



Policy Paper

Problems and Solutions

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

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I

NATIONAL NEED FOR YOUTH CAREER EXPLORATION/EMPLOYMENT

The summer employment rate for US teens in 2004 was the lowest that it has been since 1948 (JAG, 2004), indicating just how difficult the competitive job market has become for young people. With so many corporations cutting jobs due to advances in technology or corporate movement overseas, lower paying jobs are now being filled by unskilled adults needing to make a living.

Federal spending on youth employment programs is also at a low. With the replacement of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) with the Work Investment Act (WIA), state and local workforce development agencies have been forced to dramatically reduce the number of subsidized jobs for youth. Previously, a large portion of the jobs allowed for under the JTPA went to minority teens in urban settings and low income teens in rural and suburban areas ([Online Index to Quality Practices](#), 2005). The WIA has significantly decreased the funding for these programs.

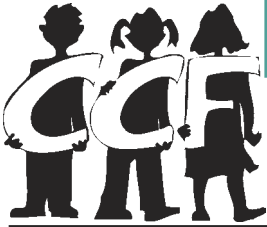
In order for adolescents to become successful adults with financially sound futures, they must meet the demand for more advanced work skills and higher education. According to Murnane and Levy, “during the past 20 years, the skills required to succeed in the economy have changed radically, but the skills taught in most schools have changed very little” (1996). A minimum education no longer guarantees a sufficient wage. The youth of today are up against a particularly challenging labor market, and with little federal help, there are few places to which families can turn.

ASSETS FOR YOUTH IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

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- Heather Kellams, Community Attention
- Lee Davis, Charlottesville Schools
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“A minimum education no longer guarantees a sufficient wage.”





Assets for Youth members believe it is timely for the progression of a concerted community effort to improve the summer career exploration and employment options for low-income young people in the Charlottesville and Albemarle area.

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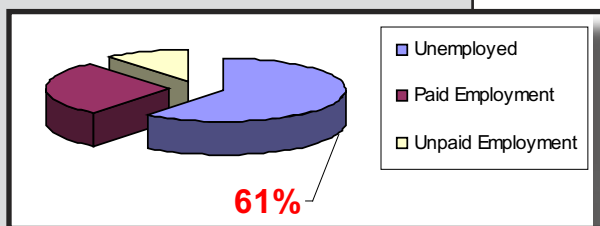
LOCAL RESOURCES AND GAPS

While it may seem like this is a problem exclusively for urban areas, youth all over the country need education and work experience in order to secure a well-paying job with a foreseeable future. Many youth today either do not have the capabilities to access such resources, don't have the guidance of parents or other adults in their community, or lack a sense of hope due to the social and economic circumstances in which they find themselves. A report by Child Trends (2001) indicates that there is a connection between youth participation in employment programs with higher educational expectations and completion rates. By increasing the availability and accessibility of work opportunities and enrichment experiences, many youth, particularly low-income youth, may begin to see the connection between education, hard work, and success.

CCF became interested in low-income youth employment issues after its Assets for Youth work group conducted a study, Youth Voices, where teens facilitated focus groups of 276 middle and high school youth in the City and County. Conducted in May, 2005, before summer vacation, the study revealed that a large number of local teens cited lack of employment as one of their main concerns. In their final report, the Assets for Youth work group recommended a push to "increase community opportunities for youth development and employment in summer, particularly for youth ages 13-16, in response to federal funding cuts in this area" as well as to "create a 'jobs clearinghouse' particularly for youth, ages 14-16." According to interviews conducted with local youth and staff at youth programs, there has been a substantial interest among youth for paid summer employment. However, there are currently only about 300 paid program spots available to young people in the area. With approximately 700 youth, ages 12-17, in local low-income families, the potential demand for these spots far exceeds the availability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The local programs offering current positions follow similar funding and coordination efforts. They rely on individual funding sources and businesses to help run the programs. Many local programs report that this funding is inadequate to meet program needs. Another complication expressed by program staff is a shortage of employers who are aware of the need for youth employment in the area.

Current Employment Resources and Deficit for Youth in Poverty in Albemarle County and City of Charlottesville, ages 12-17





CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT

After review of multiple publications and interviews with local organizations, the following list of effective youth employment program criteria was compiled to guide a local effort to expand career exploration and employment opportunities.

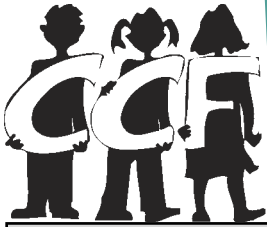
Criteria include:

- Job Orientation:** Hold workshops and courses discussing job readiness topics, interviewing skills, expectations of youth and the work experience, as well as covering basic information;
- Career Exploration:** Offer chances for youth to evaluate and discover career interests, in addition to exposing youth to a variety of educational and occupational choices;
- Diverse Experiences:** Provide opportunities for youth to participate in work-based learning activities, such as job shadowing, internships, work-experience and community service;
- Positive Role Models:** Have involved, educated and excited employers;
- Tracking Progress and Development:** Record achievements, skills and competencies through evaluations and self-assessments;
- Displays of Competence and Learning:** Require demonstrations of skills learned through real-life projects; organize end of the summer opportunities for youth to learn how to compile their resumes and portfolios as well as prepare for future job applications;
- Financial Support:** Have enough funding to support the youths' wages and the program staff;
- Staff Support System:** Have clear support services for both the youth and employers to provide stability, continuous monitoring, contact information and procedures, and increased confidence, and to allow for the option of follow-up interviews, assessments and workshops for participants;
- Organization and Planning:** Make contact early, maintaining contact throughout the program, and clarifying expectations and program specifics with sponsoring employers to result in much more positive feedback from both the youth and the employers;
- Year-Round Programs:** Have a full year program to allow for the formation of a stronger connection to the program, more networking between teens and coworkers, and a better opportunity to see how teens have made a difference;
- Follow-Up:** Make sure that both the programs and the youth participants provide continuous feedback on the progress being made and any issues that arise to assure mutual benefit for the teen and the business.

“Without jobs in their neighborhoods, youth in low-income urban areas may also lack good adult role models for employment. The working adults they do know often earn low wages. Youth in these communities may also have very little information about careers or the connections to help them get the jobs they want. Because of this, youth in disadvantaged urban areas also often fail to equate scholastic achievement with high-quality, high-paying jobs putting them at risk of failing or even dropping out of school.”

--Public/Private Ventures (2004) on the impact of how low wage employment affects both adults and children in a community.





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LOCAL PROGRAMS THAT MEET THE CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT

TEENSIGHT:

Operated since 1988 to serve youth in Regions Nine and Ten, the summer program runs for six weeks, with a year round commitment to follow-up with program workers. There is a week long pre-employment orientation to convey the expectations of the program, employers and participants. Participants can earn anywhere from six to nine dollars an hour, and all services are free to participants.

TEENS AT WORK:

Operated by Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries (CALM), yet is no longer running due to a lack of substantial funding. When the program was operating, youth worked for about 14 hours per week for a period of 7 weeks with a local employer. Every Friday morning there was a personal development class which participants were paid to attend. Wages come from CALM for the first 3 weeks and the employer for the last 4 weeks.

REGION TEN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM:

Implemented in 2005, the program ran for a total of nine weeks with the first week dedicated to orientation and training in CPR, first aid, team building, and policy. Participants worked in mental retardation facilities in positions of direct care (with direct supervision for guidance) for 25-30 hours/week.

COMPETITIVE WORK EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITION PROGRAM:

Began in 1987 to provide a structured work experience in a field linked to a child's career goals and interests. This is a competitive employment program in which the child receives above minimum wage for his/her performance during the academic school year. Each student receives school credit for participation. Funding for the program is provided by

There are several local youth employment programs in which youth receive monetary income for their involvement and participation. Assets for Youth members identified these programs as good initial contacts for coordination development and program

Program	Eligibility
Teensight at FOCUS	(1)From financially disadvantaged family, and (2) some other barrier to employment (runaway, foster child, teen parent, etc).
Teens at Work (seeking funding for continuation)	From financially disadvantaged family (most youth were from the Prospect area).
Region Ten Employment Program	Must apply to program (looking for people who are responsible, well-rounded and interested in civic involvement).
The Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Education Center (CATEC) Summer Career Institute	Businesses select participants based upon interviews. Looking for students who need help with future career choices. Open to CATEC Career Academy members first, yet all Charlottesville, Albemarle, and Fluvanna County students can apply.
Charlottesville Area Student Business Association (CASBA)	Through their schools, students have access to the various different programs that CASBA offers in career exploration and training.
City and County High Schools	
Competitive Work Employment and Transition Program (Charlottesville High School)	Referred youth who receive special education services, repeated 1 or more grades and need credit for graduation, have chronic attendance problems, and/or are enrolled in vocational education classes.
Albemarle County Cooperative Education Programs	Students must apply to the program and are also required to apply for the job they desire. Must be enrolled in an Albemarle County high school.





expansion. There are also many other local organizations that seek to support youth interns in an unpaid but educational environment. Furthermore, various employment programs exist to serve different populations with slightly different goals. The following describe some of the paid employment programs available to low-income youth in Charlottesville/Albemarle, and appear to meet the criteria Assets for Youth has identified as effective.

Ages	Youth Served Annually	Wages	Contact
14-22	120	\$6-\$9/hr.	Maureen Burkhill (434) 295-8336
14-18	15-20	\$6/hr.	Lindsay Quinn (434) 970-2016
18-25	11	\$8/hr.	Frank Allevato (434) 970-1392
High school juniors and seniors	20	\$250 for the three weeks + .5 elective credits for high school	Deborah Gannon (434) 973-4461 x112
All ages, mostly middle and high school students	6400 students trained	Depends on program, can help getting paid jobs or unpaid experience	Linda Seaman (434) 973-3193

High School Programs

16-21	144	Above minimum wage + school credit	Lee Davis (434) 245-2634
High school students	Approx. 20 per school	Competitive wages + school credit	Albemarle High: Jill Garnett (434) 975-9300 Western Albemarle High: Caroline Bertrand (434) 823-8700 Monticello High: Pat Culpepper (434) 244-3100

the school system and is in operation at Charlottesville High School.

ALBEMARLE COUNTY COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

Running at each of the County’s public high schools, all County schools include an in-class portion which works on honing job skills and career development. Depending on the school, students can participate in a marketing, business, or general employment class. Students work with their teacher to find and apply for their own jobs. Students get a work grade averaged in with their class grade. Salaries come from the employers, and students are expected to work approximately ten hours per week.

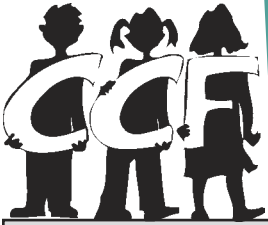
CATEC SUMMER CAREER INSTITUTE:

For three weeks during the summer, the program aids students in defining career goals, gaining awareness of career opportunities, learning technical skills, and developing workplace readiness skills. Students build a portfolio, engage in training by certified instructors, and participate in field trips, job shadowing, research activities, and seminars. Participants are paid either by the business or by CATEC.

CASBA:

The Charlottesville Area School Business Alliance was formed in 1996 in an effort to better prepare students in the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, and Nelson County for the business world. CASBA houses many youth employment and career exploration initiatives such as career fairs, an interactive classroom seminar called CHOICES, skill-building courses, and summer internships. Students can apply for the organized programs through their schools.





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DEVELOPING PROGRAMS WILLING TO OFFER CAREER EXPLORATION & EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR LOW-INCOME YOUTH

The following are youth programs where the leadership has expressed a willingness to be a resource and/or provide developmental aid to low-income youth seeking employment.

(1) Computers4Kids is a computer resource center that has been running since 2001. C4K runs twelve-month programs where students learn about current computer technology. After 8-10 hours working with a mentor, the student is eligible to receive a donated computer system for their home, and after five supplementary workshops they can receive one year of free internet access. All enrolled students are free to use the computer lab which is open six days a week. This might be a resource for a youth employment effort training program. Computers4Kids staff has expertise in teaching young people necessary, career-applicable computer skills.



(2) Urban Vision is a new organization to the Charlottesville area. Since its conception in January of 2004, the program has promoted educational equity, life-long learning, and economic vitality to low-income housing divisions. Currently focused in Charlottesville's Friendship Court area, Urban Vision offers GED preparation, adult computer skills, job counseling and money management classes, as well as job and educational fairs and leadership programs. The program has the potential to serve as a source for skills and life training as well as a comprehensive career resource.



(3) Park's Edge Community Center is a neighborhood organization in the Park's Edge community. Participants must be low-income and preference is given to Park's Edge residents. The Center focuses on education, job training and programming for children and youth. The after-school program is conducted in partnership with the YMCA. A computer lab and classes in GED preparation and other topics are also available. This is another resource that could serve as a source for skills training and recruitment of low-income youth.





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Assests for Youth Implementation Team makes the following recommendtations for addressing the local need for youth employment and expanded career exploration.

- ▶ The localities, community organizations, and local employers should launch a “jobs campaign” to generate partners to pledge jobs to youth employment programs that will match young people to opportunities.
- ▶ These community partners should identify and dedicate resources to provide training and supervision to youth seeking employment and entering the work force through the jobs campaign.
- ▶ These community partners should establish a “jobs clearing-house” to collect job information and inform low-income youth about employment possibilities. Interested employers can provide information about job requirements and performance expectations and youth can be matched with meaningful work experiences.
- ▶ Additionally, individuals, organizations, and businesses that want to support youth employment could assist in the following ways:
 - Provide voluntary mentoring of employed youth.
 - Offer career exploration opportunities to allow youth to learn more about employment in various fields.
 - Make donations to the agencies and organizations mentioned in this paper to support youth employment initiatives. (see sidebar)

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Invest in Youth Development:

\$600-\$800

Provides the summer wages of one student in a 6-week job program.

\$1,500-\$2,500

Provides for indirect costs such as travel, rent, supplies, and materials.

\$7,000-\$7,500

Provides for part-time personnel for 12 weeks.

\$30,000-\$40,000

Provides for a 25-person summer employment program with one supervisor.

