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# Connecting Hartford's Youth to Employment Opportunities

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## Case Studies

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**January 10, 2003**

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*Prepared for Hartford, Connecticut, and the Annie E. Casey  
Foundation Making Connections Initiative*

## **Boston, Massachusetts:** **The Boston Compact and the Summer of Work and Learning**

### **Background**

The Boston Compact is a unique arrangement. Employers guarantee summer jobs and priority hiring; the higher education community commits to scholarships and priority admissions; and the schools promise to improve as measured by test scores, drop-out rates, and attendance. Implementation of the Compact's employment goals has rested primarily with the PIC. Since 1982, when the first Compact was signed, the PIC has convened Compact partners to work together to improve educational opportunities for all students.

With just under 600,000 residents, Boston is the twentieth largest city in the United States. (The metropolitan area is the seventh largest.) As in many Northeast urban centers, Boston's population declined from the 1950s through the 1970s. The city population grew in the 1980s but has declined slightly in this decade. Ethnic minorities comprise 41 percent of the population.

Boston is home to 10 percent of Massachusetts adults but 17 percent of its economically disadvantaged adults. The numbers are similar for youth: 11 percent of the state's 14-21 year olds and 20 percent of those living in poverty reside in Boston.

### **Snapshot**

In the early 1980s, few graduates of the Boston Public Schools were prepared to succeed in postsecondary education or in jobs that were in high demand. Leaders in city government, the schools, higher education, the employer community, and organized labor came together to reform K-12 education and improve the employment prospects of public school graduates. The result was the 1982 Boston Compact, initiating a linkage between local employment opportunities and school improvement.

Compact revisions in 1988 and 1994 set the context for serious school reform, addressing such issues as school-based management, professional development, curriculum standards, and high school restructuring. In 2000, Compact signatories agreed to a new set of commitments, along with accountability measures. The signatories committed to: meet the "high standards" challenge, increase opportunities for college and career success, and recruit and prepare the next generation of teachers and principals.

### *The Boston Summer Jobs Program*

One of the ways the Boston Compact has been operationalized is the Boston Summer Jobs Program, an effort to address the critical challenge of raising young people's academic and workplace skills. Three promising strategies help address this challenge by extending learning into the summer. These programs, which forge partnerships between businesses and schools, show significant success in engaging students, including those who are most at risk of not passing the state tests known as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. These programs, jointly sponsored by the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Private Industry Council, merge the worlds of work and learning. Participating employers and teachers report that students are more

motivated when they connect academic skills to high-quality, workplace learning opportunities.

*Summer Transitions: Work and Learning:* Students who have scored at level 1 in Reading or Math on the Stanford 9 in grade 8 benefit from a combined, mutually reinforcing set of activities: project-based and direct instruction on literacy and math skills coupled with workplace experience at non-profit agencies. Students who are selected for this program attend one of the six school-to-career middle schools in the Boston Public School system. In this five-week program, students making the transition to high school, combine intense skill-building in mathematics and reading with career exploration and project-based learning.

*Classroom at the Workplace:* Using the nationally renowned Boys Town FAME curriculum, this seven-week program for rising tenth- and eleventh-grade students combines full-time summer jobs with 80 minutes per day of formal classroom instruction on literacy and math skills. Participating employers hire students for the summer, pay teachers' salaries, and pay the students to participate in the literacy and math instruction during the work day. The classes are small and each curriculum rewards students for incremental gains. PIC business partners provide time, space, and materials during the workday for students to hone their reading comprehension, expand their vocabularies, and improve their analysis of the written word. It's a win-win situation, especially as indicated by high supervisor and student satisfaction.

*Pathway Summer of Work and Learning:* Students in this program are involved in workplace learning as a component of their school-year career pathway program. This model makes the worksite a rich learning environment where both students and teachers hone and update skills in project-based learning. Teachers join eleventh-grade students to work on projects that are relevant to the worksite. This six-week program proves that the worksite can be a place of learning where both students and teachers hone and update skills. After attending a Boston Public Schools-sponsored training on effective instructional strategies, teachers join with students in specific career pathways to work on projects. The culminating showcase provides an opportunity for employers to work with teachers to develop more relevant skills for youth.

### **Outcomes/Lessons**

*Summer Transitions: Work and Learning:* In 2001, Summer Transitions program posted a remarkable 93 percent attendance rate, an improvement over the previous year. The program served 59 students—a modest increase of ten from the previous year. The program's attendance rate continues to be significantly higher than that of the BPS summer school, due in large part to the linkage to a summer work experience, the emphasis on interactive, project-based instruction, and the presence of high school teaching assistant interns. Participating students have high attendance rates and attitudinal gains and gain valuable work experience. Placements in museums, colleges, and other nonprofit organizations help students explore postsecondary interests and work on job-readiness skills.

*Classroom at the Workplace:* This program more than doubled enrollment during the summer of 2001, to a total of 125 participants. Staff focused on recruiting tenth graders, who are members of the Class of 2003 and are the first students to be subject to the MCAS graduation requirement. Overall, students gained almost a full grade level in

literacy skills. This is significant, given that the curriculum used does not teach to a given standardized test or reading inventory. Results indicate that students were able to generalize on the standardized test what they had learned during the summer.

*Pathway Summer of Work and Learning:* Students who participated in the program made significant gains in awareness of their skill levels, as indicated through a pre- and post-survey conducted with the assistance of Jobs for the Future.

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## **Brockton:** **MY-TURN and the Champion Charter School**

### **Background**

*MY TURN (Massachusetts Youth Teenage Unemployment Reduction Network), Brockton, Massachusetts:* MY TURN convenes workplace partners who employ or interface with in-school and out-of school youth for the purpose of integrating successful and comprehensive school-to-career initiatives for youth living in Southeastern Massachusetts. As a result, it has fostered new opportunities for youth, including the creation of the Champion Charter School of Brockton and the New Bedford Youth Center, both of which serve at-risk young people. MY TURN was also instrumental in the successful development and design of Brockton's Youth Opportunity Grant.

Brockton is urban, with a population of 94,304 (2000 census). Over the past decade, the city has undergone a major transition that has impacted its diversity, economic health, and overall viability. Brockton has lost much of its business base over recent years and also seen a steady exodus of white, middle-class families, replaced by young often immigrant families with limited financial resources.

Brockton Public Schools enroll about 17,000 students in grades K-12. The total school population has grown 12.9 percent over the last four years, with a 9.9 percent gain in the elementary grades and a 22.5 percent gain in the high school population.

The student population does not mirror the city in demographic composition, linguistic breadth, economic stability, or diversity but rather that of the young families with children who have moved into Brockton. In the 2000 census, the city was 80 percent white while school records indicate that school enrollment is only 44 percent white. There are 18 different linguistic groups represented in the schools. The bilingual or limited English Proficiency Program enrolls 1,311 students, 7.7 percent of the student population. For over 25 percent of students, English is not their primary language. In the elementary grades, 56 percent of students receive free or reduced-cost lunch; 48 percent of high school students receive free or reduced-cost lunch.

### **Snapshot**

Since 1984, MY TURN has forged and sustained school-employer connections on behalf of at-risk and out-of-school youth in Brockton and surrounding communities. Its services, expanded in the early 1990s under a federal multi-year education partnership grant, include pre-employment skills training, job placement, post-graduation follow-up, a drop-out prevention program, a postsecondary preparation program, and a peer leadership and academic excellence program.

MY TURN further expanded school-to-career staffing and programming under the Connections for Youth program, a school-to-career initiative begun in 1996 with a multi-year federal Urban-Rural Opportunities Grant. For several years, Connections for Youth provided a broad set of intermediary functions in the region, working in coordination with school-to-career partners. It was also a primary provider of school-to-career services to

Brockton's at-risk and out-of-school youth and a key intermediary connecting them to area employers and higher education institutions.

Soon after the launch of Connections for Youth, its director convened a dozen institutions serving high-risk youth—including representatives of social service and juvenile justice agencies, the public school district, the school-to-work local partnership, and the private industry council—to create the Brockton Alternative Education Alliance. Because Brockton offered few education options for out-of-school, court-involved, and expelled youth, the alliance decided to apply to become a site for Diploma Plus, a school-to-career model for at-risk and out-of-school youth. This model had recently begun in Boston, created by the Center for Youth Development in Education (CYDE) of the Commonwealth Corporation (then called the Corporation for Business, Work, and Learning).

In 1998, MY-TURN convened an expanded set of partners to apply for the charter to create a school serving only out-of-school youth who had dropped out of or been expelled from Brockton High. In addition to the Brockton Alternative Education Alliance and the Diploma Plus partners, this group included the mayor of Brockton, the school superintendent, a school board representative, the teacher's union president, and representatives of local colleges.

This group recognized that 1) Brockton needed a strong education alternative for out-of-school youth; 2) this alternative only made sense at a new location, rather than at the high school, which enrolled over 3,000 students; and 3) school-to-career methodologies, combined with a smaller, more supportive setting, could engage at-risk and out-of-school youth and help them achieve at a high level.

The "Champion Charter School of Brockton" opened in January 1999, with 55 students. The creation of the Champion and its future prospects owed much to a combination of factors, beginning with its base of community partnerships. Many services and supports are provided by those who participated in the formation of the Alternative Education Alliance, the launch of Diploma Plus, and the charter school application process. For example, the Brockton Neighborhood Health Center provides health services, the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club provide athletic facilities, and student teachers and social work interns come from Bridgewater State College. The Brockton Public Schools also provide special education services in addition to core budgetary support.

Also critical is the access of Champion students and staff to work-based learning and school-to-career professional development opportunities, which are equal to—or better than—those of participants in local "mainstream" schools. This reflects both the Champion's philosophy and the role of MY TURN in the local school-to-career system. Thus, a full-time Work Based Learning Specialist, a school-based staff member of Connections for Youth, develops and monitors internships, job shadows, and community service learning placements.

Also enhancing the Champion's prospects is the rigorous application process, which indicates a young person's seriousness about the program and commitment to the educational process. Young people who are interested in the school must submit a written application, references, transcripts (when available), and an essay describing why they want to attend the Champion. Applicants also attend an orientation session, participate in interviews, and complete academic assessments and inventories.

Champion conducts this recruitment through a variety of community-based organizations and social service agencies.

The Champion has twelve full-time staff: eight teachers, two administrators, counselor/case manager, and a MY TURN school-to-career specialist. A full-time office manager, a part-time counselor, and a part-time school nurse round out the staff. Community organizations and other program partners provide specific support services.

The Champion receives a combination of public and private funds, principally from the Brockton Public Schools and the Massachusetts Department of Education. The quasi-public Commonwealth Corporation provides funds for Diploma Plus implementation at the Champion.

### **Outcomes/Lessons**

MY TURN was named to the National Youth Employment Coalition's Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet) in 1998, recognizing the quality of its youth employment and development programming, including the effort to create the Champion. After opening in January 1999 with 55 students, the Champion enrolled another 20 out-of-school youth in March. Over the four years of its existence, Champion has built its enrollment to approximately 100 students, the maximum feasible at the school's present location (average daily enrollment in 2002-03 was 89.5). In 2001-02, the school's population was 36 percent African-American, 31 percent white, 17 percent Cape Verdean, 14 percent Latino, and 3 percent Asian. About 55 percent of students were male, 30 percent linguistic minorities, and 51 percent eligible for free or reduced cost lunch.

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## **Dayton, Ohio:** **Sinclair Community College**

### **Overview**

Sinclair Community College is a comprehensive two-year college located in the heart of the urban corridor of Dayton, Ohio. The institution is dedicated to improving the life prospects of disadvantaged youth and adults. Sinclair has effectively brought diverse constituents of the community together to move residents out of poverty and into career pathways. The vast majority of Sinclair students lack college-level academic skills when they enter the college. Yet, deep institutional commitment, innovation and creativity, and powerful learning opportunities have contributed to impressive graduation rates.

Dayton is home to one of the country's largest centers for tooling and machining technology. More than 800 companies employing 26,000 people provide service to a diverse client base – from automotive to aerospace, from the computer industry to the growing medical industry.

To maintain this competitive edge in this industry and to build additional connections aimed at improving access to economic opportunity, Dayton will have to persist in its efforts to mobilize the community. With statistics evidencing that 65 percent of the region's high schools did not meet the minimum performance standards for public education established by the Ohio General Assembly, implementing education offerings that build basic skills as well as workplace competencies is the goal. (Source: Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1997)

Dayton, like so many inner cities, has twice the number of low-income families than the state. Dayton is also struggling with a severe out-of-school youth issue. We know that the economic opportunities for these youth in particular are bleak to non-existent, without significant intervention strategies, programming, and resources.

### **Snapshot**

Sinclair Community College has played a prominent role in Dayton's economic development efforts for the last 20 years. The welfare of Dayton's most disenfranchised youth and adults drives the programming of this institution. Sinclair has targeted the African-American and Appalachian communities in its recruitment efforts.

Sinclair had strong relationships with the sixteen K-12 school systems in the area and has leveraged the Tech Prep system in improving the prospects of postsecondary participation for many of the city's youth. Sinclair provides leadership to the out-of-school youth initiative for the county.

The dropout rate in Dayton Public schools is an alarming 43.5 percent, with close to 6,000 young people ages 15-19 out of school. These statistics helped develop the business case for a comprehensive countywide effort to educate 1,000 young people.

With \$22.5 million in funding, the Fast Forward Center was launched in 2001. An Out-of-School Youth Task force brought the community together around the issue of out-of-



school youth. Services for this population—those without high school diplomas—accounted for nearly 70 percent of the county's spending on human services and criminal justice. The Task Force recognized that the college was one of the few entities in the community with the influence and reputation to bring diverse stakeholders together. Two Sinclair board chairs and the president of the college served on the task force and provided leadership to the fundraising efforts.

The *Fast Forward Center* represents a public/private partnership dedicated to offering those hardest to teach and hardest to reach with a powerful learning environment at alternative schools. Learning in this program is innovative and practical. Young people have the chance to select from four career pathways: construction and trades, tool and die, information technology and computer repair, and allied health occupations. There were 750 students enrolled at the start of the 2001-02 academic year. Seven alternative schools are being established, with a design that calls for personalized learning, flexible schedules, and hands-on opportunities, all delivered in a caring environment.

The Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board and its Youth Council serve in an advisory role to the *Fast Forward Center*. This initiative has brought together the county's 16 school districts, trade associations, and a host of community-based organizations. Local employers are providing career exploration and work-based learning opportunities and students are seeing the myriad of career alternatives as possibilities in their futures.

### **Outcomes/Lessons**

Even though Ohio ranks next to last in the nation for residents who pursue college, Sinclair has been very successful in helping young people and adults attain postsecondary credentials. Sinclair exceeded its target for percentage of residents in a four-county area between the ages of 15 and 39 who enroll and in the percentage of employers rating a Sinclair graduate's technical knowledge as "very good" or "good." The school was very close to target in the measure of the ratio between credit hours attempted to credit hours completed, with an attainment of 73.5 percent. Sinclair placed 84 percent of graduates in their field six months following graduation. (Source: Sinclair: The Bridge to the Future, Met Life Application)

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## **Philadelphia:** **The Philadelphia Youth Network and Comprehensive Youth Services**

### **Background**

The Philadelphia Youth Network, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was established in 1999 as an intermediary organization to support and sustain the efforts and partnerships created under Philadelphia's nationally recognized school-to-career system. Its array of activities are focused on fostering the establishment of a coordinated youth workforce development system that is aligned with the city's comprehensive education reform agenda and its workforce and economic development needs.

While Philadelphia is the core of the nation's fourth largest megalopolis, although its population declined, from 2.0 million in 1960 to 1.5 million in 2000. Employment fell from 782,000 in 1980 to 688,000 by 1994, affecting every sector except for services, which grew by 46,000 jobs from 1982 to 1994. Deindustrialization was dramatic: in 1972, manufacturing provided 23 percent of city employment; by 1994, that proportion had dropped to 9 percent. The overall job loss slowed thereafter, yet that masks the continuing loss of well-paid manufacturing jobs and growth in the lower-paying service sector. Moreover, the national recovery was slow to take hold in Philadelphia: although unemployment dropped from a peak of 9.5 percent in 1993 to a little over 6 percent in 2000, that still left it significantly above the U.S. rate.

### **Snapshot**

Staffed by the Philadelphia Youth Network, the Philadelphia Youth Council is designing and promoting a broad youth development system for the city. To align efforts citywide, the Youth Council decided to develop a clear set of standards for youth programming, to apply them first to WIA funds under the Youth Council's control, and then to work with other youth-serving institutions to expand their application. The Core Standards for Philadelphia's Youth Programs, developed by PYN and the Youth Council in collaboration with the United Way and the City of Philadelphia, emphasize a range of priorities that apply to all youth-service providers they support. The Philadelphia Youth Network has also created satisfaction surveys and organized professional development sessions, and it is developing implementation guides for youth providers and incentives to meet the standards.

The School-to-Career Leadership Council served as the foundation for the Youth Council, then chose to disband when many of its members became Youth Council members. The Philadelphia Youth Network staffs the Youth Council.

Philadelphia has an impressive combination of committees and staff work. The Youth Council established three standing committees:

- *Strategic Planning and Policy* sets the vision for the Youth Council, providing guidance to other committees.

- *Standards, Performance, and Evaluation* established standards for use by respondents to RFP for resources, and it is creating an implementation guide to help providers meet standards.
- *Public Engagement* works to raise the visibility of the Youth Council and its planning effort with key constituencies across the city.

A PYN staff person keeps each committee on task and assists it. Staff make sure that each meeting has specific products, next steps, and hard time lines. This creates a business-like atmosphere and a sense that participation matters.

Philadelphia funds this relatively intensive staff structure by combining administrative dollars from several different youth funding streams, including Workforce Investment Act funds. This arrangement is possible because so many youth dollars come into the city. Philadelphia's staff-intensive approach may be less feasible in communities with a smaller overall investment in young people. Philadelphia also has a multi-million dollar Youth Opportunities Grant that targets services to youth residing in geographically small, high-poverty neighborhoods. Adding to the funding mix, a variety of foundation grants support various PYN efforts.

### **Outcomes/Lessons**

- The alignment and coordination of youth programming can be improved without centralizing resources. Philadelphia's emphasis on common core standards for youth-serving organizations, along with its provision of related technical assistance and incentives, is encouraging and accelerating collaboration.
- The Philadelphia Youth Network has acted as broker to help rationalize youth services and turn potential turf battles into "win-win" opportunities. For example, two years ago, the Philadelphia Youth Network began conversations with the Philadelphia Housing Authority, which receives significant drug-elimination funds through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, about how those funds could best be used to help the city's youth. The Housing Authority recognized that it had not been very effective as a youth-serving organization; it was in the housing business. PYN successfully brokered a relationship between the Housing Authority and the city's network of settlement houses for them to take over youth services funded with the drug-elimination money. The arrangement has been so positive for all parties that the Housing Authority is now buying computer labs for the settlement houses. HUD has highlighted the approach as a national best practice.

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## **Portland, Oregon:** **Portland Community College**

### **Overview**

Portland Community College is the largest postsecondary institution in Oregon. With an annual enrollment of approximately 100,000 students, PCC has a student body reflective of the community. At-risk youth, high-school dropouts, limited English speakers, welfare recipients, the working poor, and the elite choose to attend PCC.

The college plays an important role in the three-county region's education reform, economic development, and workforce development efforts. PCC is the primary contractor for welfare-to-work and dislocated worker services in the region. It is also responsible for managing Oregon's largest Tech Prep consortium. Dr. Jesus "Jess" Carreon, PCC's President, stated in a recent newspaper article, "Degrees do not define a community. Work defines a community. Community colleges provide people with skills so that they can go out and get a job, support their families, and get on with their lives."

The Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area is strategically located, with good access to West Coast markets and Asia. The area has a healthy, diverse economy with a broad base of manufacturing, distribution, wholesale, and retail trade, regional government, and business services. Such diversity helps make the business environment stable and reduces the effect of adverse economic cycles. The services industry accounts for 29 percent of employment opportunities in the city, followed by wholesale and retail trade (25 percent), manufacturing (14 percent), government (14 percent), finance, insurance, and real estate (7 percent), transportation, communication, utilities (6 percent), and construction and mining (5 percent) (Source: State of Oregon, Employment Department 2001).

By 2015, the proportion of Oregon's population 18 to 24 years old is estimated to decline slightly to 8.4 percent, while the proportion over age 65 will increase 5 percent. In 2008, it is anticipated that the proportion of public high school graduates in Oregon that are white non-Latino will decline from 88 percent to 76 percent. All under-represented minority groups will see at least a slight increases in their percentages, with Latinos moving from almost 5 to 13 percent (Source: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Web site).

### **Snapshot**

Portland Community College is the primary contractor for welfare-to-work and dislocated work services in the region. Over 2,000 high school-age students enroll at Portland Community College, making it the largest high school in the city. PCC is the lead partner in the Youth Opportunity Center and the alternative education network.

PCC has developed innovative approaches to meet the needs of both youth and adults at risk of not being able to participate in or contribute to the region's economic growth. The college has created programming that appreciates the barriers for this population, in the quest for economic self-sufficiency, retention, and advancement in the workplace. The PCC model is designed to create intentional rungs on a career ladder. The ladder

addresses the needs of students at the entry level, and it extends upward to self-sufficiency, with interim milestones along the way that offer youth and adults access to credit-bearing learning opportunities so necessary in the journey out of poverty.

One rung on the ladder is PCC Prep, an alternative high school completion program for out-of-school youth. In this program students are afforded opportunities to gain college credit while completing a high school diploma. Some students enter the program with reading levels as low as third grade; others enter with the ability to immediately enroll in the College Bound program, which requires eighth-grade academic ability.

College Bound develops skill in reading, writing, math, study, and personal skills to equip them to meet the requirements of college-level coursework. Students are exposed to careers as part of the high school curriculum. Students can structure their high school experience using 41 different career pathways. At the completion of the College Bound program, students completing their high school graduation requirements are mainstreamed with PCC college-level students. Young people participating in this program can earn credits toward a high school diploma and earn college credit.

Older dropouts can opt for a GED path to college. The expectation is that the GED is a precursor to entering college, not a final educational destination.

PCC also offers certificate programs from which students graduate with one-year and two-year certificates or an Associate of Applied Science degree. One example is the machine Manufacturing Technology program, which has an open entry/open exit feature that allows students to graduate from the program based on competency. PCC has chunked the traditional certificate and degree programs into specific modules as another dimension of flexibility in this offering. When a student feels ready, he or she may decide to test out of the module and advance to the next level. The test is an authentic assessment that requires students to demonstrate proficiency. This configuration allows students to proceed at their own pace. The program hours, too, are flexible—9:00 a.m. till 9:00 p.m.—allowing young people to earn money while investing in their futures.

The Machine Manufacturing Technology Program is supported by a business advisory committee. This committee has a hand in curriculum design, developing competencies based on industry-accepted standards and regional employer needs, and shaping the delivery of content in classroom settings. PCC hopes to replicate this offering to sectors outside of the manufacturing industry.

### **Outcomes/Lessons**

In 2001, PCC had 150 articulation agreements with area high schools. The College Bound youth program has a 76 percent positive completion rate. Of the 5,000 credits completed, 77 percent of the grades in these courses were a C or better. High school students participating in dual enrollment have evidenced one grade level progression in reading per term of enrollment, with 73 percent of these students making a 5-point gain in math scores over a similar period.

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