



YOUTH COUNCIL

MINUTES

**Wednesday, November 20, 2013
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union Street
Lawrence, MA 01843**

Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:

Francisco Brea, April Lyskowsky, Wilberto Mejias, Megan Shea, Michael Strem, Superintendent John Lavoie, Linda Piergeorge, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

OTHERS:

Lisa Coy, Lisa Remington, Tom Raiche, Nancy Tariot

I. Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

II. Approval of October 9, 2013 Minutes

Cal then called for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2013 meeting.

Motion by Megan Shea, seconded by April Lyskowsky, to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2013 Youth Council minutes as submitted. Motion passed.

III. Superintendent John Lavoie, Greater Lawrence Vocational High School

Cal welcomed Superintendent Lavoie as a member of the Youth Council and called on him to address the council. Superintendent Lavoie began by stating that he is excited to be part of the Youth Council as Greater Lawrence Technical High School is all about

putting young people to work and helping them understand what they want to do even beginning at 14 years of age. The School tries to give them insight to help them make career decisions. It knows that there may be life changes and career changes but staff wants them to understand that they need to work hard and keep focused on their goals. Developing a work ethic is very important.

Superintendent Lavoie said that GLTS shares our role in the community and that it works on meeting a similar mission which explains why the school exists. In 1965, the need to train a skilled labor force resulted in GLTS being created as the first vocational school in the Commonwealth. It serves Andover, North Andover, Methuen and Lawrence with 75% of our students from Lawrence and 22% from Methuen. GLTS is one of the most important institutions in Greater Lawrence. It has value in helping youth to meet to the changing workforce and in helping the city and region become stronger and more competitive. GLTS students graduate and become leaders in the community. The Superintendent said that we encourage student involvement in the community as our students success is tied to community success.

The Superintendent said that they offer academic and vocational education with each as important as the other. Students studying carpentry, plumbing, and electrical need academics to lead a business and learn career and college readiness. The school continues to improve every year. Currently, its student MCAS scores indicate that 90% are ELA proficient or advanced and that 60% are proficient or advanced in Math. Many of its students are preparing for college and they need strong academic skills. The school integrates project-based, applied learning and teaching in science, social studies and local and state government. This helps students apply different concepts and helps motivate them.

We have 19 vocational programs that include construction, medical/health, manufacturing and transportation. Supt. Lavoie cited the 4 new programs that the school has this year. They are HVAC, Dental Hygiene, barbering, and pre-electronics/pre-engineering which will cover manufacturing, electrical and civil engineering. Students will learn theory and build what they design to see if it works. He noted that they also have a 3D printer.

GLTS also has a coop program for 12th graders. Currently, it has 70 students out working. This has been a challenge with the recent youth unemployment rate but this year the situation is better. Students learn that work is not a privilege but a necessity. They come back to classes and often improve their GPA with greater confidence in their abilities by learning of the competencies they need to meet employer expectations. They come back to school and perform better. We are also building partnerships with the community college for an automotive certificate. It started this year. Megan Shea said that students can co-enroll and earn college credits.

The Superintendent said that we have had a hard time filling Adult Education classes as many folks can't afford their cost. He said that we need to find a way to fund apprenticeships. The school partnered with Gould Institute who offers a construction apprenticeship. He said that the unions have built in apprenticeship hours but non union workers cannot get the hours toward their license. Supt. Lavoie said that they held a night workshop attended by around 50 people on learning about opportunities in construction. Megan Shea mentioned the Training Pro website and Linda Piergeorge said that MRC also has funding. Supt. Lavoie said that the school is underused at night and that it is willing to look at use options. Linda also spoke about the auto tech program at UTI being very expensive and would welcome an alternative for her clients.

The superintendent then spoke about a meeting with NECC and discussion on a Construction Management course. He also said that Dr. Lane Glenn is interested in introducing technology programs at the college to benefit kids with an associate degree.

Cal Williams asked how many students attend Greater Lawrence and the superintendent said 1,320. He said that they receive 900-1,000 applications for admission and accept 375 new students each year. He also mentioned that the state is looking at a lottery system which he is not in favor of. He said that funding is the challenge to offering alternative programs. Megan Shea said that most dropouts decide at grades 8-10 that school is not working for them and Supt. Lavoie said that GLTS dropout rate is only 2%. There are many layers of support for students to help retain them in school at GLTS. The school has a good guidance department, medical clinic in school, adjustment counselors and a psychologist. He said this support is important as our students feel that people care. They respect our school and the teachers.

Rafael Abislaiman asked if the school is accepting 1 in 3 applicants on the basis of past school attendance and good discipline or on the basis of academic aptitude. The superintendent said that they use a rating sheet and attendance counts for 20 points (5 or less absences), discipline counts for 15 points for a clean report, and that people failing either English or Math students are not accepted. A recommendation of a teacher or guidance counselor counts for 5 points and there is an appeal process where life events that may have an impact are considered.

Rafael asked about the 68% passing MCAS scores and 95% graduation rates. Supt. Lavoie said that the 65% MCAS reflects that GLTS is in the top 20% in average growth in ELA. The school outscored all other area schools in ELA improvement and only two towns, Andover and North Andover, outscored it in overall improvement. The school has improved its ELA focus through in service and professional development targeted on building literacy. There are monthly ½ day training sessions for teachers and they have resulted in tremendous growth in ELA progress. The focus now will be on improving math scores and we have already adjusted curriculum to the Common Core standards soon to take effect.

April Lyskowsky asked what percentage of applicants GLTS is not taking and the superintendent said 65%. She then asked what the per pupil cost is and he said \$17-\$18K which is more than a typical high school. He also said that the student/teacher ratio is lower than the typical high school. Lisa Remington said that she was very impressed and she would like to see the school and see what we may be able to do with out-of-school youth or adults. Superintendent Lavoie offered to host a Youth Council lunch meeting and then provide a tour at the conclusion of the meeting for those in attendance.

Cal Williams thanked the superintendent. He said that the Superintendent is right about our shared missions because MVWIB Youth Council is charged with developing a youth pipeline and it is the only mandated committee under WIA.

Rafael said that Greater Lawrence and Whittier both have great operations and that comprehensive high schools in America's inner cities would be wise to learn from them. We plan to focus non-WIA training dollars on the Voc School for manufacturing training. Supt. Lavoie said that he is looking to outreach program from his school to comprehensive schools and plans to speak with Jeff Riley as Lawrence Public Schools continues its efforts to improve.

IV. Youth Programs Updates

Bridging the Opportunities Gap - There are 17 youth enrolled into the Cycle I of BOG and 16 of them have completed their 10 hours of Orientation and Work Readiness workshops. 13 of the youth have been placed at a job, however, at this time 11 are working with 1 youth waiting for the results of his TB test before he begins work. Three youth had to be exited from the program due to one youth moving to Worcester, one youth was removed from his DYS status and is thus no longer eligible to participate, and the final youth decided he was not ready to take part in BOG at this time. Cycle II is expected to start in January 2014.

Connecting Activities - Staff continues to visit the local high schools to link school work with workplace experience to reinforce student skills and assist students in improving their academic performance. Currently working with Lawrence High School administrators and guidance counselors, staff is at LHS every Monday and Wednesday from 10:00 – 2:00 pm. Staff will start going to Phoenix starting in December to provide students with work readiness skills workshops and job shadowing opportunities. Staff is hoping to start visiting Haverhill High School starting in December. The goal for this year is to serve 350 students in total.

DESE – The Connecting Activities site visit is scheduled for Thursday November 21, 2013 from 9:00 – 12:00 pm.

Pathways - 14 of our enrolled students passed the MCAS and completed their Competency Determination (CD).

WIA - In school RFP – The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) issued an In-School Youth Request for Proposals (RFP) on October 30th, 2013 under the Title I Youth category of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Final signed and completed proposals are due to Ms. Corina Ruiz at the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board by Wednesday, November 20, 2013 at 2:00 P.M.

Cristy said that to get a copy of the November 7, 2013 Bidder's Conference Meeting Minutes please visit our website: www.mvwib.org

Year Round YouthWorks – Cristy said that we are currently recruiting for our 2013-2014 YRYW program to provide participants with comprehensive career development services to prepare them for entry into the workforce. Youth's ability to meet this goal will be improved through 22 hours of workshops based on the CommCorp Signaling Success career readiness workshops. Workshops have been scheduled for In-School at Lawrence High in December and Haverhill High in February. Out of School workshops for (20) are scheduled for Lawrence/Methuen at ValleyWorks Career Center in December, Haverhill for (25) at the Citizens Center or Haverhill City Hall in January, and again for Lawrence/Methuen (15) in February at VWCC. April Lyskowsky asked how many employers we have and Cristy said that we had 60 employers this summer and spoke about New Balance who has been very receptive and has even offered one of our participants a full time position. April asked what youth are paid and Cristy said minimum wage (\$8 per hour). Rafael Abislaiman said that nationwide 70% of people under 21 make minimum wage and 40% of adults do so. Rafael also said that most of our dollars have previously gone to OSY and now we are trying to provide more ISY services to help kids at risk learn and get a high school diploma.

Cristy then reported on new funding opportunities. One is through the American Honda Foundation and is called "Opening Doors to STEM Careers" which is a STEM focused career readiness and job training program proposing services at Lawrence High School beginning in March 2014 through October 2014. We are requesting \$64,488. The other program is through MassDevelopment, Inc. called Expanded "AMP It Up" which is a campaign to familiarize Merrimack Valley youth, their families, and educators with advanced manufacturing careers. This program would start in January 2014 through January 2015 and the requested amount is \$10,000.

V. PARTNER'S INFORMATION

Megan Shea said that Northern Essex Community College (NECC) is working with Community Action Inc. (CAI) of Haverhill to bring in their CNA program. She introduced Nancy Tariat from CAI.

Nancy said that in the past CAI graduated a total of 700 from its CNA program. Now they are pleased to partner with NECC on a great certificate program. Additionally, working with Megan and her team allows for more exposure and expanded recruitment.

CAI has changed their 12 week program to 6 weeks or 160 hours and increased the criteria for eligibility to having a High School Diploma or GED. Students who have graduated are getting jobs and those looking for a career ladder see our program as a rung. The program is not Pell eligible but it is WIA eligible and allows options from just CNA to medical assistant. Students can also continue their studies with distance learning for those with access to computers. She said that there is a distance learning orientation scheduled periodically. Nancy said that often those who are paying all or a portion of the fee are more invested. Someone asked about the impact of the program change to youth without GEDs. Rafael said that several agencies offer GED training during the day. Nancy spoke about someone who is gathering all the different programs and putting together a chart with eligibility criteria, hours, etc.

Wilberto Mejias from Job Corps said that Job Corps is a residential program for 16 to 24 year olds to get a GED, learn a trade and participate in driver's education. He said he has an office at ValleyWorks.

Cal Williams referred to a supplement in today's Eagle Tribune newspaper on the United Way. He said that this Saturday the United Way will be distributing turkey dinners to 300 families in Lawrence and 300 in Lowell.

Ellen Weinhold said that the cover page is one of her clients and spoke about the LEAP program noting that anyone who partners with this program will be eligible for funding.

VI. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Mary Kivell
Recorder