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YouthNotes

NYC Organization Addresses Critical Gaps in Services to Youth Who Drop Out

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"In the end / You'll be the one who's sure to win / So keep on moving / Don't Stop / You have a destination to be reached / You have no choice / You can do this." – C. Dixon, student

These words of determination are by a young person who embarked on the long path to a GED and further education after dropping out of school. They are a reminder of both challenge and hope.

Why Students Drop Out

The most commonly cited reason students drop out is that they do not have the skills to keep up with the high school curriculum. Low literacy and math skills portend a poor economic outlook for these young people. Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS), an initiative conducted by the Youth Development Institute (YDI) in New York City, seeks to change this.

Through CEPS, YDI is testing a community-based organization (CBO) model to enable youth who have dropped out with low academic skills – averaging fifth grade levels in reading – to transition to the GED-level and beyond, including college. CEPS operates at eight New York City CBOs. YDI is also working with an additional eight sites, funded by New York City to serve the same population. The combined efforts will reach at least 600 young people in 2008-09.

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The Program Model and Technical Assistance

Now entering its fourth year, CEPS features a highly structured approach to services and the use of work and career-related experiences to increase student engagement. Each of the four components is supported by intensive assistance and training from YDI and its educational partner, America's Choice, Inc.

YDI works with practitioners to implement a common set of principles and practices based on research about effective programs:

- **Youth development** features infused in every aspect of the program
- **Instructional methodology and curriculum** providing explicit and detailed practices guided by an educational philosophy
- **Strategies for individual student guidance and social supports** requiring constant attention to student's assets, obstacles and progress
- **Career development** to explore future interests and options and provide work experiences
- **Team approaches to services** requiring the full collaboration of supervisors, instructors and support staff so that all understand student progress and all push in the same direction
- **Organizational commitment** from leadership for building and sustaining the work.

This list is *not* a menu from which one can pick and choose. The components must be implemented together to get strong re-

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YouthNotes is a monthly e-publication of the National Youth Employment Coalition, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded in 1979. NYEC is a membership network that improves the effectiveness of organizations that help youth become productive citizens.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Senate and House returned to legislative business on Wednesday, November 19. The Senate leadership planned to take up several issues related to the economic downturn. The list included an economic stimulus package and a \$25 billion emergency loan program for the auto industry. The Senate also planned to consider a motion to proceed on a package of public land bills blocked by **Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK)**, but the leadership removed its consideration from the schedule when it became apparent it would take up too much time. In the end, the Senate was unable to secure enough votes to move forward with either an economic stimulus package or an emergency loan package for the auto industry. Congress did, however, approve an extension of unemployment benefits. On November 20, Congress adjourned for Thanksgiving. This adjournment could be the final one for the 110th Congress, although some Capitol Hill insiders speculate that legislators may return in December.

In other business, the Democratic and Republican caucuses in each House began proceedings on resolving issues of chairmanships in the new 111th Congress. The Senate Democratic caucus voted to retain **Sen. Joe Lieberman's (I-CT)** chairmanship of the Homeland Security Committee. The House Democratic caucus voted to make **Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)** chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, replacing long-time chair **Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI)**. In perhaps the biggest committee move, **Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV)** announced that he would step down as chairman of the Sen-

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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAVE THE DATE!

2009 NYEC Members Forum

Mark your calendar for the upcoming NYEC Members Forum 2009 in **San Francisco, CA from March 19 – 21, 2009**. The NYEC Members Forum is an exclusive members-only, peer-to-peer learning event focused on improving the work of organizations and professionals in the fields of youth development, workforce development, and education.

Finance Project Issues Brief on Funding Mentoring Programs

The Finance Project issued a brief entitled "Finding Resources to Support Mentoring Programs and Services for Youth." The brief highlights strategies that leaders and stakeholders can use to finance and sustain mentoring programs and services for youth. In addition, it provides information on 25 federal funding sources that can be used to finance and sustain these programs. Read the brief at www.financeproject.org/publications/FindingResources-MentoringPrograms.pdf.

Aspen Institute Releases Youth Entrepreneurship Education Policy Guide

The Aspen Institute's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy Group released a brief entitled "Youth Entrepreneurship Education In America: A Policymaker's Guide." Access the brief online at www.nyec.org/content/documents/YouthEntrepreneurshipinAmericaYESG_report4.pdf.

Civic Enterprises Paper Examines Parent-School Engagement, Satisfaction

Civic Enterprises released a paper entitled "One Dream, Two Realities: Perspectives of Parents on America's High Schools." Based on a survey and focus groups, the report examines parents' engagement and satisfaction with their children's high schools, by income, race/ethnicity, education, and school performance. The report suggests ways for schools and parents to work together more effectively. Read the report at www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/onedream.pdf.

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NYEC Hires Two New Staff

In November, NYEC hired two full-time employees, Tracey Livingston, the new Administrative Assistant, and Cheryl Holley, the new Manager of Finance and Administration. NYEC is pleased to welcome these two professionals to the team.

U.S. DOL Seeks Applicants for Young Offenders Grants

The U.S. Department of Labor announced a \$17.3 million competition through which selected localities will develop strategies to assist all their young offenders returning from correctional facilities. Applications are due by December 18, 2008. Learn more at www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/SGA_DFA_PY0809.pdf.

U.S. DOL Seeks Applicants for YouthBuild Grants

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration announced the availability of approximately \$47 million in grant funds for YouthBuild grants. Applications are due by January 15, 2009. Learn more at www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/SGA-DFA-PY-08-07_YouthBuild.pdf.

AYPF Paper Posits New Student Assessment Model

The American Youth Policy Forum released a paper entitled "A New Model of Student Assessment for the 21st Century." This experience-based report explores how standardized instructional time, semester grading, and Carnegie units influence many students to underperform and prevent failing students from getting back on track to graduation. The new assessment system based upon individual student mastery consistently produced higher levels of learning, high school graduation, and college attendance. Read the paper at www.aypf.org/documents/ANewModelofStudentAssessmentforthe21stCentury.pdf.

Members wishing to make announcements in Youth-Notes may contact Eric Cline at ec@nyec.org.

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ate Appropriations Committee. **Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI)** will replace him as Senate Appropriations Committee chair in the 111th Congress.

The 111th Congress will look very different from the 110th, with the Democrats having made significant electoral gains. In the Senate, the Democrats gained 7 seats, with 2 seats still undecided – the races between **Sen. Norm Coleman (R)** and **Al Franken (D)** in Minnesota and the race between **Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R)** and **Jim Martin (D)** in Georgia – for a total of 56 seats. With the inclusion of **Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-VT)** and **Joe Lieberman**, who are registered Independents but will caucus with the Democrats, the Senate Democratic Caucus will total 58 members. In the House, Democrats gained at least 19 seats, and potentially more pending the final results of a number of close races. This brings Democrats to a total of at least 255 seats in the House.

Budget and Appropriations

Congressional Democrats are working to complete a 2008 omnibus spending bill by the beginning of January so the new Congress and **President-Elect Barack Obama** can quickly move on to other priorities. Three of the twelve total spending bills were cleared before Congress recessed in October. The other nine were temporarily funded through a continuing resolution that expires on March 6. The Democrats' spending plan for the twelve appropriations bills totaled \$24.5 billion more than the Administration's request. Congressional insiders expect an omnibus bill to include appropriations similar to the amounts proposed by Democrats earlier in 2008. The Senate Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 26, 2008 included a \$6 million increase for **Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Activities** (\$930.5 million total).

Congressional insiders expect that an economic stimulus package will be a top priority for the 111th Congress. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman **Byrd** posted the full language of his proposal for a stimulus on the committee website on November 18. The proposal includes \$300 mil-

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tion for youth employment and \$300 million for dislocated workers. The stimulus package passed by the House of Representatives in September included \$200 million for youth employment. However, due to continued concerns about the economy, members of Congress are discussing a much larger stimulus package than originally planned. Congressional insiders expect much of this package to include investments in infrastructure repairs, aid to states, and unemployment benefit extensions, but a larger package may also result in a larger investment in job training, both for youth and adults. Access the NYEC Budget & Appropriations Side-by-Side at www.nyec.org/content/documents/Budget&AppropsSidebySideJuly2008.pdf.

Workforce Investment Act

On Monday, November 17, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee convened a listening session on the topic of reauthorizing WIA. Twenty-two organizations, including NYEC, spoke briefly at the listening session, and many others will submit written comments to the Committee. Organizations speaking included a wide variety of workforce stakeholders, including the AFL-CIO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Center for Law and Social Policy, U.S. Conference Mayors, and National Governors Association, along with many others. Final extended comments and recommendations are due by November 24. The listening session was designed as a bipartisan first-step of a longer process to inform WIA reauthorization.

Senate HELP Committee staff have requested comments on three main areas: 1) components of WIA that should be maintained and refined, 2) key challenges that need to be addressed, and 3) innovative policy ideas. The Senate HELP Committee plans to convene additional meetings focused on WIA reauthorization as we move toward the opening of the 111th Congress.

In November, NYEC signed on to a letter developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy recommending that lawmakers include \$1.5 billion total for workforce programs in any new stimulus package considered this year. This total included \$500 million for disadvantaged youth. Access this letter at www.nyec.org/content/documents/FY09stimletterSenate11-11-08.doc. 



The FINANCE PROJECT
Tip of the Month

Improve Access to Mainstream Financial Services

Many low-income families are not connected to mainstream financial services. Approximately 22 million U.S. households do not have a checking or savings account. Instead, they depend on various high-cost, alternative financial service providers to meet their banking needs, including check-cashing stores, payday lenders, title lenders, rent-to-own stores, and tax preparers. A reliance on high-cost, alternative financial service providers undermines low-income families' ability to save and build assets. Although convenient, these providers typically charge significantly higher fees and interest rates than traditional banks, and they sometimes make haphazard loans that fail to account for

whether the borrower can repay. These ill-conceived payment plans and loan schemes may lead to higher default rates on loans, lower credit scores, and can trap borrowers in a cycle of debt.

State and local leaders can undertake various strategies to improve access to and regulate financial services for low-income families. These strategies include:

- Linking public benefits to bank services;
- Encouraging banks to expand services for unbanked, low-income families; and
- Spurring private-sector innovation to improve access to, and participation in, mainstream financial services.

By improving access to mainstream financial services, state and local leaders can enhance low-income families' financial security and success. Access to interest-bearing savings and checking accounts can provide a foundation for low-income families to begin accumulating assets. "Banked" households are better off financially and more likely to own assets than are their "unbanked" counterparts.

For more information on this financing strategy and the various strategies on building assets among low-income families, see the Finance Project's publication <http://76.12.61.196/publications/StrategytoBuildAssets.pdf>.

Learn more from The Finance Project at www.financeproject.org.

NYEC WELCOMES A NEW MEMBER!

Children's Aid Society

New York, NY

www.childrengaid.org



NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COALITION

Howard Knoll, Chair, Board of Directors
Mala B. Thakur, Executive Director
Nancy Martin, Director, Capacity Building Initiatives
GeMar Neloms, Director, Professional Development
Cheryl Holley, Manager of Finance and Administration
Eric Cline, Member Services Coordinator
Jonathan Larsen, Policy Associate
Christina Weeter, Policy Associate
Tracey Livingston, Administrative Assistant

The National Youth Employment Coalition is supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Institute for Educational Leadership, Lumina Foundation for Education, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, William Penn Foundation, Public Welfare Foundation, fees for service, and membership dues.

NYEC publishes YouthNotes 11 months of the year.

sults. Learning is at the center, and all components are designed to support student academic mastery and enjoyment of learning. YDI assists sites to meet CEPS goals by building site capacity through monthly training, technical assistance, coaching and leadership network meetings. Based on need, these are provided, to entire site-based teams and on an as-needed basis, to subsets of staff and across sites to those in similar roles.

Supervisors are key to CEPS implementation, but many do not have educational backgrounds. YDI works with them to develop ways to support instructors including joint lesson planning and team teaching. An important emphasis from building capacity among the CBOs is the need for instructors to receive substantial training on the curriculum and on working with out-of-school youth prior to and early in the program cycle. New instructors particularly benefit from becoming comfortable with the instructional program early on and by having a number of

Remaking a Program

In one site's second year, three times as many students were served than were previously, almost half of whom went on to GED programs. Over the same time, student literacy gains went from a slight decrease to a large increase (2.4 GEs) with math scores increasing as well. This past year, the site more fully implemented the CEPS model, adding a student "buddy system" and increasing the time the primary person spent working with students. They added a new, enthusiastic instructor, with a special education background, began doing more and more streamlined case conferencing, and were using student data more effectively.

lesson plans prepared.

As the model has evolved and sites have matured, there has been significant progress in organizational capacity, with many integrating CEPS practices more fully into their entire operations. GED attainment, which was not a focus early on, has, now that there is greater site capacity, become a goal. At the same time, program experience has sharpened YDI's knowledge of key challeng-

es that may not be addressed through CEPS, given limited resources. One example is identifying and serving students with severe learning disabilities, something that is being addressed through support of advocacy.

Evaluation

CEPS, working with the external evaluators and site staff, has incorporated the lessons learned to sharpen the elements and practices of the model. In 2006-07, the external evaluation found five of the six sites then in operation moved closer to fully implementing the CEPS model. Youth development and student support components achieved levels that were adequate or better. The biggest challenges and most significant changes for sites were in the use of the primary person approach and in the use of case or student conferencing, where staff meet formally and regularly to learn about and support participating youth.

The evaluation for 2007-08 concluded that the CEPS model was working. Over 400 students were served, and 241 of who stayed in CEPS long enough to take the Test of Adult Basic Skills (TABE) more than once. Almost a third (32 percent) of those who took the TABE more than once went on to GED programs. Overall, students had an average literacy gain of 1.5 grade equivalents (GEs). Between 2006-07 and 2007-08, CEPS almost tripled the number of students remaining in the program (from 85 to 241) while keeping comparable academic gains. For both years, CEPS student literacy gains were significantly greater than the gains for students in five other pre-GED programs not associated with CEPS.

CEPS student math gains stayed at 0.9 GEs both years while the number of students taking the math tests tripled. Math gains remain lower than literacy gains, most likely because math is less emphasized in terms of instructional time and technical assistance.

CEPS serves both female and male students and appears to be equally effective with them. No gender differences were found in retention rates. Neither were there significant gender differences found in their pre- and post-test literacy and math scores.

The support and technical assistance CEPS staff provided, combined with previous site experience implementing the model allowed sites to effectively scale up their efforts. Experienced sites had much higher student retention rates than the new sites

Making Math Work

At one site, between its second and third year, about 30 students took the TABE literacy test more than once and continued to have strong gains (about 1.8 GEs). Over the same time period, almost 70 percent more students took the TABE math test more than once, and the math gain almost tripled (0.6 GEs vs. 1.7 GEs). The site had kept the same literacy instructor and used the primary person system and case conferencing. However, they hired a new math instructor with strong math skills and much experience.

with no significant differences in increases in literacy and math skills. Across CEPS sites, there was a strong relationship between site changes improving their implementation of the CEPS model and improved student outcomes. As sites refine their use of case conferencing and primary person, retention rates improve. When this happens in conjunction with the hiring of stronger instructors, instructional gains increase as well. YDI's three years of experience with CEPS lead us to believe in the power of models, good technical assistance and evaluation that's deeply connected to work.

CEPS has been able to almost triple the number of students being served but these numbers do not begin to address the enormous numbers of students who need such services. The population in need of such programs continues to be far greater than can be served by CEPS. More than 60 percent of students who drop out enter high school with low literacy levels. This makes them ineligible for most GED and Workforce Investment Act programs. Finding students for the programs is not a problem, finding programs for the students is. ✨

Addressing Critical Gaps in Services to Youth Who Drop Out

This article is based on a report by the Youth Development Institute entitled "Addressing Critical Gaps in Services to Youth Who Drop Out" by Patricia Campbell, Ph.D., Peter Kleinbard, Vivian Vazquez, with assistance from Annie Sykes Moyer and TJ Volonis. For more information contact Justine Beaton at jbeaton@ydinstitute.org. For related papers and other YDI materials go to www.ydinstitute.org.