



Promising Business Education Practice

Business and Education Working Together in Luzerne and Schuylkill Counties

AT A GLANCE

Through a Business Education Partnership Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the Luzerne Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board, Inc. partially or fully funded numerous career awareness initiatives that impacted high school students throughout the region.

RESULTS/IMPACT

Many partners were involved in and impacted by the career awareness initiatives including school districts, intermediate units, a career and technology center, Northeast PA Manufacturers and Employers Council, regional employers, Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Provider, the Pennsylvania CareerLink® in Luzerne and Schuylkill counties, and nonprofit organizations. Results of the grant-funded activities, which took place during the 2015-2016 school year, include the following:

Y.E.S. (Your Employability Skills) Northeast Certificate Program

- 691 high school students representing several school districts enrolled in the program
- 290 students received a certificate for completing the program
- 60 students had perfect attendance
- Many students, business members, local legislators, government officials, and school staff attended a student recognition event
- Lake Lehman School District (Luzerne County) is offering the Y.E.S. program to their high school upperclassmen during the 2016-17 school year, utilizing grant dollars for the curriculum and site license

Looking Forward Conference

- 289 high school students and parents representing 14 school districts attended
- Five regional postsecondary institutions participated

Schuylkill Youth Summit

- Approximately 100 students participated from 16 school districts in Schuylkill County

- Community and business members acted as panelists

Annual Schuylkill County Career Fair

- 61 vendors participated
- 930 students from 11 school districts attended

CareerLinking Academies

- 56 students from four high schools received up to 35 hours of intensive career awareness information and experiences
- Each participant was introduced to the services at Pennsylvania CareerLink® and was registered on Job Gateway®

ORIGIN/IMPLEMENTATION:

The availability of Business Education Partnership funding not tied to a specific demographic or constrained to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) restrictions provided the Luzerne Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board, Inc. greater flexibility in supporting existing initiatives as well as implementing several that otherwise would not be fiscally possible. Highlights of initiatives that received partial or full funding include:

Y.E.S. Northeast Certificate Program

The Northeast PA Manufacturers and Employers Council worked directly with schools to provide the Y.E.S. Northeast Certificate Program curriculum, a program that is aligned with the Pennsylvania Department of Education Career Education and Work Standards. Designed to develop the job skills required by most businesses and industries, the curriculum consists of 36 modules and "...is a 1-credit, 120-hour, yearlong elective course targeted at high school seniors."¹ In addition to classroom presentations by business professionals, students participated in business tours and mock interviews.

A Y.E.S. Recognition Breakfast was held in May 2016 to honor 290 students who received a certificate for completing the curriculum. Along with students, multiple stakeholders attended the event including school faculty, members of businesses and industries, local legislators, and government officials.

Looking Forward Conference

Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18 conducted its fifth annual Looking Forward Conference on a Saturday in March 2016. The full-day, free event was open to students in grades eight through 12, and it was required that an adult attend with the students.

Held at Penn State Wilkes-Barre Campus, the conference opened with a keynote speaker followed by four breakout sessions and information booths open throughout the day; lunch was provided. A wide variety of topics were offered during each breakout session including information about specific career clusters and postsecondary options

¹ Retrieved from [YES Northeast Certificate program](#)

such as the college selection and admissions process, vocational and technical programs, and the military. One session, facilitated by college students enrolled in various majors, allowed attendees to learn about the college experience from those presently experiencing it. While some sessions welcomed both parents and students, others were designed for one group or the other. During the event, students were encouraged to utilize online inventories in order to identify their personal career interests. Available assessments included PA Career Zone Interest Inventory, Job Gateway®, PA CareerLink®, and O*NET.

Five higher education institutions took part in the conference: King's College, Luzerne County Community College, Misericordia University, Wilkes University, and Penn State Wilkes-Barre.

An [interview](#) announcing this event was aired on PA Live and featured George Butwin and Greg Koons from the Luzerne Intermediate Unit.

Schuylkill Youth Summit

The fourth annual Schuylkill Youth Summit took place in March 2016 at Penn State Schuylkill campus, continuing its aim to engage students "...in making the county a better place for them to live, work, play and raise their families."² Approximately 100 students from 16 school districts participated in the daylong event designed to focus on career and job awareness, issues within their community, and planning and goal setting to spearhead change in their communities. During the 2015-2016 school year, students choose to focus on blight in their communities. During the summit they formulated projects to address this concern. Plans included improvements to local playgrounds and parks, helping the elderly maintain their properties, and establishing community gardens. Students were able to pose questions and discuss these projects with a panel of guest speakers consisting of community and business members.

Annual Schuylkill County Career Fair

The Northeast Pennsylvania Manufacturers and Employers Council was contracted to facilitate a career fair for youth in grades seven through 12, parents, and educators. Attendees could engage with professionals in a range of career paths in manufacturing, health care, education, logistics and transportation, engineering, law, the military, trades, and other sectors. The 8th Annual Schuylkill County Career Fair was held in April 2016 and showcased 61 vendors. Schuylkill and Luzerne Workforce Partners provided promotional assistance to The Northeast Pennsylvania Manufacturers and Employers Council for this event from.

CareerLinking Academies

The Luzerne Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board, Inc. competitively procured services to secure providers for CareerLinking Academies³ that offered up to 35 hours

² Retried from [youth summit](#)

³ The CareerLinking Academy model is aligned to the Pennsylvania Department of Education Academic Standards in Career Education and Work and adheres to federal, state, and local career education initiatives. The academy

of intensive career awareness and utilized a hands-on approach to actively engage youth in the learning process. Four academies were funded resulting in the participation of 56 students. Academies took place at Schuylkill Technology Center (where all freshmen students participated in a 14-week program), Greater Nanticoke Area School District, Pine Grove Area School District, and the ReDCo Group.

An emphasis on four regional industry clusters was the focus at each academy:

- Agriculture/Food Processing
- Healthcare
- Advanced Manufacturing and Services
- Green or Energy Related Manufacturing Services

By visiting local employers and through employers interacting with students in the classroom, students explored the many career opportunities available in the Luzerne Schuylkill region. From entry level jobs through supervisory and management positions students learned that there are many different pathways one can take throughout their career and glimpsed the day-to-day responsibilities, salary, and educational requirements needed to obtain a job in the industry.

Businesses involved in the academies included the following:

- Ashland Technologies, a leading contract manufacturer of machined and fabricated parts
- U.S. Postal Service
- Cardinal Systems, world's largest and most technologically-advanced manufacturer of galvanized steel walls for inground swimming pools
- Highwood USA, leading manufacturer of an eco-friendly synthetic wood used in outdoor applications
- Wheelabrator, cogeneration facility that provides environmentally safe disposal of anthracite coal mining waste (culm), while generating clean energy for sale to the local utility
- Fort Indiantown Gap, National Guard Training Center
- Jersey Acres Farms, family-owned diversified farm operation
- Pleasant Valley Homes, designs, builds, and sells modular homes and related structures
- Geisinger Health System, regional healthcare provider
- Medico Industries, equipment retailer for the construction industry serving 14 counties in northeastern and central Pennsylvania
- Summit Modular Homes, leader in custom designed pre-site built homes
- Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Railriders, professional minor league baseball team

NEXT STEPS/SUSTAINABILITY

provides many experiences including exploration of career interests, leadership and 21st century skill development, work-based learning, and college visits.

Funding that may serve all youth rather than those in a specific population are critical to the sustainability of these initiatives. The CareerLinking Academies, for example, were not offered during the 2016-2017 school year due to lack of funding. Supporting teacher externships, a proven strategy to connect educators and business partners, is an initiative that has been discussed but has not been implemented due to lack of funding. More youth will be served if this funding is available again.

CONTACTS

[Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Development Board, Inc.](#)

Marla Doddo, Manager of Workforce Operations and Strategies/EO Officer

marladoddo@lswib.org

570-822-1101, ext. 296

22 East Union Street, Suite 115

Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701