of AHS students, but represent well-developed career pathways that can be chosen by those AHS students who are interested in these fields. They both involve learning-by-doing, link academic and employment skills with specific industry knowledge, involve both classroom and work-based components, and lead to the award of skill certificates.

Work-Based Learning Activities

As an adult high school, this grantee has traditionally made minimal use of work-based learning, except for students in its co-ops. However, during the grant period MATC intended to expand the use of work-based learning, by providing worksite tours and guest speakers and by developing 50 slots for paid work experience involving workplace mentors. The tours and guest speakers, geared towards students in vocational courses, were used extensively. However, MATC had more difficulty developing the work experience slots and in recruiting mentors (this task was assigned to a subcontractor), so fewer such opportunities were provided than was intended. Moreover, linkages between these slots and classroom learning activities were very informal, although they typically related to youths' career interests.

Connecting Activities

AHS staff are provided with ongoing professional development opportunities, including in-service classes and training to help the faculty and staff understand school-to-work components. More generally, faculty must meet certification requirements by the Wisconsin Technical College System. School-to-work staff also co-sponsor a regional youth apprenticeship committee that brings together representatives from various schools and business and industry, and holds forums for industry to learn about school-to-work.

As part of the grant, arrangements were also made to provide training to work supervisors who agreed to serve as mentors. However, fewer mentors were recruited than was anticipated.

Case management provided under the HY-TECC II grant is not intensive in terms of referring youth to or providing supportive services. But students have access to many resources at MATC, including an Academic Support Center, an Affirmative Action Office, a Career Planning Center, an Employment Development Center, a Family and Women's Resource Center, a Program Counseling Center, and a Multicultural Resource Center. Some students, those participating in Project Second Chance, also are assigned Outreach Specialists, who assist students with selecting courses and resolving problems.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

MATC has a number of measurable outcomes, some of which have already been met and even exceeded. The goal to enroll 100 youth in work-based learning was exceeded by sending large groups of students on tours. In addition, 11 students received full-time employment and were assigned mentors. The objective to help 100 students develop career pathways was greatly exceeded by presenting career information to hundreds of youth who participated in career awareness courses. A total of 36 students have been registered in the co-op programs, exceeding the goal of enrolling 30. The goal to utilize Analyze and Apply to help 150 students master SCANS skills was not attained, due to problems with implementing this program component.

SUSTAINABILITY

The new co-op in business represents the major accomplishment that will be continued beyond the grant period. Efforts by a subcontractor to develop the work-based learning opportunities and mentorships will be discontinued, but, as before, teaching staff will continue working with employers informally to identify relevant work-based learning experiences for their students.

NEW YORK FAMILY LEARNING INSTITUTE
NEW YORK, NY

PARTNERSHIPS

The Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) Educational Services Division serves as the Bronx borough-wide "hub" for the New York State Education Department's school-to-work initiative. Although its school-to-work efforts focus primarily upon systems change, FEGS also provides direct services to several specific groups of young people. The FEGS Family Learning Institute (FEGS/FLI) for Out-Of-School Youth and Parents (the effort funded through the DOL OSY grant) represented one of these direct service projects.

The New York State Department of Education has funded 40 school-to-work local partnerships in New York City that are coordinated by five "hubs," one for each of the five boroughs, and supported by a technical assistance provider. FEGS's responsibilities as the Bronx "hub" include fostering partnership-building and parental involvement, connecting school-to-work to New York State learning standards, and promoting business involvement. Additionally, "hubs" provide staff development and assistance with curriculum and program development in the areas of careers and SCANS skills, as well as support in the creation of work-related direct services such as internships and job shadowing.

FEGS school-to-work partnerships in the Bronx include efforts to work with such programs and agencies as Goals 2000, IASA, Idea, Tech Prep, JTPA, AEA, Employment Preparation Education, Even Start, vocational education, Project Success/ Immigrant Program, the New York State Progressive Adolescent Vocational Experience (PAVE), the UFT (teachers' union) teacher centers, and Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention (AI/DP) programs. However, as of the October 1998 field visit to FEGS/FLI, there were no direct and formal links between the grant-funded program and any of these related programs. Also, Bronx employers did not yet play any formal role in the FEGS/FLI project.

Nonetheless, the project could not have been operated without the leveraging of resources from the other FEGS school-to-work activities in the Bronx. FEGS/FLI relied on the broader FEGS school-to-work system for referrals and services, and utilized staff on the FEGS payrolls to deliver key services to FEGS/FLI students, including tutoring, and supervision of the overall project staff. There was little, if any, other leveraging of resources from other programs, but the "hub activities" were expected to represent and pull together a coalition of all relevant programs in the borough.

PROGRAM SERVICES

FEGS/FLI was developed with the OSY grant funds as a separate program to provide school-to-work activities for teen parents. The receipt of the GED was the primary goal that was emphasized. Participants were expected to complete GED preparation (and then pass the GED), receive services that relate to job preparation, and then be placed in jobs. The job preparation activities included group discussions on such topics as interviewing, writing resumes, and dressing for success. Several job finding workshops were also held.

The project engaged in formal recruitment during its initial phases, but there was no formal active outreach going on after it began to hit its stride. With the exception of attending "GED Fairs," where students could learn about possible GED programs, the mature project relied primarily upon word of mouth. This approach proved to be more than adequate to provide enough students to meet the limited capacity of the program in its current facility.

A variety of assessment approaches were utilized to determine who should be permitted to participate in the project and what their course work should look like. These included interviews, standardized testing, and a written essay. After interviews with program staff, testing, and the review of student application materials, each student worked with a staff member to develop an individualized service and development plan.

FEGS/FLI then provided instruction, resources, and support on an individualized basis to small groups of students - no more than fifteen to twenty in the morning and fifteen to twenty more in the afternoon. The educational services that were offered included literacy and math education, computer training (including access to the internet), GED preparation, English as a Second Language courses, career workshops, training in job search techniques, and college information and referrals. Other services included parenting workshops and family crisis services. Classes were three hours in length, with both morning and afternoon sessions available. This timetable was established because staff felt that it was not realistic to expect students to come for a seven-hour day, given their other responsibilities that typically include child care and/or work.

School-Based Learning Activities

The FEGS/FLI classroom-based learning was based upon an individualized instruction, self-paced, open-entry-open exit system in which students went through materials for each of the GED subject areas. Learning goals were scores at least 10 points above the GED passing grade. The project offered sessions on workplace basics, although they were never fully integrated with the GED preparation activities.

The project developed a number of linkages with institutions for post-secondary education. Staff worked with the Bronx Community College (BCC) and Lehman College "bridge programs" to find ways to facilitate students' getting into and staying

in these colleges. In addition, FEGS/FLI staff "talked up" college on a regular basis as an option worth considering.

The specifics of the curriculum were still a work in progress at the time that the project was terminated. Staff had begun with existing canned GED curricula, but were working to modify them. The program used specialized computer software to track progress of students in each field, providing feedback both to the individual students and to their instructors who could use it for planing their teaching for the following week(s). Instructional staff served as advisors and coaches to their students, and tried to infuse work-related examples into the materials that they used for classroom-based instruction whenever they could. Classes were supplemented with group activities and outside speakers that addressed issues related to SCANS skills and careers.

The adult literacy computer labs helped students with attainment of literacy and provided an opportunity for them to learn "hands on" about computers, which was expected to help them learn about and enter a variety of career-based options and activities.

Work-Based Learning Activities

FEGS/FLI was just beginning to plan and implement off-site work-based learning experiences as the project wound down and was terminated. A pilot job-shadowing component was underway, and plans were being made to initiate an internship program in the spring. These efforts were expected to build on the links and relationships that FEGS had already developed with employers from other school-to-work programs. By the closing months of the project, there had been four job shadowing experiences, where students were assigned to follow FEGS staff and discuss their experiences with both the staff they had shadowed and with the staff at the FEGS/FLI classroom.

Since the majority of work-based learning activities remained on the drawing board, there was no variety of quality work experiences addressing career pathways, adult worksite mentors, formal skills certificates, or systems of academic credit for work-based activities.

Connecting Activities

FEGS/FLI regularly brought speakers into the classroom to discuss careers, career planning, and issues of personal development for the students. For example, a professor from a nearby college came by and ran a session that focused on self-confidence and how to respond to people in the neighborhood who may be a bad influence on you. However, there was no formal plan for sequencing these kinds of activities over the course of a program year by the time that the program had been terminated.

Staff had the opportunity to take advantage of a wide range of professional development opportunities that were offered to all FEGS school-to-work staff as well as those of related programs.

FEGS/FLI staff stated that their students had come to them because of attendance problems at their prior schools and so a good deal of support was needed to avoid a repetition of these attendance problems. This support was provided through "soft" services such as counseling and providing referrals to a wide range of community-based organizations, and through concrete activities such as accompanying students to court dates or hearings. No stipends were offered.

As is true of so much of the FEGS/FLI model, planning for post-program placement and follow-up was done on an individualized basis. It is difficult to be sure how effective this in fact was without systematic follow-up of previous terminees.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

The FEGS/FLI proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor did not have any explicit goals other than a target for the numbers of young people who would be served. However, program staff reported that they were pleased with the fact that virtually all students stayed with the program until achieving their individual objectives.

SUSTAINABILITY

The FEGS/FLI project got under way, in large part, because of the availability of federal funding to support the effort and it was terminated after these funds were expended.

OHIO SCHOOL STUDY COUNCIL
COLUMBUS, OH

The School Study Council of Ohio's original objectives for the OSY/STW project were: 1) to utilize a system of career clusters and career majors and to clarify pathway options to reach specific employment objectives for out-of-school youth; 2) to enhance and expand existing school-to-work professional development initiatives so that out-of-school youth will be better served by school-to-work; and 3) to facilitate transitional services and/or mentors to help out-of-school youth make a positive transition from school to work. Grant funds were to be provided to several existing entities that serve out-of-school youth, primarily the North Adult High School (a public adult high school of the Columbus public school system) and Columbus Works (a six-week intensive GED preparation and job readiness program). There seems to have been little coordination between the two programs receiving funds, beyond joint involvement in community school-to-work efforts. For this reason, it is difficult to speak of a single program; rather, the initiative consisted of two programs and collaborations that served out-of-school youth in different settings.

Progress in reaching the original objectives has been slow. Project administrators were hampered in their ability to utilize a system of career pathways by a nine-month vacancy in the position of director of career clusters in the school district, among other reasons.

PARTNERSHIPS

The partners each attempted to fulfill some aspect of the proposed objectives. The principal of North Adult High School, which serves out-of-school youth and adults, served as the grant's Project Director. An out-of-school youth coordinator, hired by this high school through the grant, tutored interested youth in preparation for the GED and the state proficiency exam and advised them of activities with various partners. She also collaborated with Columbus Works to recruit new out-of-school youth to both programs. Although it was intended that she would help expose out-of-school youth to a system of career pathways already available to in-school youth, this never materialized. Grant funds also paid part of the salary of a staff member of Columbus Works. This position was designated to provide former students with post-program transitional assistance.

In a collaboration between North Adult High School, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Columbus State Community College, and Ohio State University, a summer program called "Let's Start a Career" provided career awareness and career exploration for 8 out-of-school youth.

Formal linkages were maintained with the regional school-to-work system. Employers played a minimal role in the governance of the program.

Beyond the out-of-school youth grant, funds were drawn from the resources of the adult high school and the school district, Columbus State Community College, and Ohio State University, and from Columbus Works. Funding for these organizations came from various private and public sources.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Each of the separate programs that received grant funds continued with their individual efforts.

School-Based Learning Activities

North Adult High School provides a GED program for out-of-school youth and adults. The students study individually and the material is focused on the requirements for the GED. Students' attendance is optional, and the program is free. Those interested in vocational programs will be referred to a nearby community college, but entrance typically requires completion of the GED.

Columbus Works offers an intensive six-week GED preparation program, with instruction in computer literacy and work readiness skills. The instruction occurs seven hours a day for the entire six weeks, and includes instruction in math, English, literature, social science, science, computers, career awareness, and job readiness.

Work-Based Learning Activities

Work-based learning activities are not an integral part of either of the two institutions that received substantial funding through this grant. However, youth may be referred to job sites on an individual referral basis, either during or upon completion of classroom training. These efforts are not integrated with classroom-based activities.

Connecting Activities

All programs provided support services. The adult high school had a day care center and health clinic on site, and they provided free bus passes to students with regular attendance. Similarly, Columbus Works provided referrals for day care, primary and preventive health care, substance abuse treatment, and group activities. Columbus Works also used funds from the grant to hire a Follow-up Coordinator, who was charged with providing transition services to participants in the post-program period and recruiting and training worksite mentors. The individual hired to fill this position concentrated substantial attention on providing post-program services; also, a small number of mentors were recruited and trained by the end of the grant period.

No major new efforts at professional development were accomplished during the grant period, although it was identified as one of the project's goals.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

North Adult High School was not able to provide any data regarding the numbers of out-of-school youth who completed the program. At Columbus Works during 1998, 102 youth completed the program, over 75% of those who completed reached at least

the ninth grade level in English and the sixth grade in math or gained at least one grade level, and 27 students passed the GED exam.

SUSTAINABILITY

Both Columbus Works and North Adult High School proceeded with refining their models during the grant period, but no major systemic reforms were accomplished. It is unlikely that either of the additional staff persons that were hired with grant funds can be retained.

PHOENIX YOUTHSKILLED
PHOENIX, AZ

The City of Phoenix Human Services Department's YouthSkilled Program provides a strong model for adapting school-to-work services to the out-of-school youth population. This program has a strong partnership and a training program organized around a specific career pathway (manufacturing technology) that provides youth with exposure to all aspects of the industry. Project staff and partners have integrated academic, vocational, and work-based learning components to some extent, although the integration of the various components has provided some challenges.

PARTNERSHIPS

City of Phoenix Human Services Department, the lead agency, has forged strong partnerships with a number of partners for its school-to-work program. Support from key stakeholders is evident—especially employers, adult high schools, and CBOs. Key stakeholders—the City, Metro Tech Vocational Institute of Phoenix, employers, the Labor Community Service Agency—have donated a substantial amount of their expertise, time, and organizational resources to the planning, governance, and implementation of the City of Phoenix Human Services Department's YouthSkilled project. The high school district and the Chamber of Commerce have also been involved at different times in the project planning and implementation. The Program Director estimated that key partners will have donated a total of $211,166 in resources to support the project. These funds come from multiple sources—local, state, public, and private entities.

Although employers do not play a formal role in the governance of the school-to-work partnership, they were active and visible in the grant development and curriculum planning, and provided a range of services such as career exploration activities and work-based learning opportunities.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Recruitment for the program coincided with recruitment for the Phoenix YouthBuild program, a related initiative serving out-of-school youth. Doing so leveraged media involvement and increased training options for those who responded to recruitment efforts.

Once youth were selected into the YouthSkilled program, classroom and work-based learning opportunities were organized around one career pathway—manufacturing technology. Participants were sufficiently exposed to all aspects of the manufacturing technology industry through exploration of different career options, vocational classroom training, and work-based learning activities. According to one employer, the realistic orientation to the world of manufacturing technology, provided

early in the program, gave participants the opportunity to decide if they wanted to pursue careers in this industry.

The program was structured in the following way:

- Phase I (Jan.- April): Students attend classes 40 hours per week (morning and afternoon) with 1 hour of academic synthesis (GED training).
- Phase II (April – August): Students attend vocational and life skills classes in the morning and are placed in entry-level training positions with employers in the afternoons.
- Phase III (August-December): Once students are ready, they can progress into 100% OJT.

School-Based Learning activities

Staff clearly expected all participants to establish a basic foundation in applied math (fractions, conversion, basic geometry and trigonometry) for measurement skills and blueprint reading. Also, participants were expected to meet their GED requirements and pass the appropriate tests. Because of the youths' limited education backgrounds, few were expected to go on to post-secondary education.

A strong feature of the practical, hands-on learning of the manufacturing technology program was that workplace basics and learning in an applied context were well integrated with participants' academic learning. Several participants commented that the classroom-based training in machining and welding were interesting and had relevance to their work-based training lessons.

Work-Based Learning Activities

The work-based learning seemed to embody many of the principles of school-to-work. For example, one employer distinctly defined skills and competencies associated with the work-based learning activities. The vocational skills that youth developed during the worksite training had to build on a solid understanding of mathematical concepts of measurements; thus, the integration of academic and vocational skills was evident. In addition, the on-site work-based learning reflected realities of the workplace. Trainees were encouraged to be treated no differently than other employees. Youth rotated through all departments in the company to give them exposure to all aspects of the industry. Finally, skill certification and academic credit were given for their participation and progress in this part of the training program.

Connecting Activities

Classroom and work-based learning were integrated in a number of ways. To begin with, employers played a role in designating which basic competencies and skills (especially applied math skills) participants had to master in their classroom component. They also played a role in providing career exploration activities during the classroom component. Once students were placed with employers, employers built upon

knowledge and skills that students learned in their classes. The YouthSkilled program also hired a worksite learning coordinator and case manager to ensure that the work-based and classroom-based activities were well connected. Participants were closely monitored by YouthSkilled staff and regularly assessed while on the worksite by employers to ensure that they were making adequate progress.

The City of Phoenix Human Services Department did not provide ongoing professional development for worksite and program staff around incorporation of school-to-work principles; however, the YouthSkilled staff attend a retreat twice a year for team-building purposes to reflect on the project's visions and goals and collectively identify strategies to maintain these goals.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

As of November 1998, 23 applicants have been recruited, 16 students enrolled, 7 positively terminated with a job or education placement, 3 transferred to other programs, and 4 students negatively terminated. While only 4 have completed their GED, 6 youths have been placed in training-related jobs.

SUSTAINABILITY

The development and implementation of YouthSkilled, from the YouthBuild model, was the major accomplishment during the grant period. YouthSkilled will be sustained, with minor improvements to the program design, with additional funding that the grantee has secured. There are also plans to expand the model to add additional career pathways.

RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE ACADEMY
WARWICK, RI

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships surrounding the Chamber Education Foundation's (CEF) Commerce Academy are based on long-term relationships, particularly with the employer community, and are informal, but committed in nature. Through this grant, CEF has played an important role in forging a more cohesive, partnership-oriented approach to working with the out-of-school population. The parent organization is very active in state school-to-work efforts, and is being called upon to assist in developing a statewide strategic plan for serving out-of-school youth.

Employers were involved in validating the SCANS skills as the foundation for the Certificate of Workforce Readiness (CWR) curriculum, a credential developed to certify generic workplace skills. In addition, as part of the Certificate of Industry Readiness (CIR) credentials, CEF is engaging employers in retail, customer service, and accounting in developing industry-specific curricula.

CEF and the Community College of Rhode Island are continuing to work on formalizing articulation agreements that will grant preferred admission to Commerce Academy graduates who earn the Certificate of Workforce Readiness. The Director of Institutional Advancement at CCRI is a member of the Warwick School-to-Career Partnership Management team and is involved in all of the Foundation's School-to-Career work. The Chamber of Commerce (from which CEF originated), the Warwick Public Schools, and the state school-to-work office have provided more general support and encouragement than formal partnership activities and responsibilities.

PROGRAM SERVICES

The Commerce Academy serves out-of-school youth 18 years and older who are committed and ready to build workforce readiness and academic skills necessary to get and keep a job. Participants are recruited specifically for the project, using multiple forms of outreach and recruitment (PSAs on local television, flyers, welfare check inserts, coordination with the welfare department and department of human services).

Intake is focused on finding committed and motivated participants and ensuring they understand the goals and objectives of the program. The admissions process includes an interview to determine the youth's degree of interest and commitment, and an application. Applicants must also have a minimum 6th grade command of English and math. Approximately 1 out of 3 applicants are not accepted, often due to attitudinal issues—e.g., the applicant is believed to be there for the wrong reason or realizes the program is not for them (e.g., they just want their GED).

Once enrolled, each learner completes the APTICOM career interest test within the first few weeks of the program. Results are used as the basis for helping to organize each learner's specific program—where to start with GED preparation and other skill-building exercises and for talking with learners about career options. Career coaches meet with each learner to discuss results of the APTICOM test and show them how to use resources to research particular career clusters, and the forecasts, salaries and training requirements for particular career areas.

The project offers one credentialing program – the Certificate of Workforce Readiness (CWR) – and is currently developing another credentialing program: the Certificate of Industry Readiness (CIR) in a variety of careers, including customer service, retail, and accounting. The CWR is not organized around a specific industry, but, instead, prepares learners for a range of entry-level positions in the corporate, non-profit, or government sectors. The CIR (which requires attainment of the CWR) provides an advanced credential of industry-specific knowledge and skills and is entirely based on industry-specific contextual learning. The CIR will provide learners with exposure to many aspects of the industry, in particular, verbal job-related exercises, occupation-specific terminology, and safety regulations and procedures. Learners will gain additional on-site exposure to the specific occupation through internships that will be part of the overall curriculum. CEF began developing its first CIR program, in Telecommunications, during the grant period. For various reasons, it was stymied in its efforts, and has since moved to develop a CIR in Customer Service.

Participants attend the Commerce Academy 20 hours per week either for the morning or afternoon sessions (8:30-12:30 or 12:30-4:30). The program is open-entry/open-exit.

School-Based Learning Activities

Through a combination of computer-aided instruction and skill-building activities (video, team assignments, and written work), learners in the CWR program complete and attain "records of achievement" in a number of work readiness areas. These areas include:

1. Personal management skills (motivation, problem-solving, time management).
2. Communication skills (communicating in the workplace, effective listening, etc.).
3. A two-stage work-based internship that provides exposure to various aspects of the industry and focuses on teamwork and communication.
4. Academic skills (through GED practice tests, computer-based tutorials and achievement of GED or high school diploma).

5. Workforce literacy skills (through JSEP[1] job-related math and verbal skills and completion of TABE) [optional].
6. Technology skills (including Windows, word processing, data base and spreadsheet applications, standard office equipment, and introduction to the internet).
7. Employability skills (including resume and job application preparation, interviewing skills, career exploration, and job search skills).

The newly developed CIR curriculum in Customer Service covers several skill areas, including phone skills, workplace etiquette, and money management, and is tied to "First Impressions" – a boutique-style second-hand clothing store operated as a school-based enterprise.

Participants are encouraged to continue with post-secondary education, and a field trip to the Community College of Rhode Island is included as part of the curriculum.

Work-Based Learning Activities

With the recent establishment of First Impressions, each CWR student completes two work-based experiences. Early on, they work in the store's back room – marking, sorting, ironing, preparing, etc. Then, toward the end of their time at CEF, they work in the front as sales clerks, setting up displays, etc. Prior to First Impressions, CEF had minimal work-based learning activities.

Connecting Activities

The overall philosophy and organization of the program is geared toward preparing out-of-school youth and young adults for work. Given this, all learning is organized in a work-related context. Knowledge and skills in each of the key program areas (personal management, communication skills, teamwork skills, workforce literacy skills, technology skills and employability skills) are learned in work-related contexts (e.g., conflict resolution skills include work-related case studies).

A broad cross section of employers was involved in validating the SCANS as the foundation for the CWR curriculum. Fleet Bank has contacted CEF around the possibility of a joint training program in banking/finance, and CEF is building a relationship with the Rhode Island Retail Association to assist with and validate the CIR in retail trade.

All staff attend the State STC conference, and staff are encouraged to take advantage of relevant staff development training in the area. Additionally, the last

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[1] Job Skills Education Program (JSEP) is a computerized academic basic skills program for adults. JSEP consists of a pool of lessons from which items are drawn to form a "prescription" for any of 250 specific occupations. Computer-assisted instruction is used to teach practical, job-related reading and math skills.

Friday of every month is an in-house staff development day. The Commerce Academy also holds regular meetings where staff discuss how things are going, what might need to be added to the program, and how each learner is doing. Staff are also encouraged to discuss problems or issues that have come up during that time period. In part, these meetings serve as ongoing support and problem-solving professional development sessions.

CEF has built strong relationships with key stakeholders, including area employers, school officials and administrators, and the Employment and Training Board, all of whom are aware of and support the program. CEF has created multiple fact sheets, flyers, an annual report, and a periodic RI Commerce Academy Newsletter for participants, alumni, and friends.

The process of linking learners with other organizations to meet their needs is informal—staff talk to learners and, upon discovering an issue or barrier, provide learners with information about other organizations or people in the community who might be able to help them. The key issues/support services needs of participants seem to include transportation, child care, housing, financial assistance, mental health, emotional counseling, and domestic violence issues.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

CEF has clear goals and objectives for assessing participant outcomes. First, the curriculum itself is competency-based, and, for each program component, there is a clear list of activities and skill areas that must be mastered. The key outcome is for participants to secure employment or enter post-secondary education; however, staff also talked about key interim outcomes, such as increased confidence and self-esteem, and having hope for their future and courage.

Specific outcomes measured through tracking enrollees and follow-up calls at 6 and 12 months to graduates revealed that 105 learners have achieved the Certificate of Workforce Readiness (CWR) out of a total of 304 total enrollees; 22% of the graduates of the Commerce Academy go on to post-secondary education or further education; and 70% of graduates are placed in jobs (based on a 6-month follow-up call).

SUSTAINABILITY

The CEF Director is clear that they fully intend to sustain the project. The credentialing, the strong connection to the employer community and the sense that employers are the ultimate customers, and the entrepreneurial venture of opening a self-sustaining business to be run and operated by the learners all point to a sustained effort from this project. As an example, First Impressions was created as the OSY funding was phasing out, and is now a critical part of the program design. CEF's long term sustainability plan rests with employer buy-in and support, as the project hopes to convince employers to invest in CWR and CIR training to build a stronger and well-prepared workforce for the area.

YAKIMA VALLEY OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER: YAKIMA, WA

PARTNERSHIPS

Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) is part of a community-wide partnership committed to school-to-work. This commitment is reflected in three interrelated initiatives, each of which focuses on developing different aspects of the county-wide school-to-work system. In the first, OIC is a sub-grantee to the Tri-Valley PIC in the Urban/Rural STW Opportunity Mid-Valley School-to-Work Transition Project. In the second, the Lower Yakima Valley STW Consortium has taken the lead in teacher professional development, which includes training on strategies to align school-to-work principles with educational reform, and it has spearheaded the creation of five career pathways that are now recognized throughout the county. OIC teachers participate in the professional development training offered through the consortium, and OIC operates alternative schools for three of the four Local Educational Agencies in that consortium. Finally, the Yakima Valley Tech Prep Consortium has initiated the development of integrated academic and vocational offerings that create a bridge between high school and postsecondary education. OIC coordinates with the Tech Prep Consortium to place students enrolled in five of the alternative middle/high schools and the one adult high school into consortium-sponsored secondary and postsecondary vocational instruction programs. Stakeholders in the three school-to-work initiatives continue to provide strong support for OIC's programs.

In addition to the partnerships mentioned above, the Yakima School District (YSD) supports OIC through an Education Coordination Agreement for the purpose of coordinating services under school-to-work or related programs. YSD refers youth to OIC's EXCEL Alternative High School and transfers state average daily attendance (ADA) dollars to pay for their education. They also collaborate to provide school-based learning opportunities and/or information and assistance in obtaining appropriate documents and facilitating releases of information.

Another key partnership exists between OIC and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). Under a contract agreement, NWREL provides workshops and training for alternative-school educators on school-to-work curriculum integration and community-based learning.

OIC also has various non-financial agreements with employers to provide training to youth. Employers are involved as well through the Yakima County Business Education Compact, "a business-led organization committed to providing equal access and opportunity for quality education and training for all residents in preparation for the ever-changing demands of the workplace." Additionally, public and private non-profit organizations provide job shadowing and work experience.

OIC leverages funds from a variety of sources including the state education agency, JTPA, and other school-to-work grants. The alternative school operated by OIC uses state education (ADA) dollars, and some of the youth in the alternative school are co-enrolled in JTPA. Through JTPA funding, OIC has been developing school-to-work components over the past few years, including work maturity/pre-employment skills, linkages with employers, and connecting activities. Finally, CBOs work with OIC to provide supportive services, such as child care, drug and alcohol treatment, crisis intervention, and homeless services.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Effective recruitment strategies are in place through OIC's agreement with the YSD to provide referrals. Attendance and retention are typically a problem with this population. Many EXCEL students withdraw and re-enroll more than once. Each day during first period, a counselor/liaison tracks down students who are absent by calling their homes and/or parents' workplaces. The liaison also conducts home visits to talk with parents about youths' progress.

OIC provides academic instruction leading to a high school diploma or GED. With the OSY grant, they proposed to enrich their services. Some of the school-to-work activities to be added were portfolios, career pathways, and life skills and pre-employment training. Work-based learning activities were to include vocational exploration, job shadowing, and work experience.

School-Based Learning Activities

Courses offered at EXCEL that satisfy the State Board of Education requirements for high school graduation include: English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Health, Occupational Education, Restricted Electives, and Electives, for a total of 22 credits and 66 trimester classes. Because OIC does not have a laboratory, EXCEL students are sent to nearby high schools to fulfill the requirement of one laboratory science credit. During the grant period, teachers received a substantial amount of training around integrating school-to-work principles into their curriculum. They are each in different stages of integration, but are working as a team to develop a formal integrated curriculum for the school, from which they can train incoming EXCEL teachers in the next term. These efforts are still underway.

Special pull-out classes were added to provide training in life skills, pre-employment/work maturity skills, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Much of the content for these classes is borrowed from OIC's JTPA program and is taught by a JTPA staff member.

OIC hopes to structure classes and curriculum around the five career pathways recognized by county school-to-work entities. The pathways are Business/Marketing, Technology/Engineering, Health and Human Services, Arts and Communications, and Agriculture and Environment. During the grant period, these pathways were not infused into the curriculum, despite their plans to do so.

Work-Based Learning Activities

Within the realm of work-based learning activities that were proposed, job shadowing was the only activity that was formalized for all students. Late in the grant period, staff made a big push to get all students signed up for a job shadow. To support this effort, staff recruited several employers who were willing to take small groups of students for job shadows. The job shadow activity involved of the students fairly intensive written assignments and evaluations, but, unfortunately, the job shadows were not always relevant to students' career interests.

Some students also participate in a school-based enterprise. Students produce various items (e.g., key chains, ornaments) and operate a student store where the items are sold.

Beyond these activities, the work experience component has not yet been developed into a formalized system whereby staff would develop work slots in which students could receive supervised on-the-job experiences in careers of interest. Rather, students either have jobs that they had prior to enrolling in EXCEL, or some (very few) have received jobs through the help of EXCEL. Several barriers to implementing a formal system of work experience were cited, including students' need for a certain level of earnings to support themselves and family members.

Connecting Activities

OIC utilized technical assistance funds to contract with NWREL to provide training for teachers around integrating curriculum with school-to-work principles and community-based learning. This relationship turned out to be crucial for the OIC teachers. Working as a team with an outside training entity, rather than being handed a new curriculum by school administrators, gives teachers a sense of ownership and has them excited about future possibilities.

Teachers at OIC also were to obtain in-service training needed to utilize the on-site Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) computer-assisted learning laboratories. They were to learn how to guide students through the full range of CCP programs and compact discs, to explore careers and identify career majors within the five career pathways, and to learn about postsecondary education and/or training options.

Case management is an available JTPA service and as such serves those EXCEL students who are co-enrolled in JTPA. OIC staff work with a number of agencies and organizations to arrange services for participants. They help youth access substance abuse services, child care, transportation, family and domestic violence counseling, health and mental health services. OIC also has a Community Service Department, which offers Food Bank services, Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), and the assistance of an ombudsman.

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

Measurable outcome goals include serving 75 students with school-based learning, including 75 initiating student portfolios and 60 receiving career development; and serving 75 students in work-based learning, including vocational exploration/job shadowing and work experience. As of the final quarterly report, OIC reported meeting or exceeding all of these targets.

SUSTAINABILITY

The EXCEL alternative high school will continue to serve young people through ADA funding. The efforts to integrate curriculum with school-to-work principles, begun under this grant, will hopefully lead to a transformed curriculum that will continue to be used by existing staff and future staff. Pull-out classes on employability themes will most likely continue. Because the Employer Services Specialist position will not continue without the OSY funding, employer recruitment and job development will be sustained only to the extent that teaching staff assume these extra duties.

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