



**COMPETENCE +
CONNECTIONS:**
COMMUNITIES WORKING
TOGETHER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS IN
COLLEGE AND CAREER





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Purpose of the Publication

This publication is designed for busy youth program staff that want to deepen their program's impact and increase their positive influence in the lives of the youth they serve. The exemplary Oregon programs described here possess proven features of successful youth career development and community collaboration, features consistent with the recommendations of recognized educators and youth development leaders across the country.

We hope that readers will make connections with colleagues across the state and find gems of good ideas in the promising program profiles, ideas that can be adapted, augmented and applied to the programs they shape to better serve Oregon's youth.

Executive Summary

This publication calls attention to seven exemplary programs in Oregon that encourage young people to pursue postsecondary education and training options on career paths that will meet future business needs. They reach their young people through a balance of academics and Work-Based Learning (WBL). Each program relies on cross system collaborations and connections with employers, community colleges and other systems that support youth to provide a rich array of services and experiences delivered through caring relationships. These programs are demonstrating a positive impact in the lives of youth as they navigate their paths to college, career and citizenship.

Informed by Research

Our research on what's needed and what works to establish multiple pathways to college and career success for disconnected and disadvantaged youth led us to Jobs for the Future's Back on Track framework. This three-phase approach provides a comprehensive list of essential elements needed to accelerate learning, provide personalized supports and help young people advance in both their postsecondary education and career.

The three phases of the Back on Track framework are:

Phase One - Enriched Preparation – Integrates high quality, college-ready instruction with strong academic and social supports.

Phase Two – Postsecondary Bridging – Builds college-ready skills and provides informed transition counseling.

Phase Three – College - First-Year Support – Offers appropriate supports in first year of postsecondary education to ensure persistence and success.

The program features identified in the Back on Track framework formed the basis of selection criteria for Oregon's promising programs included in this publication.

The featured Oregon programs are:

- 1) Open Meadow
- 2) Martin Luther King Education Center
- 3) New Avenues for Youth
- 4) Northwest Youth Corps

- 5) Clackamas Technical Education Consortium
- 6) Cottage Grove High School
- 7) Community Action Program of East Central Oregon

Oregon’s Common Elements for Success

While each site profiled serves youth in unique ways, together they share a number of common elements that are grounded in a blend of competence and connection. Specifically, the sites exhibit strengths in the following areas:

Culture of High Expectations

- Program aligns with organizational mission, vision, and values
- Explicit college-going culture that reflects workplace expectations
- Leadership prioritizes program and measures impact
- Commitment to on-going professional development

Quality Program Practices

- Outcome driven strategies
- Feedback loops and shared data for continuous improvement
- Strengths-based approach
- Relationship emphasis
- Cross system collaboration and connections
- Sustainable and diverse funding streams

In relation to the Back on Track framework, the Oregon sites all demonstrated existing and expanding attention to the first and second phases.

Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations, integrated with our review of national best practices and local opportunities.

PERSPECTIVE

ACT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF YOUTH. Adults may operate within the exclusive worlds of vocational or academic education, from the comfort zones of the organizations they know and represent. To succeed in college and career, youth must integrate all of these worlds into a meaningful whole that matches their interest, talents, and resources. Whenever adults can encourage an integrated approach and resist creating barriers, youth will benefit.

POLICY

INCREASE COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS. Programs featured often are funded by both the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) that operate with different rules and regulations. Program providers can be challenged to meet the different, and at times, conflicting requirements, including the tracking of

outcome measures. Increased coordination and alignment of federal requirements could minimize the pressure on an organization to prioritize one department over another and instead could maximize results for youth.

PRACTICE

FIRST YEAR SUPPORT MATTERS. Youth thrive with structure; they are buoyed by continued connections with people they trust. When youth move on to college and career they often need an extended hand off where they can still grab on for stability and encouragement. National trends are shifting; often now, an organization’s success is measured by the number of graduates who succeed at the next level of college and/or career. Recognizing this shift and adding first year supports now will benefit both youth and the organizations serving them.

USE DATA FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Organizations steadily improve when they measure key data points beyond those required for compliance. By aligning data analysis with organizational goals, focusing on achievement results, tracking youth success at the next level of education and career, measuring growth, and listening to multiple perspectives (youth, staff, and partners), an organization can affirm what’s working and correct what’s not. Smart data use, reflecting real conditions and results, can increase confidence in the organization for all involved. Even when data are distressing, it’s better to know than not know – because when you know you can start to solve the problem.

INCORPORATE WAYS TO AWARD CREDIT BY PROFICIENCY.

Oregon State Board of Education policy supports the use of credit by proficiency, a way to award academic credit when students demonstrate mastery of learning objectives. It can apply to both academic and WBL curriculum. It allows students to earn credit at a pace that’s right for them. As programs figure out ways to award proficiency credit, they will increase their ability to make every learning opportunity count for the youth they serve.



Connecting with Youth – What’s the Best Way?

Really reaching a young person. Breaking through barriers of resistance and fear of failure. Sparking interest and excitement. Unleashing untapped desires to learn and achieve. There is no best way: each young person brings a unique set of talents, aptitudes, and needs. For youth with a history of academic failure and/or significant challenges that distract them from learning, it can be especially difficult to stay on a path to college and career success.

Personalized opportunities that sit at the intersection of academics and work-based learning - where youth can do something, can see the use and value of something first – these are situations where marginalized youth can connect. By linking service or work projects to learning, youth can see why education matters, build the momentum to forge ahead, develop resilience, and stretch their belief in what they can accomplish. The programs described in this publication all reach their youth through a balance of academics and work-based learning.

False Choice: College or Work

Is he college material? Does he belong in a training program? Is she worth our time and investment? For many decades adults shaped the life choices available to our young people by sorting them into college or career tracks, determining that they either had academic talents OR needed to learn a trade to make their lives successful. Programs developed over the years in response to this either / or thinking by creating a false separation between college and career. Unfortunately, as a result, too many young people have found themselves at dead ends, unable to advance in a career or make a necessary move to get more education or training.

Attitudes today are shifting: leaders in education and youth development point to recent research indicating that “high school students need to be educated to a comparable level of readiness in reading and math ... if they are to succeed in college-level courses without remediation and to enter workforce training programs ready to learn job-specific skills.” According to this emerging belief, the student, not the adult, should make the choice about college and career paths; the adult should prepare the student to a high enough level that true choice is possible.

Sponsored by the Youth and Education Committee (YEC) of the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB), this publication highlights Oregon programs that reflect this shift by encouraging youth to pursue postsecondary education and training options on career paths that will meet future business needs. These programs are demonstrating a positive impact in the lives of youth as they navigate their paths to college, career, and citizenship.

National Scan of Promising Practices

Jobs for the Future, (JFF) respected nationally for its groundbreaking analyses of what’s needed and what works to establish multiple pathways to college and career success for disconnected and disadvantaged youth, developed “Back on Track to College.” This model framework can be used for both diploma-granting and GED programs. Adding a note of realism to the “college for all” mantra, Back on Track outlines three program phases needed to accelerate learning, provide personalized supports, and help young people advance in both their postsecondary education and career.

The three phases of the Back on Track model provide a comprehensive list of essential elements necessary for program success – a list forming the basis of selection criteria for Oregon’s promising programs included in this publication.

Back on Track Model

Program Features Geared Toward College and Career Success

Enriched Preparation

Integrates high quality college-ready instruction with strong academic and social supports.

Postsecondary and Career Connections

Builds college-ready skills and provides informed transition counseling.

First Year Support

Offers appropriate supports in first year of postsecondary education to ensure persistence and success.

Phase One: Enriched Preparation focuses on the establishment of an explicit college and career-going culture in any program; implementation of a college-ready curriculum that includes adjustments for individual needs, contextualized learning, opportunities for acceleration and remediation, and personalized guidance and support.

Phase Two: Postsecondary Bridging incorporates supported dual enrollment in high school and postsecondary courses (both academic and career-specific); a focus on college knowledge; a focus on work-based learning; and personalized guidance connecting youth to their best bets for success.

Phase Three: College-First-Year Support focuses on supports for students to succeed in course work, regular check-ins and connections to campus resources and alumni groups, and just in time support to problem solve and ensure persistence.

When scanning the national landscape for programs identified as successful by multiple sources, it was evident that respected programs demonstrated strength in most elements of JFF's Three Phases. In each JFF phase, the student stands at the center and strategies named are designed to meet their needs.

Two reports confirmed accepted understanding of the workplace skills needed to succeed today: 1.) *Tough Choices or Tough Times: The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce* (2007) from the National Center on Education and the Economy 2.) *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce* (2006) published by a consortium of The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management. Both reports address the need for basic academic and applied skills.

A number of organizations and schools are cited multiple times in our research for their quality and results. Each appears strong in most aspects of the JFF Three Phase model. Programs or schools reviewed with strong contextualized, applied, hands on learning components include:

- College, Career and Technology Academy (Texas)
- Improved Systems for Urban Solutions (ISDS) (Dayton, OH)
- Olive Harvey Early College of Youth Connection Charter School Network (Chicago IL)
- Operation Fresh Start (Madison WI)
- X-Cel (Boston MA)
- Youth Development Institute (YDYDI partnership with Cypress Hills and NYC Tech (NY)
- Open Meadow (Portland, OR)
- Portland YouthBuilders (OR)
- Year Up (national)
- I-BEST (WA)

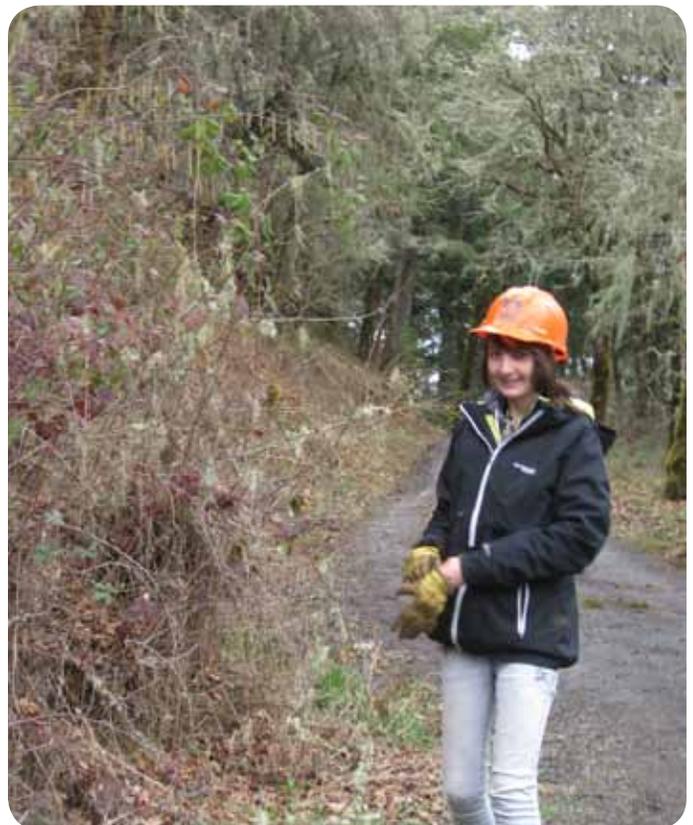
Organizations striving to increase college access and success include:

- Gateway to College (national)
- Completion by Design (national)

OREGON PROMISING PRACTICES

Each Oregon promising practice site included in this publication has been carefully selected using the Jobs for the Future Back-on-Track model as a point of reference. The programs are operated by a variety of organization types, including: community based organizations, Department of Youth Services/Juvenile Justice Center, and an Education Services District. The first three programs are covered in-depth: Open Meadow, MLK Education Center and New Avenues for Youth. Each is comprehensive and delivers most of the Back on Track features. The other five programs are covered in snapshots, these programs deliver key elements of Back on Track as part of a continuum of services in collaboration with other providers that prepare youth for success in college and careers.

None of these programs operate in isolation. Tightly aligned with the workforce needs of Oregon's economy, these program examples offer evidence of effective collaboration where youth, especially at-risk or disadvantaged youth with higher needs for attention and support, thrive in strengths-based programs with tailored attention to their academic needs, career development, and linkages to community resources.



“The coolest thing I’ve done here? Stepped out of my shell. I was in my own head, done with everyone. Open Meadow helped me see what was important to me and connect with others.” —OMHS senior

Open Meadow

Four seniors in a focus group had plenty to say after working on scholarship applications in their required Transitions class. Dredging up mixed memories of struggles and successes, the practice essays hadn’t come easily: write what you are doing to reach your goals, distinguish yourself from the pack, pick something that was truly difficult to overcome, make the reader feel what you went through, and limit yourself to 150 words.

Each senior had a different story to tell about finding Open Meadow and their path through the high school: each one sings its praises with comments like, “Open Meadow is first about family for kids who fell through the cracks. Everyone knows and cares about each other.” And, the seniors from our focus group appreciate that their school has challenged them too, saying: “I want a high school diploma because I want to show I did the work. It gives me confidence,” and “I want a diploma for personal pride.”

All four seniors will earn their diplomas this spring and head off to college or career training – while staying connected to their extended Open Meadow family and support system through the school’s Career Services department, an extension of Transitions class. With necessary, familiar structure and personalized attention, students can cross over a secure bridge to their post-high school life.

OVERVIEW

Open Meadow operates a variety of educational and vocational training programs. Collectively, the programs form a continuum that supports work-based learning: a middle school and high school that emphasize project-based learning along with postsecondary success programs that emphasize career training, credentialing, and college success. The continuum supports effective work-based learning by blending job skills, education, and educational credentialing.

: Executive Director Andrew Mason speaks
: with determined intensity when he talks
: about living the mission and beliefs of Open
: Meadow: “The culture of our organization
: works to counter the stereotype that
: alternative students don’t want to, or can’t, go
: on to college and successful careers.” Echoing
: his comments, Associate Director Karen
: Belsey describes the way the school helps
: students spot a sight line beyond high school
: and then head for it. Through the Transitions
: class, Open Meadow creates a hand off from
: high school to college and career for its high
: school students; through Career Services they
: open the available support to include other
: community youth too.



Open Meadow



Dropping into Paige Knight's Advanced Writing class at the end of the day, 14 juniors and seniors are thoroughly engrossed in their assignment. After reading *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, students analyze the characters' shift in mental model before and after the trees were depleted – a central storyline element – and then graph the changes using tools from Peter Senge's systems thinking. Certainly an unexpected find at an alternative high school for marginalized and disconnected youth. Yet, OMHS teachers now frequently create such lessons, knowing how essential it is to develop students' 21st century critical thinking skills if they are to succeed in postsecondary options.

Relationships among students and staff form the fabric of Open Meadow. Being known and belonging, caring for one another, that's what matters first. Students can't be made to learn; they choose to learn – for themselves and for others they value.

The challenges are great. Mason notes: "When a kid resists planning for his future – when he says 'I'll be dead or in jail by the time I'm 19' – we need to translate that in a constructive way, understand where he's coming from while we help him turn toward something positive." Genuine student-teacher relationships and patient, positive persistence help redirect youth. Advocacy systems, combined with the shared mission of the staff, communicate to youth that they can learn and succeed.

PROGRAMS

Open Meadow High School (OMHS)

OMHS serves up to 130 students with classes that are designed to teach to a variety of learning styles and skill levels, graduating youth up to age 21. Classes address all Portland Public Schools graduation requirements and average 14 students. All OMHS students have the option to apply for intensive, project-based learning opportunities using the project site as a classroom.

When students enter OMHS they're often stepping away from negative school experiences. Many have struggled in classes; they've lacked enthusiasm for school or connection to learning. To move forward, students need to build confidence and trust in incremental steps. Nearly 80% of students live in poverty, 60% are youth of color, about 50% come from single parent households, a rising 30-32% qualify for special education services, and 10% are teen parents. Ninety-eight percent of high school students are under skilled and behind in credits with the majority entering with fifth grade reading and math levels. Nevertheless, students need to catch up, speed up, and move up.

High School Program Director Kelli Clark believes rituals marking steps to success play a key role: "It's about 'badge-ing' not batching," she says. Clark and her staff are exploring credit by proficiency as a way to reward students for smaller accomplishment milestones and decrease the negative constraints of the seat-time based Carnegie unit.

OMHS students complete structured service-learning activities where students can connect to their own community in a meaningful way and make a contribution, where students are givers, setting the stage for subsequent career and community-based learning activities. Seniors participate in the required Transitions class, and after graduation they can join the Career Connections program. A gap year between high school and postsecondary is not a good idea for the OMHS population; they thrive on structure and clear next steps. Career Services Program Director Nancy Werts works across all Open Meadow departments to link school, career, and college for Portland area youth up through age 24. Career Services includes: (1) College Success, a one-year, grant-funded support program; (2) the OMHS Transitions program, and (3) Career Connections. Participants in any aspect of Career Services can receive incremental and continuous support from the time they first define their career goals, through their first employment experience, and on into college and career-track employment.

Using strategies that complement the other Open Meadow initiatives, Partnership Coordinator Eileen Schmidt draws on her 20+ years as a Nike Human Resources manager to organize Career Connections, a 3-year career development program for low income Portland residents (aged 18-24 with a diploma or GED) who are interested in exploring professional careers and /or college. Youth show their commitment from the orientation and intake interviews through workshops in career planning and job hunting to professional

Ensuring College & Career Success for Off-Track & Disengaged Students

- 1. Students** Get to know and believe in each student, put advocacy systems in place, celebrate successes with rituals and recognition, foster student responsibility for choices and outcomes.
- 2. Accountability** Use data to measure progress, personalize instruction, and improve program.
- 3. Education** Combine positive youth development with academics aligned to state standards and teach 21st century skills like critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and teamwork.
- 4. Post High School Transitions** Plan for college and career transition from day one, offer first year supports after graduation and learn who succeeds in postsecondary and why – then improve the program as needed.
- 5. Partnerships** Create and sustain college, corporate, and community partnerships to support hands on learning and career connections.

experiences like business tours, networking panels, and speed interviewing. To sharpen computer and applied workplace skills, youth do exercises where they solve problems in teams while communicating effectively.

Career Connections offers 4 paths: internship, job placement, college, and volunteer/career exploration. While Schmidt frontloads the program by focusing on the skills, tools, and resources participants will need to move ahead, she also makes sure to strengthen connections among youth and the staff. Again, the Open Meadow formula for success is evident: positive relationships and a strengths-based approach supply the energy that sustains progress.

PARTNERS

Open Meadow High School

Program Director Clark knows students need to see clear

connections between lessons and life. She's actively seeking corporate and community partnerships where students can apply what they're learning in school. In the youth grant-making class Community 101 sponsored by Portland General Electric, students have chosen the theme of domestic violence; they study the topic and then award funds to local groups trying to reduce the problem. At the Mercy Corps Action Center they learn leadership and conflict resolution skills applicable from the personal to the global level. Clark stresses: "We need our partners to share our belief that we don't have anyone to waste – that the success of every one of our students matters to our greater Portland community."

Recent budget cuts, combined with increased demand for alternative schools to show improved academic results, have made it necessary to eliminate some popular off-site learning activities OMHS students have enjoyed for years. With far fewer van excursions where kinesthetic learners can work with their hands on an environmental project, with fewer opportunities for staff to talk informally and cement student-teacher relationships, teachers are challenged to grab the attention and trust of their skeptical, marginalized students. Moving forward Clark hopes to develop new kinds of partnerships where students can study a topic of personal interest by working with a community expert and then upload and make accessible what's been learned.

Career Services

Schmidt wants to make sure students gain the skills they need to perform off-site, partners know and accept their responsibilities, and all can communicate clearly through a single, point person. She welcomes a potpourri of partnerships to create college access opportunities, career/volunteer explorations, and internships. Schmidt makes sure partners and students share stories and learn what matters to one another, what works, and what doesn't. Through stories and other networking, partners find the value and meaning that keep them coming back.

A sampling of Open Meadow's partners in Career Services includes Standard Insurance, Providence Health Systems, Dress for Success, Portland Clinic, OHSU, Courtyard by Marriott, Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development, NW Natural, US Bank,

"I wish we could have a caring adult take each student by the hand and walk them through the walls of the school to what is next. This does happen [for many] with college tours and Transitions and Career Connections." —Karen Belsey

Open Meadow



Portland Community College, University of Portland, and more.

Open Meadow is an excellent school determined to meet the shifting expectations and demands of the alternative education environment. Where before success meant re-engaging youth in their education, it now means ensuring those youth can move into and succeed at the next level of college and career. Staff is humbled by this challenge, recognizing they are in a new frontier. This is a restless time – a time of knowing that they are still figuring it out.

Executive Director Mason speaks to the persistent achievement gaps that must be eliminated: “We have a moral challenge. Kids of color need to learn to be successful without selling out their cultural identity.” He actively champions the statements about equity and social justice in the Open Meadow Beliefs statement, and little by little progress is being made. One African-American senior noted: “I’ve been through trials and tribulations in life and here I got a more global look at who I am and what I’ve become. I was lost through the struggle and now I know where I want to go. I used to think college wasn’t an option. I was told I wasn’t college material because of my skin color. Here I found out college is for me and I’m taking small steps to get there.”

Open Meadow’s ferocious commitment to its mission combined with its value of unconditional positive regard for each student can be magical. Students sense it in interactions with the adults. They notice that their teachers and community partners are all pulling in the same direction – something that really matters to them.

Just the facts

Open Meadow Alternative Schools: Open Meadow High School; Transitions; Career Connections

Address: 7621 N. Wabash Ave,
Portland OR 97401

Program Contact: Andrew Mason,
Executive Director

Email: Andrew@openmeadow.org

TARGET POPULATION: HS – Youth in the ninth through twelfth grades, aged 14-21 not served by the traditional education system who are at risk of dropping out and with previous school challenges; Career Services – Portland area youth with high school diploma or GED up to age 24 with a special focus on low-income youth.

KEY PARTNERS: Long list of corporate and civic partners developed over many years including Portland Community College and University of Portland; PGE Foundation, NW Health Foundation, Wetlands Conservancy, Metro Regional Government, Student Watershed Research Project, Mercy Corps, Standard Insurance, Comcast, Portland Trailblazers, and City of Portland.

ACADEMICS: HS Diploma; Dual enrollment opportunities; Supported transition to postsecondary education

CAREER CONNECTIONS: Career Services program includes access to advanced employment and educational opportunities, focused training, and comprehensive support. Programs for Open Meadow HS students through Transitions and for students across the city through Career Connections

FEATURES: 14:1 Student to Teacher ratio; Classes address all Portland Public Schools graduation requirements; Intensive project-based learning; Senior year Transitions class where students complete a college class or an external experience; Professional Development Curriculum through Career Connections program; Life Skills development, highly personalized approach, case management and advocacy; Service Learning

“I never before knew how to do a job well. Now I do.”

—Student of Alan Butler

Martin Luther King Education Center

Autzen Stadium loomed up on my right; the floodlights for an early practice didn't shine far enough to light the other side of the street. Following MapQuest directions on an early, dark November morning I turned left into the parking lot, searching for Eugene's MLK Education Center among the mix of non-profit organizations and juvenile justice buildings on the expansive tract. Lost and a bit anxious, I was startled by a young man walking out from a cottage. "Are you lost? Can I help you?" he asked. After telling him my destination he offered, "Hey, that's where I'm headed." Off we went, winding our way to the back corner of the lot while he talked non-stop about how much he loved his school and the opportunities it offers him to get back on track.

We passed the award-winning native plants garden and green house, ending at the horticulture supply center located in a parked semi-truck container. Peter (a pseudonym) greeted his supervisors and set to work with obvious enthusiasm. Previously Peter got involved with drugs and made some mistakes. In a rehab program and living in a cottage on the campus, he works in horticulture three days a week and takes two classes per term at Lane Community College. When he earned his GED, his view of himself and what he could accomplish shifted. Then, college entry and success strengthened his belief that he can be an architect or engineer. The free college courses reduce Peter's sense of risk: he's now willing to bank on himself, and he exudes quiet confidence that he can make it.

Connections form the core strength of the MLK Learning Center, connections among students and staff, between lessons and life, across programs and schools, and with community

- partners. Adults at MLK intentionally foster
- the sense of community – of belonging
- - evident in Peter's connection with his
- school.

OVERVIEW

- MLK serves high-risk youth (aged 13-19)
- who have an active case with Lane County
- Department of Youth Services. MLK
- provides wrap-around services and support
- to juvenile offenders who have experienced
- multiple interruptions in a traditional school
- placement.

- Afternoon vocational programs offer all
- MLK students the chance to practice job
- skills while learning about culinary arts,
- technology, or horticulture. The immediate
- rewards of work-based learning motivate
- students' effort in morning classes where
- they can get back on track to a high school
- diploma by earning credits, or opt for GED
- preparation.



Martin Luther King Education Center



A Positive Behavior Support system (PBS) is used school-wide. Youth are part of a team: they are taught to contribute instead of take. Youth are calmly and clearly taught to look at their thoughts and feelings before they act, then make better choices. Reminders in English and Spanish dot the walls: “Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible.”

PROGRAM

Entry

Transition Specialist Janay Stroup gets to know students as they set academic and

personal goals and complete reading and math placement tests. She coordinates communication among the juvenile justice counselor, the student’s high school and district, and the family.

As they enter MLK each student carries some baggage from recent negative experiences. MLK staff meets students directly where they are and helps them pivot onto a better path. MLK leaders ask staff to give six positive comments to a student for each negative one and all staff members are trained in EPICS (Effective Practices in Community Supervision from the University of Cincinnati School of Criminal Justice), a program that emphasizes a cognitive behavioral approach, positive modeling, skill development and natural consequences. Lynne Schroeder, Assistant Director of Department of Youth Services, believes it matters when adults show youth what to do, build on strengths, and notice what youth are doing right, emphasizing, “We use a strengths-based approach. People with hope and support change more effectively.”

Stroup works closely with Becca English-Ross, the Employment Specialist who administers the CASAS employability testing. Together they put extra effort into guiding a student’s vocational choice, knowing the work-based learning (WBL) will trigger other positive changes. English-Ross believes, “If we can’t show how subject content applies to their life, they’re not interested in learning it.” She likes to think WIA (Workforce Investment Act) really means “What I want to be in Adult life”; that’s her touchstone for the varied services she organizes for

FY2011 OUTCOMES

Outcome Measures	Results
Recidivism	74% reduction
Educational Functioning Levels (EFL)	75% increase
Restitution	\$20,000 paid to community victims
Community Hours: service, internship, work experience	15,000 hours
GED Attainment	80% of students who begin process do complete GED
Transition to High School	85% of students successfully return to a school district high school

Martin Luther King Education Center

youth including wraparound services, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) support, Lane Community College applications, scholarships, and the Career Information System.

Vocational and Academic Mix

Through the vocational programs youth gain valuable experience while they do work that people in their community truly appreciate. They get to hear the “Thank you” and see the smile. Special Work Based Learning learning opportunities include:

- **Culinary Arts:** catering, institutional and commercial kitchen equipment use, Oregon Food Handlers Course and Card.
- **Technology:** paid apprenticeships at NextStep Recycling to refurbish donated computers for Guatemalan primary schools.
- **Horticulture:** landscaping techniques, greenhouse building, nursery plant propagation, stream restoration, trail maintenance, and control of noxious weeds.

Alan Butler (Horticulture instructor) explains that several years ago MLK moved away from a punitive model to a vocational one where youth can earn a stipend, develop interview skills, show up on time, communicate clearly, and cooperate. The result? Youth competence develops and spills over into engagement in academics.

Butler, Jose Alvarez (Culinary Arts), and Jesse Herren (Technology) all emphasize the pivotal role of community service. If necessary, youth make restitution first and then become eligible to work for pay. The hired youth have a positive impact on the students who are newer and may still have a chip on their shoulder. Statistics show reduced recidivism rates (2010 Department of Labor statistics report 74% of MLK youth remained crime free).

Herren (Language Arts, Social Studies, and Technology teacher) concurs with Butler. He uses connections to vocational experiences in his lessons, noting his students are primarily kinesthetic learners. Horticulture students have prepared a video, How To Build a Garden Box, and uploaded it to YouTube and they have also presented their Pacific Crest Trail restoration projects on Oregon Public Broadcasting’s Oregon Beat. Culinary Arts students have created marketing materials for their catering business and are members in the downtown Eugene summer farmer’s market.

Herren explains, “We tailor lesson plans to student interests and work hard to figure out who the students are. They thrive because they feel safe; it’s a smaller environment. We create a community of learners.” Teachers post learning objectives each day and design lessons with multiple ways to learn so that students can make progress from their individual starting points. They work with students to empower them to assess what they’ve learned and how to ask for help.

Of the 20-25 students enrolled in the credit recovery and GED classes at any given time, almost half have special education Individual Educational Plans (IEP). From half to three-quarters of those without an IEP typically score below the 7th grade level in reading and only about 50-60% can do algebra according to entry tests. Janay retests quarterly. Her Master’s degrees in Family and Human Services and Special Education serve her well.

Andy Bracco, MLK Program Supervisor from the Education Service District, notes progress over the past few years as MLK staff has improved its ability to respond to school district needs and state curriculum standards. To raise the rigor of classes, MLK has hired highly qualified Math, Social Studies, and Language Arts teachers and integrated GED preparation into the academic classes. Efforts are underway to award partial credit more and develop competency-based assessments, essential since youth generally stay for only parts of an academic year.



“WBL is the strongest part of the program. We’re getting kids from traditional school settings and here they buy into academics because they have jobs and stipends. They hear employers talk about the importance of having of diploma.” —Matthew Sterner

Martin Luther King Education Center

Each Monday a “pod” or group of students goes with an academic teacher to a community location to build youth comfort by interacting positively in a social situation. After a library visit, they might go to a café to read. Common everyday experiences others might take for granted are essential to increase success for MLK youth: reading a paper gives a young person the chance to practice being safe, respectful, and responsible – a chance to practice competency in a

Recommendations for effective partnerships

- 1. Identify** each partner’s interests and needs.
- 2. Search** for mutual benefit and interest – discover commonality.
- 3. Follow through** on commitments, especially the administrative requirements associated with public funding.
- 4. Identify a lead contact** for each organization.
- 5. Communicate clearly** and double check what’s been heard and understood.
- 6. Show up and do the work** And s schedule it, be on time, plan together.
- 7. Recognize partner contributions** generously and frequently (newsletters, website, van logo, celebrations and any public events, etc).

low-risk situation.

Incentives reinforce youth confidence in their unfamiliar successes. They include: non-taxable educational stipends, monthly award ceremonies, and opportunities to earn the chance to do their personally preferred activities. Students are recognized for their credit recovery progress, GED completion, vocational accomplishments, worker and student of the month, and even periodic articles in the Eugene Register-Guard.

PARTNERS

Matthew Sterner (MLK Program Supervisor) knows MLK’s success rests upon its community connections: “The way I see MLK is as a conglomeration of partnerships working together on behalf of youth. No one partner understands how to do everything.” Youth come and go quickly at MLK; they need to be re-engaged in learning, redirected, and supported as they transition to another school and develop career skills. They need wraparound services and places to test new skills, places where they can stumble and get back up and try again. Partners who understand this youth learning curve are essential to the MLK program’s success.

MLK partners fall into three primary categories – education, work-based learning, and community. Primary collaboration stems from an agreement between Lane County

Department of Youth Services and Lane Education Service District. A sampling of other partnerships includes: Lane Workforce Partnership (WIA), Big Brothers, Big Sisters (mentoring agreement); Hillside Heights Rehabilitation Center (internship site); Peace Health (work experience site); Bureau of Land Management; US Forest Service; City of Eugene Parks and Open Spaces and Recreation Departments (catering contracts and work experiences); Downtown Farmer’s Market.

Just the facts MLK Education Center

Address: 2727 MLK Blvd., Eugene OR 97401

Program Contact: Matthew Sterner, Program Director

Email: matthew.sterner@co.lane.or.us

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Lane County Youth Services

ORGANIZATION TYPE: Juvenile Justice Agency

LENGTH OF TIME PROGRAM IN OPERATION: 12 years

NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED TO DATE: Over 200/year

TARGET POPULATION: High Risk Adjudicated Youth with Active Youth Services Cases

KEY PARTNERS: Lane County Youth Services, Lane ESD, Lane Workforce Partnership plus others providing WBL and wraparound services

ACADEMICS: GED and credit recovery courses, opportunity to earn college credit, all teachers meet highly qualified standard

VOCATIONAL: Programs in Culinary Arts, Computer Technology and Horticulture

FEATURES: 7:1 Student to Teacher ratio; Positive Behavior Support system used school wide; Campus Resource, Transitional and Employment Specialists on site; Free breakfast and lunch provided to all students who attend.

Ginnie Grilley, BLM Eugene District Manager, consistently partners with MLK because the students show up and do good work. As a community member she values the investment in local youth and as a manager of 314,000 Lane County acres she states with practicality: “An MLK partnership is a good idea. It gives us a pipeline of future workers and it provides good jobs for kids – gives them an opportunity to be outside.”

“Before I was just going through the motions but after Job Readiness Training I knew I had skills and had confidence to talk about them.” —PAVE student

New Avenues For Youth (PAVE)

Getting upstairs to PAVE (Promoting Avenues to Employment) at New Avenues for Youth (NAFY) isn't easy. Eight large shipping cartons from Nike filled with sports equipment for holiday gift bags narrow the path from the front door. The aroma of breakfast cooking wafts over the welcoming and warm reception room. The space is filled with easy staff and volunteer conversations: it feels like home. No part of the scene matches the stereotypical images of homeless youth rudely or pathetically panhandling for spare change – and that is by design at NAFY. Program Director Kari Brenk explains, “We treat our youth like adults – we don't lower our expectations and they respond by rising to the challenge.”

Moving up to the sunny second floor, youth are getting the last of their 3'x5' painted self-portrait panels ready to install at a downtown construction site. After two years the panels will be cleaned and auctioned off to raise funds for NAFY. Easily accessible PAVE staff meets informally with youth near the computers.

Students in Job Readiness Training (JRT) gather around a conference table, practicing how to have a conversation beyond yes/no answers. They are eager to share their stories. One young man laughs saying, “The magic is the staff. You come in looking for food and shelter and the next thing you know you are in Job Readiness Training.” And another adds, “They've stood by me. Gave me a second chance at JRT and I've shifted from a survival focus to a focus on stability.”

OVERVIEW

NAFY works in partnership with the community to reduce and prevent youth homelessness by providing homeless and at-risk young people aged 16-25 with the resources and skills needed to exit street life and lead healthy, productive lives. The

NAFY model ensures that youth have the opportunity to build life-skills, establish a stable living environment, and eventually become a self-sufficient adult. Initially, staff focuses on meeting a young person's basic needs for food and shelter as they begin to risk establishing relationships with adults. Next comes access to education and job training necessary to obtain living-wage employment.

Staff meets youth where they are and develops an individualized plan to move them forward in pursuit of their goals. Most youth enter with a history of fractured relationships, broken trust, and failure at traditional paths. As they are connected to wraparound services, education, and training, youth are encouraged to own their choices. Small, steady steps build confidence; praise comes after specific accomplishments. Program Director Brenk clarifies, “We strongly believe that relationships are



New Avenues For Youth (PAVE)



essential before anything else happens here. Trust and relationships carry youth through challenges and failures.”

NAFY employment and education programs receive funding from the Portland Development Commission, the Federal Workforce Investment Act, Portland Public Schools and private fundraising. NAFY addresses both the prevention and intervention of youth homelessness. It serves youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to identified risk factors like poverty, school dropout, and strained or broken family ties.

PROGRAMS

PAVE sits within NAFY’s comprehensive homeless youth program, providing 400-500 youth per year with the knowledge and training they need to obtain living-wage employment. The open design encourages interaction between staff and youth. NAFY’s long history of business partnerships is apparent with a wall acknowledging the

Rotary Club who supported the build out of the space.

In one corner students are engaged in a service project – they are making holiday cards to send soldiers serving in Afghanistan. Inside the training room 8 students are participating in Job Readiness Training (JRT), a comprehensive three week course that begins with a True Colors assessment that helps youth learn about themselves and those around them in a fun and interactive way. As they learn

“Everything is hands-on.”

—Kari Brenk

about each other, youth develop a sense of belonging and trust. Today they are identifying their strengths and weaknesses and how to convey them during an interview. The reward for completion of JRT is access to internships.

The internship design at NAFY provides youth with ample opportunity to build confidence and develop job skills prior to placement at a business in the community. First, NAFY offers hands on work opportunities within a youth friendly culture – either in the PAVE program or Drop-In kitchen. Next, youth can access subsidized internships at a Ben & Jerry’s Scoop Shop owned and operated by a division of NAFY called New Ventures for Youth. As Brenk

puts it, “It’s a real business with the same standards as any other shop, the difference is we use slip ups as learning experiences”. Youth get second and third chances and receive quality training in inventory management, advanced customer service, and management training while earning a paycheck. PAVE staff and the Ben & Jerry’s team collaborate to ensure each youth’s scoop shop job training is part of a larger employment strategy and action plan, with the goal of helping youth into living-wage employment or further education.

As youth build confidence, skills, and their resumes they can transition out of proprietary internships into training and subsidized internship placements with community partners. Nike is a long time partner and delivers it’s “Rookie Training Camp” to NAFY youth who will then be qualified for upper level, customer service positions. Jennifer Thomas oversees 85 employees at the Nike Factory Store in Portland and believes there’s

New Avenues for Youth (PAVE)

mutual benefit – youth are given tools to succeed and access to job opportunities and Nike has the opportunity to hire from a great training pool. About 12% of Nike’s Factory Store employees got their start in the PAVE program. Thomas believes NAFY youth are some of her highest performers and attributes this to NAFY selecting youth who are a good fit with the brand and preparing youth with the training and support they need to succeed.

“Before I was just going through the motions but after Job Readiness Training I knew I had skills and had confidence to talk about them.” —PAVE student

New Avenues for Youth Education Center is a fully accredited high school designed to meet the individual needs of homeless youth. Recruitment happens during every day interactions between teachers and youth who come to NAFY to access services. At breakfast teachers sell their education plan for the day. Students voluntarily access one on one tutoring to improve basic skills in preparation for GED testing or post secondary placement exams. Students can also earn credit toward a high school diploma and work with teachers to design individualized credit courses that meet district and state standards. Instruction is inquiry based and credit can be earned in science, social studies, reading, math, basic study skills, and career exploration.

New Avenues for Youth College Prep Program draws youth from PAVE and the Education Center and provides one on one support through a College Support Specialist and volunteer mentors. The College Prep Program aims to boost academic skills of youth so they are ready to succeed in college level classes. The program emphasizes retention and pairs a volunteer mentor with each student to assist with tutoring, navigation of the college system, and support in adjusting to the college culture. While in college, students continue to have access to NAFY’s full array of services, including internships and job shadows. This program is funded through a College Challenge Access Grant.

PARTNERS

PAVE youth learn employment basics from over 40 business partners, adults who understand the lives of homeless and at-risk youth and are invested in their success. With business partners, youth participate in mock and informational interviews, company tours, job shadows, internships, and subsidized work experiences. In addition, employer

Elements of a good work-based learning experience

1. Lay the foundation with Job Readiness Training.
2. Then layer on advanced training with employers (provided by employers).
3. Place youth in meaningful work experiences.
4. Always attend to the care and continuation of youth/employer relationships.
5. Establish feedback loops: between case manager and youth regarding status of the placement and between coordinator and business partner to understand what’s working and not working.



“Staff helps us realize that college and employment are accessible to homeless kids.”
—PAVE student

New Avenues for Youth (PAVE)



Just the facts

New Avenues for Youth Promoting Avenues to Employment (PAVE)

Address: 314 SW 9th Ave, Portland OR 97205

Program Contact: Kari Brenk,
Program Director

Email: kbrenk@newavenues.org

LEAD ORGANIZATION: New Avenues
for Youth

ORGANIZATION TYPE: CBO

LENGTH OF TIME PROGRAM IN
OPERATION: 8 years PAVE; 13 years
Education Center

NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED TO DATE:
PAVE 1340; Ed Ctr 1420 (Unduplicated; only
tracked since 2004)

TARGET POPULATION: Homeless and At-Risk
of Homeless aged 16-25

SOME KEY PARTNERS: Nike, KGW, New
Seasons, Fred Meyer, Bellagios, and Growing
Seeds.

“What’s been most helpful isn’t the program as much as it is the people here. They are careful about who they hire. Staff wants to connect. It’s genuine. We [homeless youth] are guarded people – we have trust issues and here staff earn our trust.”

—PAVE student

partners teach classes in the Advanced Training Academies in business services and hospitality/retail giving youth the advantage of learning job readiness skills from an employer perspective.

An Employer Advisory Committee helps NAFY ensure JRT is relevant and meets employer needs. Committee members also reach out to other employers encouraging them to join the PAVE team. They are active organizational champions involved in multiple aspects of the overall program from donating Nike equipment to serving breakfast to supervising internships.

“Why do businesses partner with NAFY? They want high value employees. These youth receive job readiness training here, have work experiences through New Ventures – so they go to their jobs prepared to work and with a wrap around support system in place.” Kari Brenk, Program Director NAFY’s wrap around support services, PAVE and education programs tie together to provide homeless youth a path to self-sufficiency. As one youth participant put it, “Staff helped me realize that I have a right to be as successful as anyone else who isn’t homeless”.

“Outdoor work makes classroom learning stick.”

—ODS Student

Northwest Youth Corps

Each September when Outdoor High School (ODS) launches the new school year with SPIKE, a school-wide camping week, students experience just how different their new high school will be. ODS Executive Director Jeff Parker isn't kidding when he says: "The tent is the ultimate equalizer as students build relationships with staff and each other." Students who've been disengaged or at-risk of dropping out of their home high school choose to attend ODS because they love being outside and like to learn by doing. The first SPIKE week really tests a student's commitment as staff and students together experience new challenges, problem solve, reflect, and work in teams that set the foundation for the year's learning.

OVERVIEW

ODS is a program of the Northwest Youth Corps (NYC), a non-profit organization dedicated to youth development and conservation education. Created in 1984, modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's, NYC offers four interrelated programs: YouthCorps (spring, summer, and fall programs for high school credit, a paycheck, and a Northwest outdoor service experience for youth 14-19 from anywhere in the US); Outdoor High School or ODS (an alternative Oregon high school), Outdoor Oregon (local projects throughout Oregon for teens ages 16 to 19); AmeriCorps (mentoring and other youth support opportunities).

PROGRAM

A state accredited, diploma granting alternative program, ODS serves at-risk youth in a personalized way. With a staff/student ratio of 1:5, six teaching staff and six AmeriCorps members work closely with 55-60 students per year, creating a tight community.

According to Principal Beth Krisko, ODS features an experiential education curriculum that combines classroom learning with field study activities and resource management projects. ODS is not for every student. Through the application process staff makes sure the program matches a student's interest in outdoor conservation work.

The school uses an inquiry model to grab students' attention, hoping to create lifelong curious learners in the process. In class, youth might research a cemetery's history and ponder what cemeteries mean to a community, then organize a team to clear blackberry bushes from that local cemetery. Afterward, the class reflects on the project and their teamwork process. This cycle of speculation and research, action and reflective analysis builds 21st century leadership, communication, and problem solving skills. Curriculum Director Eric Boggs explains: "The hook is building a practice of inquiry prior to site work and at the site." And students confirm that it does grab their attention: "Before ODS I went through the motions with school. Now education has meaning to me. I'm curious now. We do a lot of reflection at sites – that helps us think about everyday life."

The rewards are primarily intrinsic; students love the hard work and sense of accomplishment they derive from building trails, planting trees, and improving local parks – work that matters in their world today. They do assignments that incorporate science, math, writing, and



Northwest Youth Corps

social studies necessary to meet academic standards, and their lessons are tied to a place they know. Students say it best: "Outdoor work makes classroom learning stick."

ODS supports students' interest in continuing education by providing a match to help all qualifying students aged 16 and older earn a scholarship through the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps.

ODS wants to increase its proportion of female students and asks referring school counselors to encourage more girls to enroll. The diversity of students mirrors Lane County averaging 80% Caucasian, 13% Hispanic, 2% Black, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% Native American. Other student risk factor measures show a recent spike in students from low-income situations from 49% to 71%, a steady 66% from single parent or non-biological homes, a recent rise from 18% to 34% involved with Juvenile Justice, a self-reported 25% previously suspended or expelled, and 45% qualifying for Special Education.

PARTNERS

Career education and work-based learning are embedded in the field education program. Students spend 30 hours each month doing service-learning projects where they work on trail construction and maintenance, tree planting, non-native species removal, stream restoration, fencing, and construction projects for ODS agency partners. All students also help out with the Laurel Valley Educational Farm, which grows food for youth programs and the local food bank. Some key program sponsors for fieldwork include Laurel Valley Educational Farm, US Army Corps of Engineers, Eugene Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Lane County Public Works, Friends of Hendricks Park, Hendricks Hill Community, Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, Oregon Department of Forestry, US Forest Service, McKenzie River Trust, and nonprofits like the Raptor Center.

Elements of a Good Outdoor-based Learning Experience

1. Know the Learning Targets.
2. Take care of logistics: transportation details, time, and place of meetings.
3. Think ahead about individual student needs: clothing, equipment, necessary behavior guidelines, and preferred style of communication.
4. Determine the best staff to student ratio for safety and success.
5. Plan for access to resources: books, texts, tools, GPS unit, weather protective outdoor gear, vehicle size and type, and cooking equipment.
6. Connect the place and the work to human history and meaning today.

Just the facts

Northwest Youth Corps (NYC) Outdoor High School (ODS)

Address: 2621 Augusta St., Eugene OR 97403

Program Contact: Beth Krisko, Principal

Email: bethk@nwyouthcorps.org

ORGANIZATION TYPE: Alternative High School

LENGTH OF TIME PROGRAM IN OPERATION:
15 years

NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED TO DATE: 978

TARGET POPULATION: Lane County students aged 14-18 seeking an alternative HS setting

KEY PARTNERS: County School Districts and Program Sponsors for Service-Learning

PROJECTS: Laurel Valley Educational Farm, US Army Corps of Engineers, Eugene BLM, Lane County Public Works, Friends of Hendricks Park, Hendricks Hill Community, Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, Oregon Dept. of Forestry, Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, US Forest Service, McKenzie River Trust, Raptor Center.

ACADEMICS: Individual Learning Plans, Instruction alternates weekly between classroom lessons and fieldwork, Diploma

CAREER CONNECTIONS: Embedded in fieldwork

FEATURES: 1:5 staff/student ratio; Campouts build community and support service-learning model through inquiry cycle including study, action, and reflection.

To create successful service-learning partnerships, both ODS staff and community partners need to truly understand each other's needs, expectations, mission, and values. Jason Blazar, a long time City of Eugene Parks Department partner, notes how important it is to share a value of stewardship. He stays at the partnership table because he appreciates the education focus, believes the value outweighs the cost, respects the integrity of ODS, and can rely on their excellent quality control.

When the match is right between student and school and partner, connections last. Many ODS partners have long-standing relationships with the school, and many students continue to circle back to ODS after graduation, still invested in their school and their community.

“If you raise the bar youth will meet it particularly with support.”

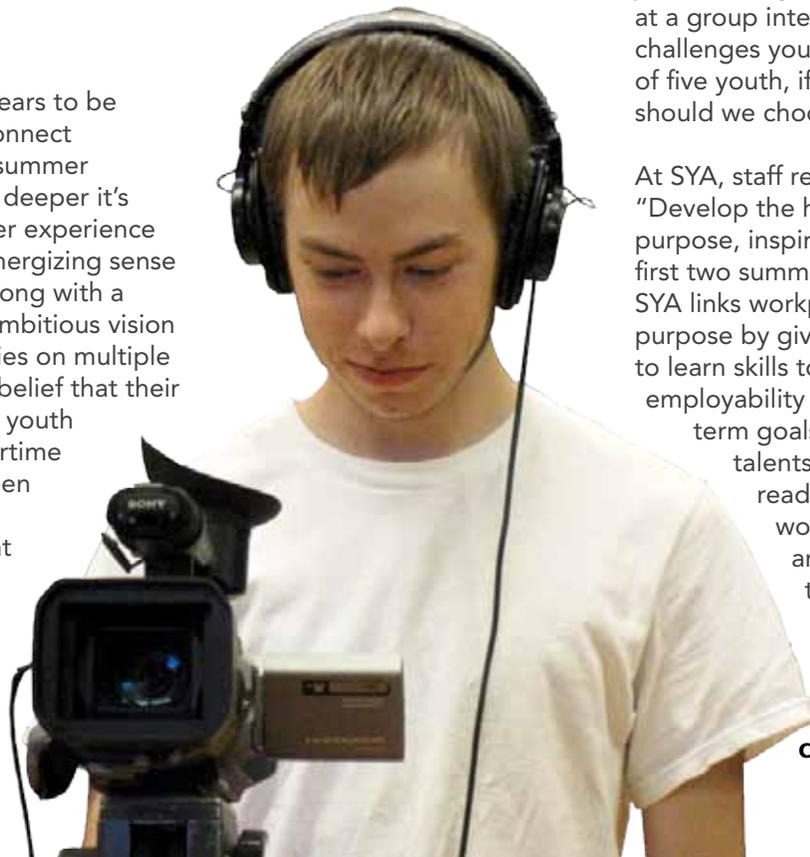
—Molly Aleshire, Program Coordinator C-TEC Youth Services

Clackamas Technical education consortium Youth Services (C-TEC)

C-TEC Youth Services is a federally funded Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth workforce development program serving Clackamas County. By building a network of partners, C-TEC is able to provide a continuum of support services addressing secondary education, career exploration, work readiness, specific occupational skills training, postsecondary education, employment, employment retention, and career enhancement for youth. Summer Youth Academy (SYA) is one of several career development opportunities available to C-TEC participants.

PROGRAM

At first glance, SYA appears to be a modest program to connect low-income youth with summer internships, but looking deeper it's clear this 8 week summer experience imbues youth with an energizing sense of hope and meaning along with a new, more realistically ambitious vision for their future. SYA relies on multiple partners who share the belief that their first priority is providing youth with meaningful summertime experiences that can open future doors. Recent 2010 statistics document SYA involved 74 interns with 35 employers in 8800 hours of career development experience,



confirming that SYA creates a positive bridging experience between high school and career.

Summer Youth Academy (SYA) combines two weeks of work readiness and industry specific training with six weeks of work experience with local employers. SYA provides a unique opportunity for youth to receive employment training and experience as well as college credit through Clackamas Community College (CCC). Potential participants are primarily referred from seven county school districts, CCC, WorkSource Clackamas, Oregon Youth Authority, Clackamas County Juvenile Department, Housing Authority of Clackamas County, Department of Human Services, First Star and other youth serving organizations.

Program enrollment isn't automatic. The rigorous admission process intentionally mirrors a typical job search process. Youth complete an application, get themselves on-time to an information session, and join a small group of hopeful participants at a group interview. The interview panel challenges youth with questions like: "Out of five youth, if we only have one slot, why should we choose you?"

At SYA, staff really lives its slogan: "Develop the human, discover the purpose, inspire the action." During the first two summer weeks at Boot Camp, SYA links workplace education with life purpose by giving participants a chance to learn skills to increase their overall employability and also explore their long-term goals, interests and personal talents. Youth receive workplace readiness coaching, practice workplace communication and teamwork skills, stretch themselves through new leadership opportunities, and thoughtfully reflect about shaping their

Summer Youth Academy (SYA) of C-TEC Youth Services



future as an adult member of the community. They also receive employer and industry exposure through hands-on training.

One youth proudly reports: "Boot Camp taught teamwork by having us work in groups of 5 or 6 kids. Each person on the team had a role – leader, assistant, PR person, supervisor, timekeeper, and safety. Everyone really embraced the process. At first we were shy and anxious but the teams brought us closer together."

After Boot Camp, youth are placed in internships in an occupation of their personal interest. SYA uses individualized CCC Internship Training Plans to support its internships, and adds some additional work readiness criteria to emphasize the development of soft skills like attendance, punctuality, and appearance, as well as, occupation specific technical skills. Equivalent to the CCC pre-internship preparation class and internship, participants can earn up to 4 regular college credits for SYA.

One 20-year old former SYA student now enrolled at CCC sums it up well: "Before it seemed what I wanted to do was beyond my reach. My internship was a film internship – eye opening for me – I saw I could act on things that were bigger than an entry level, dead end job. I could have a career – any career I wanted. That's why I'm here at CCC. School is hard but I have hope now. I'm the first in my family to go to college."

PARTNERS

SYA operates effectively with a small budget through an extensive web of public and private sector partnerships. Each partner is critical to the success of the program. When the budget allows, SYA subsidizes youth internships by offering stipends for successful completion. For SYA partners, CCC covers worker's compensation insurance for internships registered through the college. Workers compensation insurance reduces employer risk and makes oversight of internships more appealing to employers.

Partners credit their highly collaborative relationships with C-TEC staff as the reason they are willing to stay connected to the program, citing C-TEC's "Can Do" culture and belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Mary Clark of the Oregon Department of Human Services enthusiastically adds: "C-TEC staff are very talented and terrific to work with. They never say no; they are willing to explore ideas and are extremely collaborative."

SYA counters the typical summer disconnection that can discourage youth from exploring new opportunities. Its tight community college connection – program location on campus combined with caring relationships with college staff – gives a valuable and valued lift to low-income and first-generation college-going youth.

Why these partnerships work

- 1) Shared goals
- 2) Clear, shared youth focus
- 3) Relationships with mutual trust and respect
- 4) Clear, defined roles
- 5) Contracts and agreements in place specifying deliverables and timelines

Just the facts

Summer Youth Academy (SYA) of C-TEC Youth Services

Address: 19600 Molalla Ave, M113, Oregon City, OR 97045

Program Contact: Molly Aleshire, Program Coordinator

Email: mollya@clackamas.edu

ORGANIZATION TYPE: Clackamas ESD & Workforce Investment Council's Youth WIA Contractor

LENGTH OF TIME PROGRAM IN OPERATION: 11 years

NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED TO DATE: Over 1800 youth served by C-TEC Youth Services

TARGET POPULATION: Low-income youth aged 14-21 with barriers to education and employment in Clackamas County

KEY PARTNERS: First Star, Clackamas Community College, area high schools and youth serving agencies, and a variety of local businesses participating in the CCC SMART internship program

ACADEMICS: Summer program with minimal direct academic lessons

CAREER CONNECTIONS; Work readiness "Boot Camp" and structured work-based learning curriculum (total 120 hours work experience) including personal accountability, time management, using a daily planner, personal and professional boundaries, employer interviews, presentation of self, and basic skills for particular high growth, high wage industries.

FEATURES: Youth receive up to 4 college credits because Boot Camp and Internship are equivalent to CCC courses offered in SMART internship program. Credits may also be transferable as elective high school credit toward diploma. By enrolling at CCC students are covered for worker's compensation.

“We’re here to get kids to innovate – to think like they’ve never thought before. They do the research, conceptual development, develop a prototype and then do a marketing plan and blog about it.”

—Chris Medina, Engineering Tech Teacher

Cottage Grove High School

Tucked behind Cottage Grove High School (CGHS) and adjacent to a campus of Lane Community College is a modern structure, home to the Amatrol Engineering Technology Program, a CTE pathway at CGHS. Inside, the place is electric with activity – 15 engineering stations provide students with hands on learning opportunities in computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM). This isn’t your typical metals class. Here, students are challenged to solve real world problems like designing an active heating unit for homes in third world countries.

SNAPSHOT

In the center of the lab is an electric vehicle, completely designed and built by students. Chris Medina, Engineering Tech Teacher and visionary founder of the program wants to keep our country’s competitive edge. “We’re here to get kids to innovate – to think like they’ve never thought before. They do the research, conceptual development, develop a prototype, and then do a marketing plan and blog about it.”

The Model:

- Students select the Pre-College Drafting and Engineering CTE pathway
- Drafting and Engineering electives start in 9th grade through graduation
- Dual credit available through Lane Community College
- Hands on learning in engineering lab and robotics program that requires application of core subjects

What makes this program a success?

1. Relevance

Direct application of core subject content to engineering projects, prepares students for careers in advanced manufacturing

2. Collaborative Hands On Learning

Teacher as learning coach for team of students while students learn 21st Century skills such leadership, teamwork, and problem solving

3. Equipment

State of the art equipment and teacher training

This isn’t your typical metals class. Here, students are challenged to solve real world problems like designing an active heating unit for homes in third world countries.



Just the facts

Cottage Grove High School – Amatrol Engineering Technology Program

Address: 1375 S. River Rd.,
Cottage Grove, OR 97424

Program Contact: David Bascue,
Director of Special Services

Email: david.bascue@slane.k12.or.us

ORGANIZATION TYPE: High School

TARGET POPULATION: Open to all students

KEY PARTNERS: Lane Workforce Partnership,
Lane Community College, private sector
employers

Results: CTE students' graduation rates and state test scores are significantly higher than non-CTE students. Half of the CGHS students are CTE concentrators (includes other CTE pathways). The graduation rate for CTE students is 12% higher than non-CTE students.

	Non CTE	CTE
Graduation rate	87%	99%



Strategies for Program Success in Rural Settings

1) Build Trust Take time to build trust and relationships with youth and their families. Listen to stories and respect differences. Be aware of possible prejudices – they go both ways.

2) Overcome Distance In rural settings youth may live over 100 miles from service delivery and public transportation systems. Best results occur when services are delivered where people live; don't expect that they can come to you. Build in time and budget for travel to client population.

3) Work in Partnership Align with other public systems to maximize service and supports for youth.

4) Clear Expertise Strive for excellence in what you do. Be the go-to organization for your partners (work experience and post-secondary bridging).

“We are successful because we genuinely like youth and believe if you set the bar high enough youth will rise to the occasion.” – Chris Weissenfluh

Community Action Program of East Central Oregon (CAPECO)

Under a grey sky with the landscape covered in frost, the world seems cast in crystal as CAPECO staff drives youth from high school to college and worksites. Without public transportation other than prohibitively expensive cabs, the CAPECO “shuttle service” gives Workforce Development Specialists Chris Weissenfluh and Susie Stuvland time to build relationships with youth during the drives. They literally go the extra mile with creative determination to deliver results in the vast Eastern Oregon region.

CAPECO, a rural provider with limited resources serving a diverse client population, faces special challenges. Many youth are members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and others are Latino or low-income white. CAPECO is an example of a program with a clear focus, work experience, and



secondary bridging, that complements the education and support services provided by local school districts, juvenile justice, and the foster care/ Independent Living Program. In this Umatilla and Morrow

County region, CAPECO is the go-to organization for youth employment services.

How does CAPECO do it? Relationships matter. The staff partners closely with other services, providers appreciating what each organization can do as they connect the dots to make youth services as comprehensive as possible. When trying to arrange a summer work experience with an employer or answer admissions questions at Blue Mountain Community College, CAPECO staff knows the right person to call. They appreciate the diversity of the client population, doing their best to build trust by demonstrating respect for differences and open-mindedness to new ways of doing things.

Just the facts

CAPECO Youth Program

Address: 721 SE Third, Suite D, Pendleton, OR 97801

Program Contact: Chris Weissenfluh, Workforce Development Specialist

Email: cweissenfluh@capeco-works.org

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Community Action Program East Central Oregon

ORGANIZATION TYPE: Private Non-Profit Organization, WIA 1B Provider

LENGTH OF TIME PROGRAM IN OPERATION: 20 years

NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED TO DATE: 415 youth placed in Work Experiences in past 5 years. 352 youth have completed Work Readiness Workshops.

TARGET POPULATION: Low-income at-risk youth aged 14-24.

KEY PARTNERS: Pendleton High School Education Credit Management Corporation, Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, Oregon Youth employment Initiative, Umatilla County commission on Children and Families youth Investment Program, Juvenile Justice, Department of Human Services, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and local CBOs.

COMMON ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS

Although each Oregon site profiled serves youth in unique ways, together they share a number of common elements. In particular, the sites value a formula for youth success and program effectiveness grounded in a blend of competence and connection.

No one operates in isolation. Rather, each site relies on its web of connections to move youth forward. Students excel when they can learn in settings other than the traditional classroom – outside, in teams, on meaningful service-learning projects, in work-based settings where their efforts make an immediate difference they can see and touch. Organizations excel when they can collaborate, meeting both the individual interests of each partner and their shared desire for increased youth success in college, career, and community.

Specifically, the sites profiled exhibit strengths in the following areas:

Culture of High Expectations

- Program aligns with organizational mission, vision, and values
- Explicit college-going culture also reflects workplace expectations
- Organization's leadership prioritizes program and tracks impact
- Commitment to ongoing professional development

Quality Program Practices

- Outcome driven strategies
- Feedback loops and shared data
- Relationship emphasis – strengths-based, personalized guidance and support
- Cross system collaborations and connections
- Sustainable and diverse funding streams

In relation to the Back on Track Framework, the sites studied all demonstrated existing and expanding attention to the first and second phases.

Phase One: Enriched Preparation

- Academics aligned to state college-going standards
- Learning opportunities in real contexts
- Meeting students where they are – then accelerating or remediating as needed
- Personal guidance and support

Phase Two: Bridging to College and Career

- Deliberate instruction in skills for work-based learning and college knowledge
- Personalized guidance and support
- Mentored experiences in postsecondary and career situations

RECOMMENDATIONS

The sites profiled in this document give us much to appreciate. They build on the success formula integrating competence and connections. They also reveal emerging opportunities for greater youth success in the current economic and educational environment. We offer the following recommendations, integrated with our review of national best practices and local opportunities, in this spirit.

Perspective

ACT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF YOUTH. Adults may operate within the exclusive worlds of vocational or academic education, from the comfort zones of the organizations they know and represent. To succeed in college and career, youth must integrate all of these worlds into a meaningful whole that matches their interest, talents, and resources. Whenever adults can encourage an integrated approach and resist creating barriers, youth will benefit.

Policy

INCREASE COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS. Programs featured often are funded by both the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) that operate with different rules and regulations. Program providers can be challenged to meet the different, and at times, conflicting requirements, including the tracking of outcome measures. Increased coordination and alignment of federal requirements could minimize the pressure on an organization to prioritize one department over another and instead could maximize results for youth.

Practice

FIRST YEAR SUPPORT MATTERS. Youth thrive with structure; they are buoyed by continued connections with people they trust. When youth move on to college and career they often need an extended hand off where they can still grab on for stability and encouragement. National trends are shifting: often now an organization's success is measured by the number of graduates who succeed at the next level of college and/or career. Recognizing this shift and adding first year supports now will benefit both youth and the organizations serving them.

USE DATA FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

Organizations steadily improve when they measure key data points beyond those required for compliance. By aligning data analysis with organizational goals, focusing on achievement results, tracking youth success at the next level of education and career, measuring growth, and listening to multiple perspectives (youth,

staff, and partners), an organization can affirm what’s working and correct what’s not. Smart data use reflecting real conditions and results can increase confidence in the organization for all involved. Even when data are distressing, it’s better to know than not know – because when you know you can start to solve the problem.

INCORPORATE WAYS TO AWARD CREDIT BY PROFICIENCY.

Oregon State Board of Education policy supports the use of credit by proficiency, a way to award academic credit when students demonstrate mastery of learning objectives. It can apply to both academic and WBL

curriculum. It allows students to earn credit at a pace that’s right for them. As programs figure out ways to award proficiency credit, they will increase their ability to make every learning opportunity count for the youth they serve.

SELECT EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES WHEN POSSIBLE.

Over the past few years, youth organizations in various fields have standardized the use of evidence or research-based practices. By selecting learning materials and strategies that have been tested, organizations can more reliably predict effects and expect results in their programs.

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