



YOUTH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday, January 8, 2014
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union Street
Lawrence, MA 01843

Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Bevilacqua, Francisco Brea, Irene Chalek, Superintendent John Lavoie, April Lyskowsky, Wilberto Mejias, Megan Shea, Linda Piergeorge, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:

Howard Allen, Janet Allison, Marina Acosta, Beverly DeSalvo, Brad Howell, Tom Connors, Ed Fitzgerald, Maria Miles, Steve Noroian, Barbara Richards, Donna Rivera, Michael Strem, Ed Warnshuis

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

OTHERS:

Ralph Carrero, Lisa Coy, Denise Perrault

I. Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. and welcomed all to the first meeting of 2014. Introductions were made around the table.

II. Approval of November 20, 2013 Minutes

Cal then called for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2013 meeting.

Motion by Megan Shea, seconded by Lisa Remington, to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2013 Youth Council minutes as submitted. Motion passed.

Cal then introduced MVWIB Chairman Joseph Bevilacqua stating that Joe is also the State WIB Co-Chair and the USWIB Chair. Joe began by thanking members of this

important committee of the WIB. He said that he heard at a meeting in Washington the percentage of kids in the overall population but noted that they are 100% of our future. We need to make sure that kids are prepared for their future through public schools, charter schools and colleges as well as through union apprenticeships. Joe said that our country is falling behind and we need to make sure our kids are ready by utilizing mentorships and training programs. Some kids are not destined for college and trades people are needed. Vocational/Technical schools are important and apprenticeships that offer hands on training are needed.

Joe also noted that funding will never be the same as in the past. He said that, as chair of the national board, he will be going to Washington in February and getting updates from the administration. Joe said that the Youth Council was begun to help kids and we need to help youth network and look at volunteer programs which he plans to discuss with the board. Kids need to show up and be on time and we all need to work together to make this happen. He also mentioned that our region extends all the way to the ocean including 15 cities and towns.

Denise Perrault said that often disabilities don't show up until the 7th or 8th grade and she suggested students mentoring other students. Francisco Brea suggested having a meeting in Hopkinton to view the AFL/CIO apprenticeship program and have a tour of the facility.

III. Special Presentation: Superintendent/Director Ralph Carrero, *Lawrence Family Development Charter School*

Cal welcomed Superintendent/Director Ralph Carrero noting that we have two superintendents at today's meeting.

Ralph began his remarks thanking Cal and the Youth Council for the opportunity to be here today. He mentioned that we have new city leadership and vision and hopefully 2014 will be a good year. He said that his title is Superintendent/Director as he is the director of the non-profit board of the Lawrence Family Development & Education Fund, Inc. The non-profit oversees the Quintana Family Center which is the only agency in Lawrence that is BIA certified. They also have a YouthBuild Program.

In his role as Superintendent, Ralph said that he is Vice President of the state Charter School Association which meets quarterly with the Board of Education. He mentioned the new K-14 Accountability which will track the success rates out of high school youth going into college and graduating. It will look at the whole system of accountability and reduce the waste of public dollars in public education. Ralph said that Massachusetts is one of the top states in the country for accessible, successful charter schools. He referenced education reform and that there is current legislation going forward this year and he is pleased that our three state representatives and senator are members of the Massachusetts House education subcommittee.

Ralph said that the Lawrence Public School Receiver is working on how to improve education in the City. He said that Receiver Riley is kid focused and that Lawrence is a finalist for a Gates Foundation Grant which will allow for creating opportunities for youth. He said that kids don't one day just decide to drop out but rather the process begins in 7th and 8th grade. By 7th and 8th grade the gap between the public schools and charter schools is evident. He said that the two Lawrence charter schools are top in the Commonwealth. He referred members to the DOE website which he said has data and statistics on all Massachusetts school districts.

He said that there is a lottery system for the Lawrence Family Development Charter School and students come from the poorest, minority neighborhoods and some are ESL learners but still achieve high test scores. We hope to partner with the Receiver to help produce successful students.

Ralph then spoke about at risk youth and his past 17 years with YouthBuild. Asking businesses to volunteer and mentor are good strategies. He said that the most challenging thing is having them get to work on time and being responsible every day. Employers can teach most anything so we focus on developing characteristics and teaching them to develop networks. We approach the employer to allow us to place a youth for a 10 week internship for 10-15 hours per week. We provide the supervision and ask the employer to provide a partner employee who we pay a stipend to mentor our student. At the end of the internship we ask them to evaluate the student. They pay both the student and the worker a stipend.

Ralph said that there is one last piece for In-School-Youth who don't pass the MCAS and receive a certificate of attendance. We follow them for a year and they are allowed to retake the MCAS. We have a program for support services and for taking the test outside of the realm of the high school. Denise Perrault asked if transportation is included and Ralph said that they have a van that can be used to transport them from Youth Build. Irene Chalek wondered what the thinking is on an alternative for a certificate of attendance and Ralph said their offsite support center helps students practice for the test with teachers. He said that students take the MCAS in their sophomore year and have three other opportunities while in school. After high school they have one more shot. Cristy Gomez said that we continue to work with students from class of 2003 up to the current graduating class who have not passed any of the MCAS tests including the science test so there may be more than one shot after graduation.

Joe Bevilacqua mentioned that there are middle of the road students who may need a little assistance. Cal mentioned the idea of volunteering and mentoring and the fact that, as a retired HR person, he used to go into the schools and speak to students about the relevance of soft skills. Lisa Coy said that YouthBuild does that with different company HR personnel and that the students respond better to actual employer

representatives. Ralph Carrero suggested inviting Mike Fiato and receiver Riley to come in to speak. He also referred to Youth Recognition Day as a vehicle YouthBuild instituted 15 years ago to recognize middle of the road youth. He said that often the honor students or discipline students get the most attention. Tom Raiche relayed his experience as a member of the Saugus School Committee and the fact that parents said that students who are not really bright or bad fall through the cracks. Linda Piergeorge commented on personal experience and the fact that she was told her child was bright but not motivated and feels that the school system let him down.

Ralph Carrero said that the public school system is modeled for the last century before there was a global economy and the internet. Students do much better in small school communities and cited the example of a small school with 60 students per guidance counselor opposed to the Technical school with 150-200 students per guidance counselor. Ralph then spoke about the new assessment and accountability regulations for standardized testing which gives a framework to compare kids and assess students from all walks of life and holds the schools accountable. Joe Bevilacqua said that public school teachers do a tremendous job in spite of the amazing disrespect for teachers. We need to adapt to today's concerns and together get to the point of helping kids.

Francisco Brea wondered where the funding comes from for the charter schools and Ralph Carrero said the charter schools are public education funded by the state based on local district allocations. Ralph said that the exception is that the teachers are non union but can unionize. Denise Perrault talked about the Children's Federation for support for students with disabilities and relayed her experience. Ralph Carrero said that the disrespect in the schools is a culture problem. He said that urban public schools will face another challenge beginning July 1st with the new changes in discipline law which brings more bureaucracy for suspending students and also mandating teaching while they are suspended.

Superintendent Lavoie asked if YouthBuild participants were placed in licensed trades and Lisa Coy said that they complete a pre-internship certification and get into programs that are training related. Superintendent Lavoie said that some of the union apprenticeships are difficult to get into and it costs \$1,000 to get into a good apprenticeship program connected with employers. He mentioned Peterson and Gould who are private providers for all licensed trades and offer evening classes. Ralph Carrero said that those who complete the service component of YouthBuild qualify for post secondary education grants. Superintendent Lavoie said that connecting some of these youth with opportunities would be great as there is a shortage of pipe fitters, sprinkler system installers and other areas. Ralph Abislaiman said we may be able to get some youth into training with WIA dollars.

Ralph Carrero then spoke about the Arizona Self Sufficiency Matrix which is an out of school tracking system. It tracks the living arrangements, employment and education of out of school youth. Agencies can see what they have done and where they have

accessed services. Ralph Carrero stated that these youth are masters at reading people and systems as survival skills.

IV. PARTNER'S INFORMATION

Cal Williams thanked Superintendent Carrero for coming today and said that we have gotten a lot of information at the last two meetings and is looking forward to a busy, productive 2014 for the Youth Council.

Lisa Coy said that YouthBuild is accepting applications for a new cycle and will be accepting 33 beginning in February. They graduated 18 in December. It is open to out of school youth ages 16-24. There was a suggestion to promote the program on Latino radio. Ralph Carrero mentioned that he had a conversation with Mayor Rivera who said he may be interested in starting a Youth Commission and Ralph suggested we should be involved.

Irene Chalek said that they are recruiting another cohort of second language learners in health care with the goal of preparing them to enter one of the college programs. Megan Shea said that they are still working with Community Action Inc. on the CNA program and are also working with Greater Lawrence Technical School and two WIBs on the Advance Manufacturing initiative.

Wilfredo Mejia said that Job Corps is accepting applications on a regular basis. Ellen Weinhold suggested inviting guidance counselors to attend a Youth Council meeting. Linda Piergeorge wondered if there is any trend to increase opportunities to expand enrollment at the vocational schools. Superintendent Lavoie said that the issue is funding.

Lisa Coy also said that there is an EPA training program with GroundWork Lawrence for out of school youth 18 and older for asbestos and deleading. There is an information session scheduled on January 15th. Cristy reported that we received a second round \$10,000 AMP It Up grant.

V. Adjournment

Having no further business made a motion to adjourn seconded by. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Mary Kivell
Recorder