

SCHOOL-TO-WORK INTERMEDIARY PROJECT

AUGUST 2000

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project seeks to strengthen and raise the profile of local organizations that connect schools, workplaces, and other community resources to improve pathways for youth into postsecondary learning and careers.

In many communities, new partnerships have emerged to promote young people's self-confidence about their abilities, increase their connections to adults and opportunities outside the classroom, and foster the academic and work-related competencies that are needed to succeed. However, education-community relationships do not develop automatically; nor can they be sustained without significant commitments of time and resources. To do so requires organizations prepared to play an *intermediary* role—committed, structured, and staffed to creating and supporting effective, efficient collaborations.

In its first phase, from the fall 1998 through the spring of 2000, the School-to-Work Intermediary Project:

- **Conducted research** on strategies and activities of intermediary organizations;
- **Provided technical assistance** to 25 intermediaries to strengthen, and accelerate improvement in, their convening and connecting activities;
- **Conducted and disseminated research** through the project Web site, public presentations, project intersite meetings, and other venues; and
- **Launched and staffed an Intermediary Network** that supports peer learning opportunities and provides a voice for these organizations in national, state, and local policy arenas.

THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK INTERMEDIARY PROJECT TODAY

The project's second phase, begun in mid-2000, focuses on:

- **Building momentum** by expanding the Intermediary Network of organizations

that take advantage of its tools, research, peer learning opportunities, and other resources;

- **Strengthening leadership** by helping the original 25 network members become a strong core for expanding that network;
- **Gathering evidence** by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data on the intermediary activities, priorities, and growth of network members;
- **Guiding practice** by creating and marketing tools, materials, and activities that can inform the field about "best practices" across the nation and encourage quality intermediary efforts;
- **Promoting effective policy** by documenting and promoting public policies that can sustain and advance intermediary activities and organizations; and
- **Reaching key audiences** by disseminating project products through print and electronic means.

Partners

Jobs for the Future

New Ways to Work

AFL-CIO Working for America Institute

Bay Area School-to-Career Action Network

Boston Private Industry Council

Center for Workforce Preparation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Corporation for Business, Work, and Learning

National Alliance of Business

Funded by the National School-to-Work Office, a Joint Initiative of the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education

For more information:

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project is designed to strengthen and raise the public profile of local, state, regional, and national organizations that connect schools, workplaces, and other community resources. For more information, including how to contact all the organizations described here, consult the project Web site.

www.intermediarynetwork.org

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PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The project has identified a set of functions that are essential to the success and sustainability of community-wide efforts to connect youth to the workplace and employers and their workforces to the classroom.

One or more local institutions must fulfill *four strategic functions* to connect schools and community resources in ways that are effective and sustainable:

- Convene key stakeholders;
- Broker or provide services to employers, educational institutions, young people, and the youth-serving system;
- Measure outcomes to ensure the quality and impact of these efforts; and
- Promote policies that can sustain effective practices.

Intermediary organizations play key, day-to-day, operational functions in their communities. These organizations work:

With workplace partners to (1) create and strengthen demand and (2) provide services to address needs;

With schools/community to (1) build awareness and buy-in and (2) provide services to support involvement;

With youth to (1) connect youth to appropriate quality experiences and (2) promote and improve the quality of work-based learning; and

With all partners to (1) provide a communications link and (2) create a system focused on quality and improvement.

As a result of participation in the project, sites have implemented new program elements or activities.

Examples from project sites:

Boston Private Industry Council (Massachusetts) created an “employer organizing” department and provided staff for it.

East Bay Learns (Hayward, California) strengthened its connection with Youth Councils, drawing on evidence of coordination between Workforce Investment Boards/ Youth Councils and school-to-career efforts throughout the country.

Greater Louisville, Inc., (Kentucky) introduced e-mentoring, identified niche career areas, and established working connections with the emerging Youth Council and the Workforce Investment Board.

New Bedford Public Schools (Massachusetts) involved new partners, bringing the mayor of New Bedford into its work and reaching out to employers, particularly through the South Coast Compact.

San Diego Workforce Partnership (California) developed a model for integrating the implementation and processes of school-to-career with such efforts as Youth Opportunities Grants and the Youth Council and other Workforce Investment Act activities.

Participating intermediaries have engaged a variety of new partners in local youth-serving efforts.

Examples from project sites:

Career Partners, Inc./Tulsa Chamber of Commerce (Oklahoma) strengthened its linkages with Chamber members, functions, and events and began brokering services for local employers, Tulsa Community College, and others.

Summary of Project Accomplishments

- The project has identified a set of functions that are essential to the success and sustainability of community-wide efforts to connect youth to the workplace and employers and their workforces to the classroom.
- As a result of participation in the project, sites have implemented new program elements or activities.
- Participating intermediaries have engaged a variety of new partners in local youth-serving efforts.
- Sites have attracted new financial and other resources for local connecting and convening efforts.
- Peer learning has raised the quality of activities through opportunities to share information and experience and to use project tools and research materials.

Illinois Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO forged partnerships with the Illinois Chamber of Commerce to address the gap between education reform and workforce development.

LEED-Sacramento (California) reports that it heightened regional awareness of its value as an intermediary, including its contribution to connecting activities, thereby using its prominence in a national project to help enhance buy-in among strategic stakeholders.

Rochester Area Career Education Collaborative (New York) brought in forty-two new employers and three organizations serving special populations.

Youth Trust (Minneapolis, Minnesota) brought existing but isolated school-to-career efforts into closer working relationships, interested several employers in school-to-career activities, enlisted the support of two labor unions, and engaged the Private Industry Council in more productive ways.

Sites have attracted new financial and other resources for local connecting and convening efforts.

Examples from project sites:

Business/Education Expectations (Kansas City, Missouri) attributes its project participation to winning a \$570,984 Department of Labor grant to enhance the school district's school-to-work efforts and link those with other Missouri efforts.

Capital Area Training Foundation (Austin, Texas) attracted financial support for its programs to support summer youth supervisors and is pursuing funding to connect math, science, and computer teachers to Internet companies.

Berkshire County Regional Employment Board (Massachusetts) secured funding for additional projects, such as efforts to develop an information technology pathway and a career majors initiative.

Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation (South Carolina) raised \$80,000 from corporations and foundations for school-to-work and other projects.

Fox Cities Alliance for Education (Appleton, Wisconsin) won a planning grant to study the feasibility of creating a Regional Technical High School to serve the consortium's eight school districts. The idea of pooling resources to create a school emerged after conversations that members of the Alliance Consortium had with peers in the School-to-Work Intermediary Project.

Peer learning has raised the quality of activities through project tools, research materials, and opportunities to share information and experience.

Examples from project sites:

BaySCAN (San Jose, California) acquired a "big picture" of what is necessary, what works, and what the common barriers are, and it shared project materials within its own statewide network. Moreover, the project provided the backbone for BaySCAN's strategic plan.

A Collective Profile of the Project Sites

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project has created and supported—and learned from—a 25-member network of organizations that link schools, employers, and other community resources. These 25 sites are a diverse group, yet all are committed to sustaining and increasing their roles in helping schools, workplace partners, and other community resources collaborate more effectively to yield long-term learning and career benefits for local youth.

Organizational Type: Network members include: nonprofit business-school partnerships (9), local school-to-work partnerships (9), Chambers of Commerce (5), Private Industry Councils (3), school districts (2), a local education fund, a government agency, and a labor organization.

Staffing: Range: 1-55 FTE; Median: 5 FTE

Annual Budget: Range: \$100,000–\$5 million; Median: \$746,500

Annual Budget for School-to-Work Intermediary Efforts: Range: \$35,000–\$1.3 million; Median: \$460,900

Schools Involved: Range: 2–200+; Median: Over 100

Employers Involved: Range: 12–1,000+; Median: Over 200

Funding Sources: Most have federal School to Work funding, but only two rely solely upon federal resources. Other sources include private corporations, foundations, school districts, state budgets, events, and fee-for-service work.

Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce and the Southwest Idaho STW Partnership

learned from approaches modeled by other network members in initiating associations with the Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council and a collaboration with the local university on industry consortiums.

New York Citywide STW Alliance (New York) called peer learning the project's most important contribution, particularly "the opportunity to develop direct personal relationships with our peers in other cities and at national organizations."

Philadelphia Youth Network (Pennsylvania) reported that participation fostered enhanced connections with other leading school-to-work sites. In a city with a highly developed school-to-work system, the Philadelphia Youth Network valued the project's team planning time and impetus to reflect on practice, time that it otherwise might not have been able to afford.

Sonoma County STC Partnership's (California) team members, through participation in project intersite meetings, became strong champions of their organization, enabling them to help other policy-makers improve their understanding and ability to move school-to-career forward. One team member, who is an aide to a state legislator, wrote currently pending legislation for state school-to-career funding, a role made possible by his participation in a project intersite.

Tulare County Office Of Education (California) greatly expanded its national network and gained ideas it might apply locally, such as e-mentoring to connect students electronically with employers. Peer learning opportunities helped the coalition revitalize and refocus its work, for example, by providing information that supported an expanded vision for the new Youth Council and a countywide youth agenda. ■

Peer Learning in the School-to-Work-Intermediary Project

Intermediary Network members highly value their opportunities to learn from one another about networks, publications, and models and strategies on such issues as funding and implementation. Network membership has significantly helped them articulate clear messages, raise the quality of efforts to convene local partners, and market school-to-career to workplace partners and schools.

The network's opportunities for peer learning among sites have included:

Leadership Team Meeting: In March 1999, project partner representatives, technical-assistance coordinators, and "Leadership Site" representatives met as part of the process of designating local sites to participate. To help provide peer learning opportunities to project sites, four Leadership Sites had been selected: BaySCAN, Boston PIC, LEED-Sacramento, and Philadelphia Youth Network/Education for Employment.

Team Leader Intersite: In May 1999, representatives of the 25 project sites came together to share information on practices, receive assistance in developing local work plans, and help set a common project agenda.

Institute: In October 1999, 20+ teams participated in two days of facilitated training on: the strategic intermediary func-

tions, employer engagement, serving all students, accountability, standards, and other topics.

Peer Learning Site Visits: In winter 2000, network members visited the Leadership Sites. Boston PIC and Philadelphia Youth Council hosted an intersite on policy advocacy, funding strategies, and data and measurement. BaySCAN and LEED hosted an intersite on employer involvement and regional intermediary approaches.

Policy Forum: In March 2000, 50 team leaders, partners, and advisors met in Washington, DC, for policy briefings with high-level officials, in-depth dialogue on federal legislation, discussions of state strategies, and sessions with congressional representatives.

Leadership Meeting: In June 2000, network members came together to follow up on the Policy Forum, share best practices and lessons learned, and discuss plans for expanding the network and using it to improve local practice.

Content Conference Calls: On a regular basis, the project brings network members together through conference calls on issues of broad interest, with content presentations by experts. Each call focuses on one topic, such as employer engagement, funding strategies, inclusionary strategies, and federal legislation.