

After-School Programs and Workforce Preparation: Exploring the Opportunities to Prepare Youth for the 21st Century Knowledge Economy

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Preparing youth for the workforce has taken on new meaning in the 21st century. A shift from the industrial age to the knowledge economy has created widespread concern that young people lack the skills essential for job success and are entering the workplace unprepared (Levy & Murnane, 2006; Murnane & Levy, 1996; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003; Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills [SCANS], 1991). Nearly all the attention on remedies for the skills gap has focused on education reforms that are school-based. However, learning cuts across both the school day and after-school hours (Pittman, Irby, Yohalem, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004), suggesting that youth development organizations can play an important role.

Lack of skills is only part of the concern. Another aspect of the issue appears to be lack of opportunity (America's Promise, 2007; Joyce & Neumark, 2001). America's Promise (2007) data suggest that young people are still lacking opportunities to develop skills when they are outside the school doors. Although after-school programs are recognized as a key resource in preparation for the world of work, their potential has yet to be realized (Schwarz & Stolow, 2006).

After-school programs have expanded greatly in the past decade. Although fewer after-school programs target middle school and high school youth, interest is growing in programs that address their unique needs (Hall, Israel, & Shortt, 2004; Miller, 2003; Pittman, Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, & Ferber, 2003; Wynn, 2003). Youth development professionals recognize that adolescence is a time of major developmental changes. Adolescents are expected to acquire a range of skills that will help them to make a successful transition to adulthood (Zarrett &

Eccles, 2006). As well, identity development is a major adolescent developmental task (Harter, 1993; Kroger, 2000; McIntosh, Metz, & Youniss, 2005; Thomas, 1992; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). Researchers concur that opportunities to hold meaningful roles and carry out real responsibilities are important to adolescents, as they are critical to the development of both identity and initiative (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Kroger, 2000; Larson, 2000). Workforce preparation should be part of the discussion as after-school programs evaluate how to add or enhance opportunities for adolescents.

From our vantage point as youth development professionals with experience leading after-school and workforce preparation programs, we think an even greater impact can be made with a more intentional focus on the complementary nature of a youth development approach and workforce preparation. In this paper, we will build a case, based on theory, research, and our experience, as to the role that after-school programs and youth development organizations can play. First, we provide a brief discussion of background issues related to adolescent employment and skills young people need for success. Next, we will define workforce preparation and review the youth development approach. We will focus on work-based learning, a subset of programs particularly relevant for adolescents, reviewing principles and key ingredients that should be considered. Finally, we discuss the opportunities for workforce preparation programming within youth development organizations.

BACKGROUND ON ADOLESCENT EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE SKILLS

Youth development practitioners should have an understanding of two major topics as background for understanding the current context of workforce preparation: adolescent employment and the skills needed for success in the 21st century. First, much has been written about adolescent employment including the nature and extent (who works, what kind of jobs,

how much they are working) and research on benefits and detriments to working. It is clear that most American adolescents are working, especially during their high school years. There is also evidence suggesting both detrimental and beneficial aspects of these work experiences. We believe existing research on adolescent employment can inform the work of youth development professionals in a variety of ways.

- We should view work neither as all good nor all bad. Rather, we should seek to emphasize the factors that contribute to a positive work experience and minimize those that create negative conditions. The potential for adolescent employment to be a positive experience depends on the quality of the work environment and the degree of connection between work and other contexts.
- We should not assume that all jobs are created equal or that all adolescents experience work in the same way. We must take into account that there are individual and community differences that influence adolescents' experiences: if and when they enter the workforce, the kind of work they do, and what they get out of it.
- We should consider how to make connections with employers to ensure a quality work experience.
- We should recognize that the family is often a silent partner when it comes to workforce preparation and consider how we can involve parents in this process.

By design or default, adolescents make important decisions that affect their future in the world of work. How adolescent employment can be a stepping stone to future workplace success is a topic requiring further consideration. The answer is not more work but better structured work experiences (Brown, 2001). Workforce preparation programs are part of the answer.

Secondly, a gap between skills desired by employers and the skills those entering the workforce possess has been the subject of research publications, white papers, and the popular press. While those surveyed and the intended audience of the publications vary from youth development and K-12 education to higher education and the business sector, the message is the same: The nature of work has changed, there is a widening gap between the skills employers need and the capabilities of new entrants to the workforce, and the issue is very important for our future.

While the language or organizing frameworks differ, SCANS (1991) and other national studies (Carnevale, 1991; National Academy of Sciences, 1984) from the same time period align well with skills identified by current research (ASTD, 2006; BHEF, 2003; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; International Society for Technology in Education [ISTE], 2007; Levy & Murnane, 2006). Cochran and Lekies (2008) synthesized across these sources and identified a framework of workforce skills needed for success in the 21st century knowledge economy. Drawing from the current literature and practitioner experience, six general categories of skills were identified including thinking skills, communication, teamwork and leadership, lifelong learning and self-direction, technology adoption and application, and professionalism and ethics. Table 1 describes each of these areas.

Insert Table #1 here

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AS A PROGRAM FOCUS IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The importance of workforce preparation is clear when it is considered in relation to issues raised about adolescent employment along with concerns about the skills gap. Viewed from a youth development lens, workforce preparation is inclusive of a variety of ages from early childhood through adulthood and is focused on non-formal educational settings that involve active participation in intentional learning experiences. It is best viewed as a process consisting of a range of experiences that introduce young people to the world of work, not as a one-time event (DeCoursey & Skyles, 2007; Ferrari, 2003). Such a network of programs is designed to help young people to explore career opportunities, to acquire applied skills needed for success in the knowledge economy, to develop work readiness skills (e.g., how to get a job, interview, complete applications), and to gain experience in the workforce. The following quote embodies this perspective:

This continuum does not begin with immediate involvement with employers. Rather, youth are encouraged to explore their interests with educators and program providers while learning about the behavioral expectations of the workplace. Only when youth have achieved greater knowledge of and practice in meeting workplace expectations coupled with an understanding of their own interests and identity are they connected to employers. This approach to providing workforce preparation experiences is intentional and requires great commitment of funders, program administrators, and program providers. Such an approach will likely increase commitment among employers to remain involved and perhaps expand their involvement and should be explored by program

providers seeking to improve their engagement with youth and employers. (DeCoursey & Skyles, 2007, p. 47)

Skills for Work Are Skills for Life

As we engaged our co-workers in discussions on workforce preparation, they expressed some concern that a focus on skills to make young people better workers was too narrow. However, many of the skills discussed as critical for success in the 21st century workforce are the same skills needed to be capable, competent, and contributing citizens and family members (Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Levin, 1994). While technology has simplified or eliminated routine tasks, social issues have become increasingly complex. Even personal affairs including shopping and financial decisions require people to acquire new knowledge from a variety of media and process complex information (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). While our discussion will focus on helping young people develop skills employers need, it is clear that both schools and community-based youth programs are also preparing young people to be better citizens and contributing members of society, in addition to preparing them with skills for success in the workforce.

Making the Case – Why Workforce Preparation in Youth Development Organizations?

After-school programs have been suggested as the ideal place to focus on developing skills needed for the 21st century workforce (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Schwarz & Stollow, 2006). This suggestion makes sense from a youth development perspective, for several reasons.

- **Adolescent’s developmental needs** - Youth development programs are in a good position to ensure that workforce preparation programs are in alignment with adolescents’ developmental needs. There is a growing body of research that points to the

ability of youth development programs to serve as positive developmental settings, (e.g., Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Little & Harris, 2003; Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002). In contrast to school, such programs are characterized by voluntary participation, and youth experience higher levels of motivation and interest in these activities (Larson, 2000; Vandell, Shernoff, Pierce, Bolt, Dadisman, & Brown, 2005).

- **Track record of developing 21st century skills** - Evidence from a variety of studies shows that when teens do participate in programs, they indicate they have learned valuable skills such as interpersonal skills, social competence, and connections with adult role models (Hansen & Larson, 2007). Research suggests that to derive the most benefits youth must participate with sufficient frequency, over a long enough period of time, and in a variety of activities (Fredricks, & Eccles, 2006; Rose-Krasnor, Busseri, Willoughby, & Chalmers, 2006; Vandell et al., 2005).
- **Ability to tailor programs** - Youth development programs often have the autonomy to create a curriculum that is tailored to the community and audience needs. These characteristics make them suited to playing a role in workforce preparation.
- **Complimentary learning** - Children and youth benefit from a coherent continuum of learning opportunities in various contexts, the type generally provided by youth development programs (Harvard Family Research Project, n.d.). Authentic learning experiences provided by youth development programs can help reduce boundaries between formal and non-formal education (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003), thereby serving to connect the various contexts of adolescent life.

- **Critical role of adults** - Studies show that opportunities to interact with positive adult role models and have meaningful responsibilities are present in youth development programs (Hansen, Larsen, & Dworkin, 2003), but not often in the jobs typically available to teens (Bryant, Zvonkovic, Raskauskas, & Peters, 2004).

In summary, when they are situated in the context of positive youth development organizations, workforce preparation programs can engage youth through distinct but connected experiences. Some youth development organizations have created programs explicitly to develop workforce skills (Blalock, Streiter, & Hughes, 2006; Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran, in press; Halpern, 2006; Kraft, 2001; Lobley & Peronto, 2007). Experiences youth have in such programs contribute to their overall development. Our conception of workforce preparation programs is not simply about getting a job, nor is the focus to prepare youth for specific jobs. Rather, through intentional programmatic efforts, youth development professionals can create authentic learning experiences that complement the formal education system and facilitate the development of skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

A Positive Youth Development Approach

A positive youth development approach is based on the premise that youth are resources to be developed (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004; Lerner, 2005; Lerner, Dowling, & Andersen, 2003; Witt & Caldwell, 2005). In contrast to the deficit perspective, current models focus on the concept of thriving, which goes beyond simply eliminating negative behaviors. Youth development organizations aim to promote “Six Cs” in youth (Lerner, 2004; Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001).

There is general agreement that certain key features characterize positive developmental settings (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). When these features are in place, it is more likely that young

people's developmental needs will be met. Programs that provide these elements address young people's needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity (Kress, 2006) and in turn enable them to develop positively and contribute to society (Lerner, 2006; Lerner et al., 2005). These key features, needs of youth, and outcomes are illustrated in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here.

Two features are particularly relevant for this discussion: supportive adults and engagement in learning.

Supportive adults. Quality youth development programs are characterized by positive adult-youth interaction (Eccles & Gootman; Ferrari & Turner, 2006; Grossman, Campbell, & Raley, 2007; Paisley & Ferrari, 2005) and typically have better adult to youth ratios (Hansen & Larson, 2007). We know that such relationships are critical in providing a safe and supportive environment for youth to take on new challenges and develop their skills (Grossman & Bulle, 2006; Pearce & Larson, 2006; Rhodes, 2004). Adults provide both caring and instrumental support (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). However, adults walk a fine line as they offer the appropriate balance of guidance as young people take on new responsibilities (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005). Larson (2006) explains the dilemma: "too much structure or direction from adults can lead to loss of youth ownership, whereas supporting youth ownership as the top priority can mean that youth are not being challenged to grow and develop" (p. 683). Adults must guide youth to develop in appropriate ways. To address this dilemma, workforce preparation programs should be built on a program model that engages youth as partners with adult mentors who share common goals. Furthermore, these relationships should allow youth to

develop human capital, meaning they accumulate personal resources that have value within a workforce setting (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2000; Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005).

Engagement in learning. Youth development programs emphasize learning in a fun way (Hamilton et al., 2004). There is an emphasis on learning new skills with opportunities to showcase accomplishments and gain recognition, but the emphasis is on mastery, not on being tested and graded. The activities provide opportunities for participants to exercise self-determination and leadership, learn how to make decisions, and work cooperatively with others. Often, youth assume leadership positions where they serve as role models for younger participants, as well as interacting with adults (Digby & Ferrari, 2007). Overall, these experiences enhance adolescents' needs for identity development because they test out new roles and relationships.

In conclusion, youth development programs provide support and opportunities for youth as they transition through key phases of their life, including the school-to-work transition. Although it has become normative for adolescents to work part-time while they are attending school, the job experiences available to them may not be quality ones. Youth development programs have the opportunity to assist in this transition by helping youth to make connections between what they are learning in school and what employers require for success in the world of work.

WORKFORCE PREPARATION:

A FOCUS ON WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMS

Although work-based learning comes in many forms, it can be defined simply as “learning activities that use the workplace as a site for learning” (Keating, 2006, p. 2). Work-based learning can encompass a wide variety of program models (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997),

all of which are “occurring intentionally in a location where the primary activity is producing goods or services” (p. 6). All such programs bring employers and youth into contact in the work setting.

Work-based learning programs involve teens in practical experiences that integrate work and learning. They are real-life experiences that are structured, supervised, and evaluated. Successful programs use the experiential learning model—doing real work, reflecting on these experiences, and generalizing to future life situations (Ferrari et al., in press). The work experiences may be paid or unpaid, but they are clearly viewed by both participants and employers as real work. The focus of work-based learning is not simply on working for the sake of having a job, but on an experience that takes into account the developmental needs of youth participants.

An important aspect of work-based learning programs as we will define them here is that the work experience is a learning experience. While the work is important, as it provides the real-world context for skill development, it is not simply an end in itself, but viewed as the means to the end of positive youth development. Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) suggested that educational approaches that include real-world experiences are important for the development of 21st century skills.

Although many of the approaches are school based, we specifically focus here on work-based learning that occurs in conjunction with an out-of-school learning opportunity. Youth development programs can promote work-based learning experiences as practical opportunities that integrate work and learning. Because paid employment often conflicts with teens’ participation in out-of-school time programs (Pittman et al., 2003), it makes sense for those who run such programs to keep teens engaged by offering activities that develop work readiness and

by providing supervised work-based learning experiences. Experiences offered through youth development programs can involve performing real work that is structured, supervised by an on-site adult mentor, and evaluated. Many of the skills needed for workforce success develop over time and must be learned through active participation. That is, youth are afforded the opportunity to learn interpersonal skills, cooperation, and teamwork by actually having to work as a team with others in the workplace. Participants' learning is facilitated by reflecting on what they have learned through their experiences.

Benefits of work-based learning. Because of their relative inexperience, the potential for youth to contribute to the workplace is often underestimated. However, studies show that work experiences can have a positive impact on both the young people and the businesses or organizations that participate by hosting teens as employees in work-based learning programs (DeCoursey & Skyles, 2007; Ferrari et al., in press). Those with experience conducting work-based learning programs perceive multiple benefits. For example, Halpern (2006) found apprenticeships for teens created a rich learning environment where participants developed skills in areas such as teamwork, professionalism, and communication. Employers are often pleasantly surprised with the contributions that youth make to the workplace, often exceeding employers' expectations (Ferrari, et al., in press; Whalen, DeCoursey, & Skyles, 2003). Other potential benefits for participants in work-based learning experiences are summarized in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 here.

Achieving these benefits is recognized as being contingent on the presence of strong adult supervision and mentoring and skill development opportunities (Bryant et al., 2004; Ferrari

et al., in press), in essence, the positive youth development approach described earlier. An intentional focus on positive youth development principles will ensure that the tasks and the staff are supportive of adolescents' developmental needs. Halpern (2006) further concluded that the work-based learning model was a good developmental fit for teens because it provides an opportunity to get good at something, experiment, and receive just-in-time teaching through feedback and learning from mistakes.

Challenges with work-based learning. Work-based learning is not without its challenges (see Table 3). Employers vary in their willingness and ability to support youth on the job. To overcome these challenges, youth development professionals can prepare teens with skill building and work readiness sessions prior to entering the workplace. They can assist employers in understanding the needs of youth so that employers are ready as well. Some employers are willing to allow teen employees provided they can be assured teens will have adequate supervision (S. Matloff-Nieves, personal communication, December 19, 2007).

Insert Table 3 here.

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Work-Based Learning – Principles and Key Ingredients

Principles are those elements that are consistent across programs (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004). Specific practices will differ depending on particular community situations and goals of the sponsoring organizations. Hamilton and Hamilton (1997) recommended several principles of work-based learning, such as challenging work, an opportunity to gain personal and social competence, and clear expectation and feedback. When we reviewed recommendations about work-based learning programs from a variety of sources, some of which were community based and others were school-based programs, several themes were evident. Table 4 is a synthesis of ten key elements.

Insert Table 4 here.

Opportunities for Youth Development Organizations

DeCoursey and Skyles (2007) suggest that youth program providers view their role as multidimensional – that is, to prepare youth to be ready to participate in the workplace (e.g., how to dress, workplace etiquette) as well as to work closely with employers to ensure young people’s successful experience in the workplace. Thus, there are a variety of roles for youth development organizations.

Value added: From leadership and community service to work-based learning. Some programs are clearly designed for the express purpose of developing workforce skills through supervised apprenticeships (Halpern 2006) or worksite placements (Ferrari et al., in press). However, many organizations have programs where teens are involved in leadership roles and community service. By viewing them from a workforce preparation lens, they can be

transformed into high quality work-based learning experiences. Hamilton and Hamilton (2004) particularly note that service experiences and work experiences have many overlapping characteristics (e.g., both provide opportunities for gaining competence). Service-learning and volunteering use the community as a context for helping youth to develop and apply critical skills that are important in the workplace and in life in general, and can therefore be part of a comprehensive approach to workforce preparation. While many existing programs are already high quality experiences, by viewing them through a workforce lens they can serve two purposes.

An example of applying this intentional focus is Ohio State University Extension Greene County's Friends Care Intergenerational Garden (Arnett, Lekies, & Bridgeman, 2007; Beth Bridgeman, personal communication, January 10, 2008). This program was originally designed as a community service project and a way to learn gardening skills. With an intentional focus on workforce preparation, performance appraisals, self-assessment, and reflection opportunities were added, and it became a work-based learning program as well. By adding these components, the program accomplished its original goals and much more, resulting in a richer experience for the participants. Other organizations likely have similar programs that can grow from good teen programming to high quality work-based learning experiences that continue to meet early goals (e.g., youth development outcomes or teaching subject matter content) but also provide opportunities to develop and practice 21st century skills.

Growing your own. Growing your own is a natural progression from participant to teen leader to teen employee to adult staff member. Keeping teens engaged by offering work-based learning programs is a way to retain teens who may drop out of youth programs because work often conflicts with their participation in out-of-school time programs (Pittman, et al., 2003).

From a youth development perspective, it is a means to provide young people with increasingly challenging roles and responsibilities that can facilitate their development of important workforce skills and dispositions. From a practical standpoint, the concept makes sense as a way to address current staffing needs. It also makes sense as a way to develop future employees who have a commitment to the mission and goals of the organization (e.g., Matloff-Nieves, 2007). Thus, youth development organizations that employ teens should be intentional in implementing this practice and should be mindful of work-based learning principles to ensure that the work experiences they provide are positive ones.

Work with employers. Employers are important partners in providing work-based learning experiences. Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) suggest that business leaders must take an active role in supporting adolescents' workforce preparation. From outlining the skills needed to creating opportunities for young people to obtain these skills, employers can play a key role in identifying innovative and creative solutions to enhance and expand workforce preparation opportunities. Employers should orient their business practices toward providing teens an opportunity to contribute and learn through their work experience. Youth development practitioners should recruit employers by appealing to their mission, civic interest, and community commitment; businesses with such a focus would also be predisposed to working with youth to enhance their development (DeCoursey & Skyles, 2007; Whalen et al., 2003). Finally, youth development professionals can provide training and other support to employers who may not be well prepared for working with young people and the associated challenges that go along with supporting their development.

Connect with parents. Several authors (America's Promise, 2006; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; James, 1997) point to the critical role parents can play in supporting

adolescents' workforce preparation. With 40% of adolescents saying they do not have parents involved in their education (America's Promise, 2006), and parents expressing concern that they cannot provide appropriate guidance for their children without assistance (Reagor & Rehm, 1995), there is clearly work to be done, and youth development practitioners have a role to play. Parents are primary figures in the lives of their children; ideally, they provide home environments conducive to learning goal directed behaviors (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathnude, Whalen, & Wong 1997) and they play significant roles in decision making about the future. However, educational programs that specifically address the role of parents in workforce and career development are virtually nonexistent (Ferrari, 1992). Thus, this area is wide open for exploration. Youth development professionals are in a good position to work in collaboration with parents.

In summary, youth development organizations are in an ideal position to bring together different sectors of the community to address the need to assist adolescents with preparing for a successful transition to the workforce. In order to do so, they require support from a variety of sources (e.g., businesses, community organizations, and parents). Youth development programs and the professionals leading them can draw on their community connections to bring together the right resources, and they can help young people make connections between home, school, and work.

CALL TO ACTION

In this paper, we discussed how an approach grounded in principles of positive youth development can be applied to workforce preparation programs in after-school settings, specifically in work-based learning programs for teens. The interest in adolescent employment

and workforce preparation issues is not new. However, there is a renewed focus in this area because of the changing nature of work in the knowledge economy. There is a basic set of applied skills that employers are looking for and these skills are the same ones needed to live as a successful adult in the context of one's family, community, and the larger society. Against the backdrop of 21st century skills, opening doors to high quality jobs through experiences that build applied skills and expand young people's views of career opportunities is critical. We believe that workforce preparation programming opens this door and opens it wide.

Because the potential exists for both positive and negative outcomes of adolescent employment, we have addressed how to maximize factors that contribute to a positive work experience and minimize those that create negative conditions. Workforce preparation programs provide a means to bridge the concern about potential negative outcomes and the need to prepare for the 21st century workplace by creating a supportive environment from which to engage with the world of work.

We have shared key concepts about workforce preparation as intertwined with youth development, and provided specific program practices in work-based learning. Successful work-based learning programs empower young people to be an active participant in their future by taking control of their own learning and experiences. Given the concerns expressed about the need for young people to develop workforce skills, work-based learning is a good model for engaging teens in meaningful service to the public and developing workplace skills and competencies that they can apply now and in the future.

What can professionals working in after-school programs do? We can commit ourselves to learning about the current context and issues, and we can apply the information presented here to improve current programs or add new programs. There are also opportunities to be the bridge

connecting youth and employers. By making an intentional link between workforce preparation and youth development, after-school practitioners will be more prepared to develop, implement, and evaluate programs designed to narrow the skills gap. However, this is only the first step. What we have done here is to summarize the issues, approaches, and key principles in order to get the process started. The nature of most after-school programs is that they are designed to meet the needs of a local community and that is where the rest of the work remains in order to realize the full potential of workforce preparation programming.

The time is right for after-school programs to consider a more intentional role in supporting adolescents' workforce preparation. Workforce preparation and youth development are really two sides of the same coin. The process of using a workforce preparation lens will improve both workforce preparation and youth development programs. High quality work-based learning programs are an opportunity to build the capacity of tomorrow's workforce. Not only will young people be better prepared for work, our country will benefit from having young people who are prepared for the responsibilities of life in a civil society. The importance of preparing our youth for success in this new age—the knowledge economy of the 21st century—cannot be underestimated. Our future depends on it.

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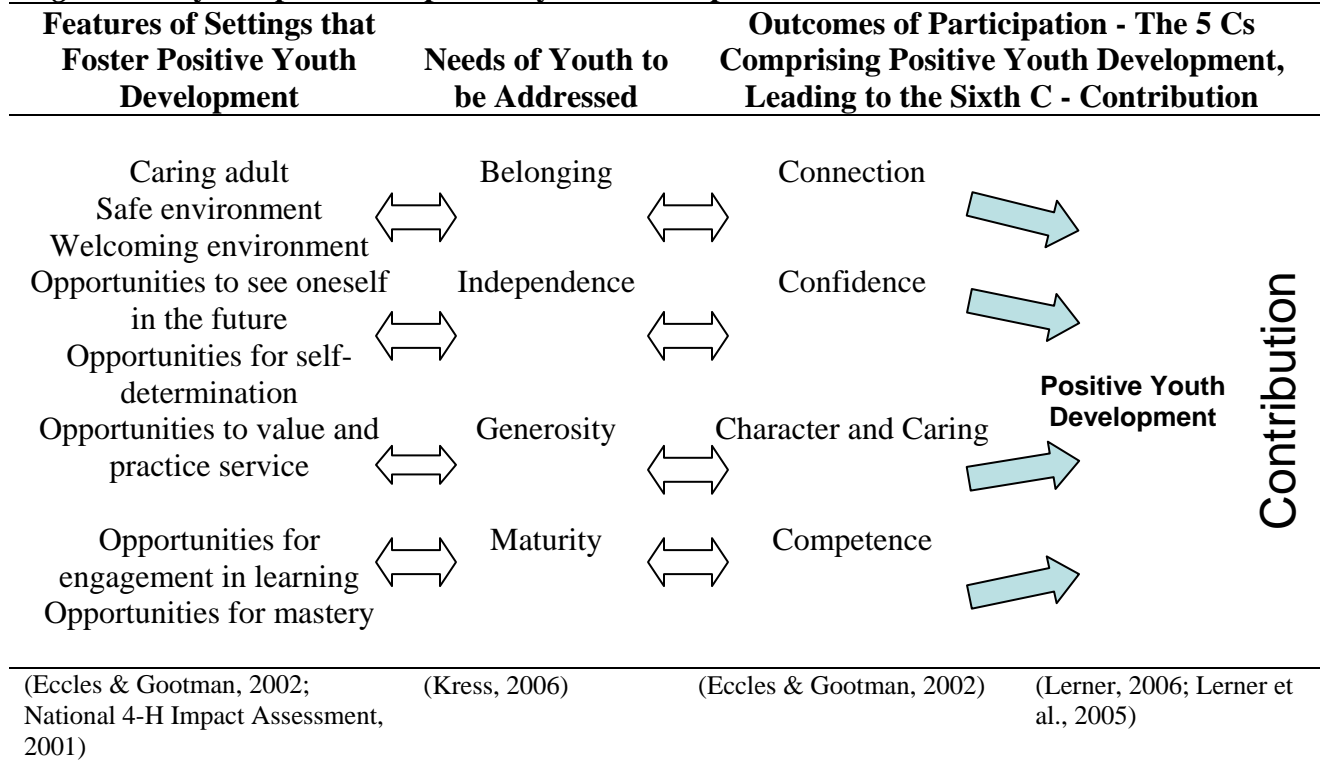
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Table 1
Skills for Success in the Knowledge Economy

Thinking Skills	Thinking skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and innovation.
Communication	The ability to communicate effectively using the range of methods and tools available in today's environment.
Teamwork and Leadership	The interpersonal skills to work effectively in a team and provide leadership through collaboration, motivation and leveraging the strengths of others.
Lifelong Learning and Self-direction	Continually improving capabilities by taking responsibility to set goals, improve skills, and who initiative.
Technology Adoption and Application	A firm foundation of technology skills including concepts and operations, selecting appropriate tools and solving problems..
Professionalism and Ethics	The ability to maintain an appropriate level of professionalism and ethical behavior.
Source: Cochran & Lekies (2008)	

Figure 1. Key components of positive youth development



Source: Cochran, Arnett, and Ferrari (2007, p. 61)

Table 2
Benefits of Work-Based Learning

Teens

- Make connections between real work expectations and the classroom
 - Pursue education with a greater sense of purpose
 - Interact with positive adult role models
 - Develop new skills
 - Receive feedback on their skill development
 - Experience enhanced self-concept and self-esteem
 - Expand their horizons and awareness of future work options
-

Employers

- Enhance skills of their employees (e.g., learning to supervise others)
 - Realize contributions youth make to workplace
 - Give back to the community
-

Youth Organizations

- Accomplish their mission
 - Meet developmental needs
 - Retain teens in their programs
 - Add authenticity and relevance to the learning experiences they provide
 - Groom potential employees in their organization
-

Sources: Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran, in press; Halpern, 2006; Matloff-Nieves, 2007; New Ways to Work, 2003, p. iii ; Partee, 2003; Whalen, DeCoursey, & Skyles, 2003

Table 3
Challenges with Work-Based Learning

Teens

- Meeting program and workplace expectations for attendance, dress code, and appropriate language
 - Lack of experience in the work world
 - Logistical challenges (e.g., transportation)
-

Employers

- Must be convinced they will gain from participation
 - May be hesitant to hire youth, fearing they will not possess the necessary work readiness skills
 - Differ in their capacity for providing a work experience that is a learning experience
 - May lack experience in supporting the developmental needs of teens
 - May have to change policies and practices to provide quality work experiences
-

Youth Organizations

- May be hampered by short time frames for producing program results
 - Completing the necessary paperwork accompanying incentives to work with the neediest youth for whom fewer opportunities exist to engage with employers
 - Figuring out how to appropriately screen teens who are minors when they will be working directly with children in after-school time program
 - May encounter challenges from funders who are resistant to proposals that include paying teens, arguing that they should not have to pay teens to participate in a youth development program
 - May encounter policies that require paid staff be 18 years of age, which is a challenge when they are trying to provide work-based learning experiences within their own programs (i.e., *growing your own*)
 - Amount of time investment needed to recruit employers, provide training and support, and monitor program implementation
-

Sources: Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; Cochran & Ferrari, 2008; DeCoursey & Skyles, 2007; S. Matloff-Nieves, personal communication, December 19, 2007; New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, 2006

Table 4
Ten Principles and Key Ingredients for Work-based Learning

Principle/Key Ingredient	Description
1. Ground work-based learning programs in principles of positive youth development.	Youth development principles (e.g., caring and supportive adults and experiential learning) are important to workforce programs. Ensure programs are developmentally appropriate. Having a job meets a developmental need of having increasingly responsible roles, providing an appropriate level of challenge.
2. Provide opportunities for career awareness and skill building.	Work-based learning programs are ideal places to teach teens workforce skills that will be applied immediately, including work readiness skills and 21 st century skills (e.g., employability skills, social skills, teamwork). These may be taught in specific skill-building sessions or embedded in the work experience.
3. Provide authentic work experiences with high expectations.	Students who face high expectations are more likely to feel well prepared for future expectations in work and life. Provide real experiences for young people and hold them to high expectations, including challenging experiences and honest evaluations.
4. Consider opportunities for increasing responsibility and reward.	Gradually build levels of responsibility through scaffolded leadership opportunities. The practice of paying or providing incentives can be an important part an authentic experience, is a practice that creates an incentive to keep teens connected at a time when many lose interest, and provides opportunities to gradually build levels of responsibility and reward.
5. Establish partnerships for worksite placements.	Successful work-based learning programs require strong community partnerships to provide worksite placements. Partner organizations must be willing to have a developmental approach to working with youth. The strength of these partnerships, based on relationships and communication, will affect program quality.
6. Make good matches between youth and employers.	Gather enough information to understand the work sites, the work environment, job duties, and the young person being placed there. Ensure a balance between sufficient challenge and enough support for the young person to succeed.
7. Provide orientation and training for adult staff and teens.	Site-based supervisors are an integral component of work-based learning programs. Orientation and training provides clear expectations and builds skills for youth and adults to support the experience.

Table 4***Ten Principles and Key Ingredients for Work-based Learning***

8. Monitor and support participants throughout the experience.	Recognize the need to support participants and employers and create a plan for such support. Many employers are not prepared to deal with issues teens bring to the workplace. Generational issues may arise. Teens may require support to be successful on the job.
9. Understand legal issues and comply with state and federal labor laws.	Be aware of child labor laws; distinctions between employee (paid) and non-employee (unpaid) experiences; and requirements for work permits, insurance, what minors can and cannot do, etc.
10. Evaluate and provide feedback.	Evaluation and feedback makes the work experience a learning experience, engages adults, can meet both formative and summative evaluation needs, and helps with accountability to funding bodies and other key stakeholders.

Sources: Brown & Thakur, 2006; DeCoursey & Skyles, 2007; Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran., in press; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997; Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2007; Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2005; Matloff-Nieves, 2007; New Ways to Work, 2003; Warren, Brown, & Freudenberg, 1999; Zuckerman, 2000