

**CYFAR Conference Proposal
2007**

Title Of Proposal:

Developing High Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences: Examples from Ohio's CYFAR Project.

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CYFAR Program Area:

Teens

Integrated Program Components:

COMMUNITY
SUSTAINABILITY

Audience Experience Level:

Intermediate

Maximum Number:

25-50

Preferred Format:

Workshop (90 minutes)

Title of Proposal:

Developing High Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences: Examples from Ohio's CYFAR Project.

60 word proposal description

Preparing youth for the workforce is a major concern, especially for at-risk teens. What are the principles of practice for providing youth with meaningful work-based learning experiences? Learn from staff and Ohio 4-H teens about important principles, program components, and evaluation strategies. Participants will leave with ideas and resources to enhance or start a new program.

500-word Abstract

Preparing youth for the workforce is a major concern in U.S. society. In the last 30 years, the skills required for youth to succeed in the economy have changed radically, but the skills emphasized in schools have not changed at the same pace (Murnane & Levy, 1996; SCANS, 1991). Thus, youth lack the skills essential for job success and are entering the workplace unprepared (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). In 1991, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report concluded that American high school students need to develop a new set of competencies and foundation skills if they want to enjoy a productive and satisfying work life. Fifteen years later, research is showing that applied skills (i.e., SCANS Competencies) may trump foundation skills. These applied skills, such as communication, problem solving, and teamwork, refer to those skills that enable individuals to use basic knowledge acquired in school to perform in the workplace (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

Developing applied skills for the workforce is vitally important for at-risk youth. Numerous obstacles, such as the rising demand for technical skills and the emphasis on applied skills in the 21st century, translate into serious challenges for workers of color, particularly in urban communities (Moss & Tilly, 2001). Opening doors to high quality jobs through experiences that build applied skills and expand the view of career opportunities is critical.

After-school and out-of-school programs have been suggested as the ideal place to focus on developing skills needed for the 21st century workforce (Schwarz & Stolow, 2006). Ohio's two CYFAR sites (Columbus and Dayton) have developed successful work-based learning programs for teens. Although there are differences between the two sites, the programs are similar in terms of the principles that guide them. Work-based learning experiences are practical opportunities

that integrate work and learning. They involve performing real work that is structured, supervised by an on-site adult mentor, and evaluated. Participants' learning is facilitated by reflecting on what they have learned through their experiences.

Drawing from the literature, existing curricula, and experiences at Ohio's CYFAR sites, this session will highlight principles for developing quality work-based learning programs that build on a philosophy of positive youth development. Evaluation shows that by self-report and their supervisors' assessment, youth participants in these programs have made significant gains in workforce skills. The areas discussed will include: (a) roles and training of adult mentors (worksite supervisors); (b) designing work experiences that are intentional, meaningful, challenging, practical, and feasible and are also learning experiences; (c) program management practices including participant recruitment, staffing, partnerships, participant incentives (including paid and unpaid roles), and funding; (d) sufficient participation "dosage" to achieve results; and (e) assessment and evaluation strategies.

A team of Extension staff and 4-H teens will lead this presentation, highlighting principles by sharing program examples and lessons learned. In a panel discussion format allowing ample time for questions, teens will share what they learned from their work experiences. CYFAR conference participants will gain an understanding of the current skills emphasized by employers and the current literature. They will receive program overviews, resources, and evaluation tools that can be adapted to conducting programs in their communities.

Preferred Format:

1 = Workshop

2 = Poster Session

3 = Program Showcase

N/A Computer Lab

Yes, willing to present as Program Showcase