

Youth related excerpts from the ...

Workforce Demand-Based Strategic Plan

Gaps: Youth

Youth Gap 1: Truancy

Potential truants are not engaged in school. The system for addressing truancy is not working effectively. Youth learn the system and become masters of how to avoid being identified as dropouts or qualified as "alternative students". Truancy regulations are not followed consistently. Parents often leave for work before the child goes to school, and are unaware their children are not at school. Parents often lack life skills to work with the behavior problems of their children. School systems, courts, parents groups, social services, cooperative education, business, and community action groups all must work together to address truancy problems. Truancy very frequently leads to dropping out of school.

Bridge:

- K-4: Provide life skills training for parents and custodians to prevent students from becoming truants in later years.
- Middle School: (75% of dropouts are 9th grade students) Reward WDB program students who have good attendance. Example: For every ten consecutive school days a student goes to school, that student will receive a free movie ticket or rental.
- High School: The WDB and the Youth Council will assist Area III school divisions in developing SOL directed, workforce focused curricula. The WDB and the Youth Council will facilitate business partnerships with Area III school divisions to provide internships and incentives for students to remain in school. This would include involving employers in the classroom to emphasize to students that a high school diploma or GED is a requirement for successful employment.
- Work with school systems and Junior Achievement to incorporate *Economics to Stay in School* class into the curricula at all at risk schools.

Youth Gap 2: Homebound Instruction

Youth receive homebound instruction for behavioral and medical reasons. These students frequently do not receive the pre-employment, work maturity or social skills training that other youth receive in the public school environment. These students usually receive a maximum of two hours daily/10 hours per week of instruction. Often, homebound instruction does not provide appropriate academic skills.

Bridge:

- Work with social services and the school systems to find creative solutions for homebound students.
- Work with employers to find part time jobs for homebound students that will provide on the job training.

Youth Gap 3: Employment for Disabled Youth

Youths who are developmentally disabled or severely physically disabled have very few options for employment or on-the-job training. Parents often do not understand the system. Services provided at no charge end at age 22. There is no easily identifiable program that will link these individuals to continuing education programs. Furthermore, many employers have not developed or used programs like on-the-job training that would benefit youths who have few skills and abilities on which to build. Schools, parents, employers and community action groups, like Goodwill, DRS, Project Train-IT and businesses must unite to find positive solutions for youths with disabilities.

Bridge:

- Identify the number of disabled youth. Determine how many of these youths can be served by our partners and how many additional disabled youth need to be served.

Youth Gap 4: Alternative Program Youth Vocational Training

Youth enrolled in alternative programs in some school divisions are not likely to receive vocational skills training because they may not be permitted on school campuses due to past behavioral problems. This limits training availability to youth even when a program may be able to assist with the cost. Schools, community colleges, and community action agencies must partner to provide vocational skills training to students in alternative programs.

Bridge:

- Identify students who are not receiving training.
- Evaluate skills/needs.
- Make referrals to Job Corps when appropriate.
- Provide adaptive individualized vocational training such as entrepreneurship programs.
- Find partners to work on solving behavioral problems.

Youth Gap 5: Occupational Skills Training: (masonry, auto mechanics, electrical, construction)

While there are instruments in place to assess the occupational needs of area employers, more input from local businesses is needed to strengthen occupational education. Partners needed are WDB, Job Corps, VEC, community colleges, schools, training providers, youth programs chambers of commerce and the business community.

Bridge:

- Coordinate with the business community and organizations such as the VEC, Roanoke Valley Regional Alliance, Roanoke College, and Virginia Western Community College who gather workforce related data to assess workforce needs.
- Coordinate with providers of vocational education to ensure that necessary training opportunities are provided in WIA Area III.

Youth Gap 6: Youth Perceived as Dropouts: (under the age of 18)

Many youth perceived to be dropouts (under 18) are not identified as dropouts and are therefore not referred to alternative programs. Community action agencies, adult education, and schools must work together to ensure that these students no longer fall through the cracks of a system designed to serve their specific needs.

Bridge:

- Identify and consistently refer drop-outs and perceived dropouts to out-of-school programs provided by the WDB.
- Give students incentive to enroll in alternative programs.
- Engage students in school. (see Gap 1: Truancy).