

School-to-Work Intermediary Project Snapshot

Intermediary Organization

Boy Scouts of America, Southern New Jersey Council

Highlighted Activity

Exploring Program: Collaborate with community partners to link students with work-based learning activities related to career interests

Contact

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Background

For over a decade, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has sponsored a co-ed "Exploring" program designed to connect high school students with career or hobby interests. When New Jersey issued standards for workplace readiness as part of core curriculum requirements, the Southern New Jersey Council of the BSA realized that the Exploring program offered learning experiences that met virtually all the state's requirements for work-based learning programs.

Activity Summary

In 1995, in conjunction with Learning for Life, a nonprofit subsidiary of the BSA, the Southern New Jersey Council formally began an Exploring program that incorporates the three elements of school-to career activities: school-based learning, workplace learning, and connecting activities. Exploring programs interact with existing school efforts to expand opportunities for students and partners in the community. Learning for Life offers curricula and materials, while the BSA develops local contacts that make the programs possible.

The Southern New Jersey Council began by instituting an annual career survey of all high school seniors in its region's 40 school districts. Individual schools formally contract for the survey each year, which the council tabulates. The surveys provide information on specific students, as well as school-wide and region-wide data about student career choices. The Southern New Jersey Council shares the compiled information with high school

guidance counselors and uses the regional data itself to help plan the Exploring programs.

Based on the surveys, the Southern New Jersey Council, working with Learning for Life and local guidance counselors, matches students with appropriate Exploring programs. The council also recruits local organizations, individuals, and businesses to volunteer to participate in career-exploration programs in selected fields.

To work with students through Exploring programs, the council has recruited practitioners in a wide variety of fields, including medicine, teaching, and aviation. For example, police departments deliver an Exploring program for students interested in law enforcement. For young people interested in careers in the law, the area bar associations work with the council to connect young people with legal practitioners. Lawyers and judges host student visits to worksites and conduct weekly or semi-monthly evening meetings throughout the school year.

Resources

Nationally, the Boy Scouts of America funds school-to-career activities through fees, United Way donations, and other private sources. For Exploring programs, the Southern New Jersey Council provides training, insurance, and funding, including salaries for nine full-time professional staff members. Council staff members conduct and tabulate the surveys and administer the Exploring programs, enlisting the help of community members and providing support to them to build a coherent, structured format program. The staff salaries are supported by survey fees (schools pay the Southern New Jersey Council to conduct the surveys) as well as national BSA support.

Evidence of Effectiveness

- Since the mid-1980s, the Southern New Jersey Council has surveyed 15,000 students in some 40 school districts about their career interests. Based on these surveys, the council has placed and supervised about 3,000 students in Exploring programs.
- The council has established about 100 partnerships with local businesses and professionals to provide career exploration opportunities.

Sources of Additional Information

Learning for Life offers a CD-ROM, "Life Choices," that includes a lesson plan and a set of 35 workshops and career seminars.

Learning for Life Web site: www.learning-for-life.org