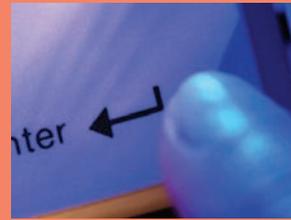


Young People Succeeding



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VISION

Children are well prepared for learning when they start school and receive support outside of the classroom for their efforts inside the classroom. Intellectual curiosity, skill development and achievement are valued. Young people receive mentoring, guidance and support as they develop the capacity to differentiate between positive and negative risk behaviors. Positive role models are plentiful, and others in the community talk to teenagers with candor and respect about the difficult choices they face. Students finish high school ready to compete successfully in the labor market and/or in continuing education and skills development.

YOUNG PEOPLE SUCCEEDING OUTCOME TEAM REPORT

The Young People Succeeding (YPS) Outcome Team worked for several months reviewing data, receiving presentations and assessing needs. Early in the discussions, the team decided to narrow its focus to four areas and established a subcommittee structure to further its work. The focus areas are:

- Early learning
- Youth opportunities as they relate to economic development for businesses
- Middle school career development programming for area school districts
- Continuing to monitor and review the progress being made in implementing the Alternative Learning Opportunities Team (ALOT) recommendations

From this work, the team developed a shared vision devoted to improving the early learning landscape for our community's children.

EARLY LEARNING

For too many families, the concept of early child care has been confused with custodial care. Diversions, such as television or solitary activities, serve to replace the stimulation offered by appropriate adult intervention and interaction with peers. Many parents shy away from certified/licensed programs due to sheer cost. Additionally, parents may be confused about how to access early learning programs. Parents must possess a certain level of savvy to even know how to gain access on behalf of their children. Systems and funding streams tend to operate in silos, often making it necessary for parents to patch together a plan for their children as opposed to accessing a full array of available



services from a single entity. Many parents who work non-traditional schedules are unable to obtain structured child care and learning environments for their children and instead make do with willing neighbors or other family members who aren't trained for such an important role.

As the result of lack of information, lack of intersystem collaboration, poor funding or inadequate resources, a significant number of children are left out of programs designed to ready them for school success. Statistics bear out the fact that participation in structured early learning programs is a predeterminant of success later in school. Long before children enroll in school, indeed, as some experts argue, from the point of birth, children are capable of developing the skills necessary for adult success. Reading, math, and strong communication skills are essential tools for self-sufficiency. Young children are prepared to learn these skills at much earlier ages than the formal education system addresses.

Children who participate in true developmental learning programs at an early age routinely outperform their peers through the formal educational process. We must ignite a sense of urgency and a broad awareness of the need for youngsters to be engaged in early learning activities which set a baseline for measurable school, and eventual adult, success.

The team reviewed a variety of national and state (Ohio and others) data to validate the local information:

- Brain research
- Longitudinal studies
- Economic development studies

- School readiness indicators initiatives
- Accreditation, certification and licensure information
- Accountability

The team also reviewed Montgomery County demographics and data to understand the magnitude of the local issues and then identified many problems and barriers in Montgomery County. Several include:

- Preschool education ranks as a low educational priority.
- The community lacks an awareness of the importance of preschool education.
- Children are not adequately evaluated for school readiness until they enter kindergarten.
- There is a lack of accessibility (affordability, proximity, transportation, etc.) to early childhood programs.
- Providers are not attracting sufficient numbers of children into the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) programs. Many families are not taking advantage of state resources.
- Lack of funding exists to compensate licensed teachers; this negatively impacts school readiness of early learners.
- There is a lack of high-quality (research-based, ongoing, job-embedded) professional development for early learning providers in our community.

The team drew many conclusions from the data. Several include:

- Quality early learning experiences are a prerequisite for school readiness.
- A significant number of children in Montgomery County are not entering school ready to learn.
- Quality of early childhood programs varies greatly within the Dayton region.
- Parents are unaware of how to access information about preschool education programs. There is no "one-stop shop" or clearinghouse for information on early childhood care/learning.
- There is a need for systematic, high-quality professional development between and among early learning providers in Montgomery County.
- Investment in universal preschool readiness programs can generate economic returns for the community.



Early child care/early learning needs a system-wide approach that is supportive of all the participants. It is necessary to determine if three- and four-year-olds are arriving at school ready to learn. The team's recommendations are:

- ⊗ That a common definition of school readiness be determined for use in a survey.
- ⊗ That an appropriate researcher(s) be contracted to conduct a survey of Montgomery County child care providers and analyze the results.
- ⊗ That we determine what barriers exist to obtaining state resources (ELI) for families in Montgomery County.

To assure that the findings of research endeavors are translated into effective program practices, we recommend the following:

- ⊗ That we deliver in Montgomery County a systematic professional development system that focuses on school readiness and early learning academic content standards. It needs to be developed for use by all regional early learning providers.
- ⊗ That we create in Montgomery County a coherent intellectual leadership for early learning teacher development. That leadership needs to occur both through the collaborative work of all Dayton area higher education institutions and the creation of a Community Chair of Early Learning to be housed at either The University of Dayton or Wright State University.
- ⊗ That we develop a pilot, exemplary early learning school readiness program for high-poverty young people.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Montgomery County educational institutions and youth development organizations provide a richly qualitative and diverse mosaic of programs and opportunities serving thousands of participants and their families each year. During 2005, area economic development personnel recognized a need for additional information on the youth development opportunities located in the county to support their communication with business leaders potentially interested in relocating their facilities to the county. The team agreed to develop a concise economic development oriented document that positively communicates the youth development opportunities readily available through the formal and informal educational systems and organizations serving youth in the county. The team will select key themes for the message and determine where the appropriate information exists to support the data collection requirements. After selecting appropriate themes, the team will present its revised recommendations.

MIDDLE SCHOOL CAREER EXPLORATION PROGRAM

Educators have reported that career exploration and awareness must happen long before the typical eighth–ninth grade emphasis. The South Metro Regional Chamber of Commerce Business Advisory Council, which had partnered with several south suburban school districts to produce effective career exploration videos targeting high school and middle school students in the early 2000s, began to explore revising the material for new media. This need was

brought to the attention of the team, which is now providing leadership for the project. The revised materials will be distributed during the 2006-07 school year to all county and area schools that would like to have them.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TEAM (ALOT) RECOMMENDATIONS

The ALOT was formed in 1999 by the FCFC to support a portion of its strategic community initiatives process. The YPS Team agreed to monitor and report on the progress of four of the ten recommendations made in the ALOT report. Those recommendations are:

- ⊗ Increase community collaboration and communication for at-risk youth
- ⊗ Advocate for continuing and sustaining the Mentoring Collaborative
- ⊗ Encourage and support the Sinclair Fast Forward Center
- ⊗ Work with higher education to prepare new teachers/retain current teachers

CONTINUED RESEARCH

The team has continued to meet with professionals and to travel to see best practice models in early learning. A research study was recently completed to acquire information to identify important gaps that are hindering children from showing up ready for school. The results of this study will be used to further the work of the team toward implementing improved early learning strategies in Montgomery County.