

Employability Outcomes of the Workforce Resource
Youth Employment Program

by

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ABSTRACT

The current literature on youth employment and its effects is mainly concerned with year round employment and its effect on school performance and activities. Very little research has been conducted solely on youth employment during the summer months and the resulting effects on long term employability skills and workforce participation.

This study seeks to demonstrate the positive effects and outcomes of the Workforce Resource Youth Employment Program. Under the guidelines of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), this program offers the opportunity for a meaningful work experience and enhancement of employability skills to youth who meet the program eligibility guidelines. The study was conducted in a rural West Central Wisconsin county. Seventeen youth, who had completed at least

one summer of the program, participated in this study. All youth in this study were placed at local business to complete a work experience and were also provided classroom activities to enhance their employability, communication, and leadership skills. Each of the youth in this study completed the requirements of this program.

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Introduction

The Workforce Resource of West-Central Wisconsin provides a youth employment program designed to instruct participants in soft employment skills through job enhancement training and paid work experiences. Soft skills such as punctuality, attendance, following directions, and working well with others are expected of all employees. The long range goals of this program are to provide students with the skills to maintain employment, to increase their wages, and to encourage completion of high school diploma.

Program eligibility is determined by the following criteria: The youth must be between the ages of 14 and 21. They must also (a) be under the 100% of poverty level for their family or (b) have a documented disability and be under the 100% of poverty level as an individual. Finally, participants must have at least one major employment barrier: high school drop out, pregnant or parenting, one or more grade levels behind age, basic skills deficient (reading or math levels under 9th grade), or have a disability.

Although this program is year round, a significant portion of the work experience and classroom training typically takes place during a ten week summer course. Classroom training instructs the youth on the importance of developing strong soft skills that will benefit both themselves and their employers. Other topics include development of resumes, interviewing skills, leadership skills, and team building. Following classroom training, the students are placed in an employment setting in their community and are given the opportunity to practice these skills in a real world environment. While working at these work sites participants are rated by their respective site supervisors on the following categories: attendance, punctuality, initiative, reaction to supervisor,

reaction to coworkers. Worksites are located in and around Menomonie, Wisconsin and consist of both private agencies, public agencies and for-profit companies.

Immediately prior to beginning their employment experience, the definitions and expectations for the specific soft skills are again explained to the students. If an individual possesses the basic soft skills, most employers believe they can train employees in the job specific skills necessary to perform the job.

The immediate goal of the Workforce Resource Youth Employment Program has been to develop or strengthen soft skills and to provide a positive work experience. The long range goal is to maintain employment and increase wages as a result of the skills learned in the program. Although this program has been operational for several years and in spite of its importance to the local economy, there has been no formal investigation to determine if these goals have been met.

Statement of the Problem

This pilot study sought to provide basic information on the Dunn County Youth Employment Program. Three specific questions were asked:

1. What are the demographic, family, and educational characteristics of the participants?
2. What are the employment outcomes of the program?
3. What is the participants' perception of the program?

Review of Literature

Although there is considerable literature on youth employment and its impact on youth, most of the research has been on the effects of youth employment during the school year. For example, Dodge (2000) stated

summer jobs and part-time employment during the school year have become a common aspect of growing up in the United States. Federal, and often state and local dollars are used to fund summer jobs programs aimed at low-income youth, thereby expanding opportunities for work experience to a broader segment of the population. In spite of a general belief that summer jobs are good for youth, there is very little research to confirm this. Most research on youth employment has been focused on part-time employment during the school year. (p.50)

The limited research that has been conducted on youth employment during the summer is as follows:

Data from the first four rounds of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97, 2003) indicated that the majority of teenage students who were employed during the summer also worked during the preceding school year. Sixty percent of youth who were age 16 at the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year were employed both during the school year and the following summer, as well as 68 percent of youth age 17 and 77 percent of youth age 18.

There were no differences between male and female students employed at ages 16, 17, or 18; all youth were more likely to work as they got older. In addition, only a small percentage of youth were employed only during the summer. While 60 percent of youths who were age 16 at the beginning of the school year worked during both the school year and the following summer, only ten percent worked only during the summer.

This number working only summers continued to decrease with age; for youth age 18 at the beginning of the school year only five percent worked during the summer only.

Although many students work during the school year, the relationship between work and school are inconsistent:

After school employment has become a major activity in high school students' lives. An estimated 80% of youths are employed at some point before they leave high school. (Wegman & Davis 1999) Of those employed, 46% work more than 20 hours per week. (Markel & Frone 1998) Studies of the effects of work on teenagers have presented both positive and negative results. Researchers studying the effects of employment on school attendance and performance have concluded that employment is good for students (D'Amico 1984), is bad for students (Brown & Steinberg 1991), makes no difference (Green & Jacquess 1987), or has complex effects (Mortimer, Finch, Ryu, Shanahan, & Call 1996) Zierold, K.M., Garman, S., & Anderson, H.A. (2005) (p. 214)

Centering on only summer employment, Dodge (2000) stated

Marsh (1991) found that working during the summer when there is no conflict between work and school, summer employment contributes positively to self-concept and does not appear to have any measurable negative effects.

Packer and Pines (1996), in reviewing the federally funded 1993 Summer Beginnings pilot program of Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), stated that "the biggest challenge to academically enriching summer jobs is to get people at all levels of program administration to abandon their preconceptions about youths, work and learning"(p.144) so youth will be appointed appropriate tasks. According to Packer and Pines, many supervisors have very low expectations the youth participants, all of whom are classified as disadvantaged. A second challenge is obtaining management buy-in at each worksite, because providing a learning-rich work environment requires a greater investment in supervisory training and time spent in supervision

Summer jobs programs can play a role in providing adult role models and real work experience in a wider variety of settings that might otherwise be available to youth. The work is still low-skill and low-pay, in most cases, but access to adults in a work setting can provide a glimpse of greater possibilities (Dodge, 2000)

Federal Youth Employment Legislation

Legislatively, earlier efforts at providing summer jobs were supported through Title II-B of the Job Training Partnership Act (1992). The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), originally passed in 1992 and subsequently amended was created to:

...to establish programs to prepare youth and adults facing serious barriers to employment for participation in the labor force by providing job training and other services that will result in increased employment and earning, increased educational and occupational skills, and decreased welfare dependency, thereby improving the quality of the workforce and enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation. (Job Training Partnership Act, 1992)

This national concern regarding the readiness of youth to enter the workforce was again reflected in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, and most recently in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). By emphasizing the long term development of the individual, the authorization of the Workforce Investment Act in 1994 further increased the movement of the workforce development system away from the short term interventions. The program designs are required to reflect a range of services that generally plan for the changing needs of the youth as they continue to age through the program.

As stated in the Workforce Investment Act Program Guide (2000)

the WIA vision for youth is that:

All youth, particularly those out of school acquire the necessary skills and work experience to successfully transition into adulthood, careers, and further education and training.

This vision was resulted in the following goals:

- a) Provide, to eligible youth seeking assistance in achieving academic and employment success, effective and comprehensive activities, which include a variety of options for improving educational and skill competencies and provide effective connections to employers.
- b) Ensure ongoing mentoring opportunities, in the workplace and the community, for eligible youth with adults committed to providing such opportunities.
- c) Provide opportunities for training for eligible youth.
- d) Provide continued supportive services for eligible youth.
- e) Provide incentives for recognition and achievement to eligible youth, and;
- f) Provide opportunities to eligible youth to participate in activities related to leadership, development, decision-making, citizenship, and community service. (p. 2-101)

Current Research in Federally Funded Employment Programs

A review of current literature has shown that researchers have explored cost-benefit, effectiveness, and performance of the most recent federal funding programs (i.e. Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 (JTPA 1982 – 1998) and Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA 1998 – present)). However, only limited research has been located that investigates the impact pre-employment services on earnings, job retention, and advanced education. A majority of these studies were conducted on JTPA programs.

While a limited amount of research addressing youth employment during the summer exists, it is secondary to the study of youth employment during the school year. Much of the current research on youth employment has focused on various effects, positive or negative that result from employment during the school year (Zierold et al. (2005), Paternoster, R., Bushway, S., Brame, R., & Apel, R. (2003), or the impact on youth with disabilities. (Carter & Lunsford, 2005)

Zierold et al (2005) administered a questionnaire to five Wisconsin high school districts selected from the five public health regions of the state (northern, northeastern,

western, southern, and southeastern). The results of this study found no significant differences between working and non-working students in grades, absenteeism or tardiness. However, working teens were more likely to cut classes or not participate in extracurricular activities.

Paternoster et al (2003) focused on the effect of teenage employment on delinquency and problem behaviors. Although previous research had consistently reported a positive relationship between work during the school year and involvement in delinquency and other problem behaviors, it was unclear if this relationship existed due to work being detrimental to teenagers, resulting in lower school grades, diminished educational ambitions, and emotional alienation from parents or due to existing pre-employment differences in teenagers.

Carter and Lunsford (2005) reviewed employment outcomes for transition age students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). Their study focused on components of high school programming that may contribute to improved employment outcomes. Specifically, they focused on four skill areas (social, vocational, academic, and self-determination) and four support areas (community linkages, workplace supports, family involvement, and student involvement) that should receive attention when preparing students for the workplace. They concluded that much of current research may lead practitioners to...

incorrectly conclude that employment is an unrealistic goal for most adolescents with EBD. Because these students often exhibit challenging behavior in the classroom, vocational and special education staff may have low expectations for their employment prospects, which may limit students' opportunities of participating in vocational education courses, on-the-job training programs, and postsecondary vocational training

Related to social skills, Carter and Lunsford (2005) recommended that secondary transition programs and other support areas address social skills training by focusing on the individual students' social skill deficits and giving instruction on social skills that are valued in the workplace. This training should be both frequent and intense, reinforcing appropriate behaviors as well as teaching new desired skills.

They also suggested that students interested in entering employment should be encouraged to attend vocational education courses as well as receive on-the-job training before they leave high school. Additionally the authors stated as most EBD students have below average school performance and may not recognize the long term value of a high school diploma. They recommended implementing a curriculum that demonstrates to the students the connections between what is learned in the classroom and how it applies to employment. Finally, the authors attention should also be given to the students' self determination skills. They stated that once students leave school and enter the workplace they typically lose the supports that were available to them in high school. The recommendations were to teach the students how to set realistic employment goals, evaluate progress toward their goals, and to self advocate for opportunities and supports.

Resnick, M.D., Bearman, P.S., Blum, R.W., Bauman, K.E., Harris, K.M., Jones, J., Tabor, J., Beuhring, T., Sieving, R.E., Shew, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, L.H., & Udry, J.R. (1997) emphasized the importance for ongoing, complex relationships with adults, and Garbarino (1999) stated that stable, long-term relationships were particularly important for at-risk youth. In other words, as stated by Dodge (2000), just being there, or being there for a short time, is not enough to make a difference in the level of

development of attitudes, or perceived improvement in skills, that can be measured in the short term.

Conclusions

Due to inconsistent results, it is difficult to reach definite conclusions on youth employment. Paternoster et al (2003) stated

There is a consensus in the empirical literature that teenage employment, particularly what is termed “intensive” employment, results in a constellation of detrimental consequences: lower school grades and diminished educational ambitions (p.297)

However, Zierold et al (2005) found that “Working students did not report lower grades, higher absenteeism, or more school tardiness than their nonworking peers.

Obviously, the consensus is not total. Additionally, it is confusing that Zierold et al consider the stated negative impacts of work (more likely to cut classes and not take part in extracurricular activities) significant when they found that working students did not report lower GPAs, higher absenteeism, or more school tardiness. It is certainly preferable not to have students cut classes, but their finding that the GPAs were not reported to be lower has greater significance. While many students may not be involved in extracurricular activities for a variety of reasons, working students are less likely to be involved in these activities because they are working during the times the extracurricular activities take place.

What is lacking is thorough investigation of the long and short term effects of summer employment. Summer employment is discussed in several studies, but only as it relates or compares to employment during the school year. Studies mentioning summer

employment indicate that more students are employed during the summer than are during the school year. It would stand to reason that further investigation is needed on the benefits of summer employment, when there would be no conflicts with school and other school activities. Youth who are employed during the summer are able to more closely focus on employment and the benefits they receive from working than they are during the school year.

In this study all students were employed during summer vacation. The majority of the participants included in this study participated in the Workforce Resource Youth Employment Program following the transition from JTPA to WIA. The Workforce Investment Act requires that all youth participants are to be involved in year-round activities. The intensity of services may fluctuate during the year depending on other activities, such as school. However, the general program design and individual service strategies are to be based on comprehensive, year-round services.

Methodology

Subjects and Sample

Subjects for this study were all past or current participants of the Dunn County Workforce Resource Youth Program. Twenty-five youth participants who were enrolled in the Youth Employment Program from 1998 through 2002 made up the population. The goal of the study was to include this entire population.

Instruments

Based on the literature review, the research questions, and program evaluation needs, a mail survey instrument was developed (See Appendix A). The completed instrument and a cover letter was reviewed by professional staff of Workforce Resource of West-Central Wisconsin. This survey consisted of three sections: demographic, educational, and program outcomes. Prior to use, the instrument and cover letter were reviewed and approved by the UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Procedure

Data collection consisted of two mailings of the survey packet to the 25 participants. After the last known addresses were obtained from Workforce Resource records, a cover letter and questionnaire were mailed on June 2, 2003 with a return date of June 16, 2003. The second mailing was July 15, 2003 with a return date of July 29, 2003. A follow-up phone contact was made to all seventeen participants who returned one of the mailings for additional employment information between October 12, 2005 and October 28, 2005. This phone contact was made to receive current employment

information from the participants. Ten surveys were returned from the first mailing. The remaining seven surveys were returned from the second mailing. Updated employment information was added to the individuals' corresponding surveys.

Data Processing and Analysis.

All data were processed using the SPSS for Windows, version 11.0. (SPSS, 2001). Due to the small sample size, data analysis consisted almost entirely of descriptive statistics.

Results

Participant Characteristics

Of the 25 persons eligible to participate in this study, useable data were obtained from 17 persons. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of these 17 persons. The ethnicity of the sample was eight white (47.1%), seven Hmong (41.2%), one Asian, not Hmong (5.9%), and one other (5.9%). The age of the participants ranged from 16 to 21. The mean age of respondents was 17.9 with a standard deviation of 1.41 years.

The family characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 2. Thirteen respondents indicated they were currently living with one or both parents (76.5%), two were living with family members (11.8%), other than parents (11.8%), and two were living with a spouse (11.8%). Two participants indicated they were pregnant or parents (11.8%), one was a single parent (5.9%), one was a non-custodial parent (5.9%), and 13 had no children (76.5%). All respondents indicated there were no unrelated children living with them. In addition to the data presented on Table 2, 15 respondents indicated they were single (88.2%), one was legally married (5.9%), and one indicated Hmong marriage (5.9%). A Hmong marriage is a cultural marriage not recognized by the State of Wisconsin as a legal marriage.

At the time of this study, 13 youth (76.5%) were in high school (Table 3). The remaining four (23.5%) had obtained their high school diploma or equivalent. The anticipated year of graduation for the thirteen youth currently in high school was reported as eight in 2004 (47.1%), two in 2005 (11.8%), and three in 2006 (17.6%). Two respondents reported they were currently in special education classes (11.8%). Of the

four graduated from high school prior to program entry, two graduated in 2000, one graduated in 2002, and one graduated in 2003. Two of the four graduates were currently attending post secondary education. One person was attending a year post secondary certificate program in Childcare and anticipated completion of this program in 2004. The other participant was enrolled as a psychology major in a Bachelors degree program.

Table 1. Consumer Demographics

Characteristic	Statistics			
	Number	Percent		
Gender				
Male	8	50.0%		
Female	8	50.0%		
Total	16	100.0%		
Racial/Ethnic Group				
Asian, not Hmong	1	5.9		
Hmong	7	41.2		
White	8	47.1		
Other	1	5.9		
Total	17	100.0%		
	Number	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	16	16-21	17.9	1.41

Table 2. Family Characteristics

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Family Situation		
Living with parents	13	76.5
Living with other family	2	11.8
Living with spouse	2	11.8
Total	17	100.0
Family Status		
Parent/pregnant	2	11.8
Single parent	1	5.9
Non custodial parent	1	5.9
No children	13	76.5
Total	17	100.0

Table 3. Educational Characteristics

Characteristic	Statistics	
	Number	Percent
Current Educational Status		
Attending high school	13	76.5
Not attending high school	4	23.5
Total	17	100.0
Anticipated high school graduation year		
2004	8	61.5%
2005	2	15.4%
2006	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

Employment Outcomes

There were three measures of program outcomes. The first was employment following program participation. Twelve of the 17 (70%) were employed (Table 4). Four persons were employed in food services, three as fast foods workers and one as a kitchen helper. The two employed at the Farmers' Union and Wal-Mart were material handlers. All were employed in unskilled jobs, with a median wage of \$7.00 per hour, with a high of \$18.30 per hour and a low of \$5.15 per hour. The median length of employment was 11.5 months, with a high of 36 months and a low of 3 months. Respondents worked a median of 20 hours per week, with a high of 40 hours and a low of 9 hours per week. Respondents earned a median weekly wage of \$127.50, with a high weekly wage of \$732.00 and a low weekly wage of \$51.50.

The second measure was skills learned by the participants, who were asked to list the employability skills learned in the program (Table 5). Participants checked an average of 6.7 skills learned. Over 75% of the participants listed *Resume writing*; over 70% listed *Completing applications* and *Working with co-workers*. Fifty-nine percent listed *Attendance*, *Time management*, *Interviewing skills*, and *Punctuality*. Two of the top three skills dealt with the skills needed to get hired. Table 6 presents the comments of the participants; in general these comments reinforce the employability skills listed in Table 5.

The final outcome measure was a single five-point scale item asking if the program prepared the participant for school or work. Nine persons (60%) believed that the program was either *Very helpful* or *Extremely helpful*. Five (33.3%) saw it as *helpful*;

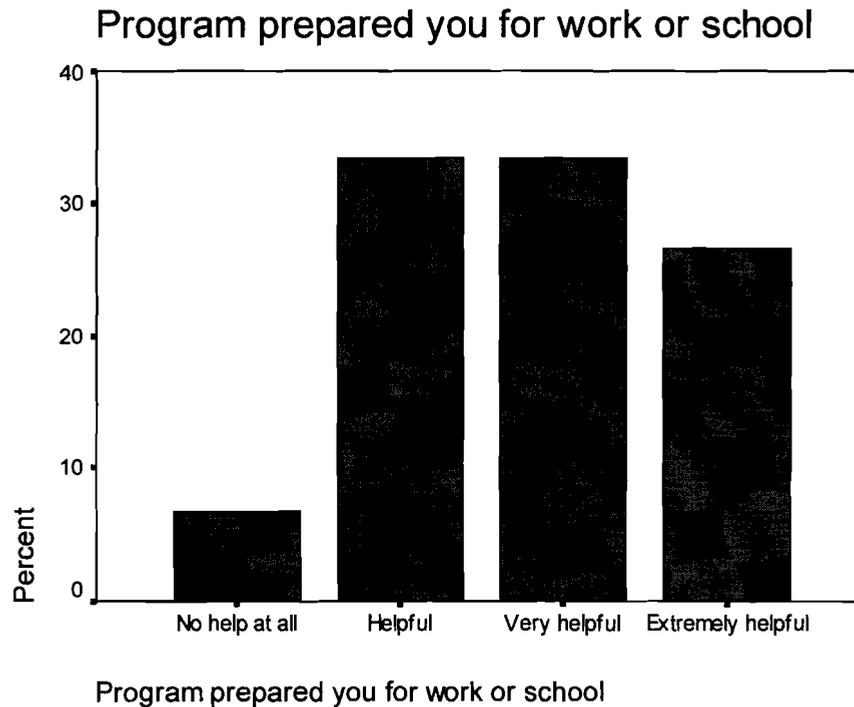
one (6.6%) thought is was *No help at all*. The mean rating was 3.73, indicating a fairly high degree of helpfulness. The result for this item is presented in Figure 1.

Table 4: Post-Program Employment

Employer	Job Duties/	Hourly Wage	Estimated Hours Worked per Week	Estimated Weekly Wage	Months Employed	Benefits
MHS DECA store	Cashier	5.15	10	51.5	6	none
McDonalds	Fast food worker	6.25	20	125.00	16	none
Menomonie Farmers Union Coop	Stockroom	9.25	25	231.25	3	none
UW Stout Commons	Dishwasher	6.00	15	90.00	20	none
Goodwill	Donations	5.70	15	85.50	6	none
Burger King	Fast Food Worker	6.50	20	130.00	9	none
Brigham Group	light production	9.30	35	325.50	14	none
UW Stout	Dishroom	6.00	15	90.00	18	none
Burger King	Fast Food Worker	7.00	20	140.00	6	none
Color My World Daycare	Daycare Worker	9.50	40	380.00	20	none
Wal-Mart Distribution Center	Loader	18.30	40	732.00	36	Health, Dental, Vision, Life, Vacation
Workforce Resource	Office Assistant	9.00	9	81.00	8	none

Table 5: Employability Skills Learned by Participants (N = 17).

Skill Learned	Percent Listing Skill
Resume writing	76.5
Completing applications	70.6
Working with co-workers	70.6
Attendance	58.8
Time management	58.8
Interviewing skills	58.8
Punctuality	58.8
Reaction to supervision	52.9
Dealing with conflicts	47.1
Initiative	41.2



Program Description and Case Studies.

Each year the youth began the summer program with a four to six hour orientation. All students participating in this program received the orientation and the same services. During orientation the students completed tax forms for employment purposes (with instruction and guidance from Workforce Resource staff), were informed of the location and contact information for their work sites, and were presented with the expectations for the Youth Employment Program. These expectations included rules of conduct and behavior, what their responsibilities were, and a summary of classroom activities they would be expected to participate in throughout the summer.

The classroom activities, referred to as Academic Enrichment (AE) during this program, included the development of employment soft skills, resume development, correctly completing employment applications, and interviewing skills. The AE sessions

were conducted once a week for three to four hours each week during the ten week duration of the Youth Employment Program. Following the orientation session, the youth were placed at their worksites. Introductions were made with their work experience site supervisor(s). This person(s) was typically a manager or lead staff person at each particular business. The specific job duties and work schedule were arranged and discussed between the youth and the site supervisor. Students were able to work and be paid for 20 hours per week at their work site. Additionally, the youth were paid for their attendance at the AE sessions. All students were paid the prevailing minimum wage (\$4.75/hour). They were not paid for time they were absent from work or Academic Enrichment sessions or for 30 minute meal breaks.

Employment soft skills were developed and strengthened through interactive discussions of punctuality, attendance, time management, demonstrating initiative, appropriate interactions with supervisors and coworkers, and appropriately handling conflicts at the workplace. Video and PowerPoint presentations were also provided to enhance the discussions of these topics.

Application and resume writing sessions were presented to the students through classroom discussions, PowerPoint presentations, and practical examples. The youth were provided with examples applications and resumes that were correctly and incorrectly completed. With each type of example, detailed discussions were provided through classroom discussions and PowerPoint presentations. Students were then asked to complete a blank application and their own resume. Workforce Resource staff provided individual assistance and feedback to each student on each of these tasks. By

the end of the program, all students had the skills to correctly and independently complete an employment application and develop a professional resume.

Interviewing skills were also discussed during each summer program. Workforce Resource staff discussed the different aspects of conducting a successful interview. These aspects included: how to make a good first impression, appropriate choice of clothing, proper hygiene, body language, maintaining appropriate eye contact, typical interview questions, and how to answer interview questions. At the end the interviewing seminar each youth participated in a mock interview provided by a Workforce Resource staff member. The youth were given feedback on their performance following the mock interview and informed on what areas they could use improvement and how they could do so.

Case studies are presented as examples of how the program worked for two persons with different vocational needs.

Case Study 1: Cindy.

Cindy, a white female, is the younger of two children and lives with parents. Referred by her high school special education teacher and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Counselor, . She was 17 years old when she was registered for the Youth Employment Program. Cindy has a learning disability (mild developmental disability), reportedly due to complications with her premature birth. Both parents have at least Bachelors degrees. Her father has a Masters degree in education and was principal of a local high school in Dunn County. Mother is an office manager for a local company.

Cindy was referred to the Youth Employment Program by her special education teacher so she could gain a work experience in the area of child care before she committed herself to a post-secondary program in this field. Prior to her participation she had no employment experience. She participated in this program for two summers. During both summers Cindy actively participated in the Academic Enrichment classroom activities with the other youth participants and completed a work experience.

The first year Cindy participated in this program was following her junior year and the second was following her senior year of high school. During both work experiences Cindy worked in local private child daycares. Typically the students change to different types of employment for separate work experiences, however, she indicated a strong desire to continue with a second childcare work experience because she had determined by her senior year in high school that she wanted to pursue a career in child care. Her job duties included monitoring the children's safe play activities, assisting the daycare workers in preparing lesson plans for the day/week, and interacting with the children in their play and through structured activities. During both summers, Cindy participated in the program she worked up to twenty hours per week at her work site and attended three to four hours of AE class per week. She was paid \$4.75 per hour for both her work experience and time she attended AE class.

Through her participation in this program Cindy successfully completed all Academic Enrichment activities described above. Following graduation from high school and participation in the program she entered into the Childcare program at the area technical college. While she attended classes at the technical college she also obtained employment as a personal care worker and a fast food worker. Within two years Cindy successfully completed the one year certificate program. She is currently employed as a child care teacher at a local child daycare.

Case Study 2: Dang

Dang, a Hmong male, is the youngest of 5 children and lives with his mother and one brother. The remaining three siblings no longer live in the same household. Fluent in English and Hmong, he was 14 years old when he registered for the Youth Employment Program. He was born in Thailand and immigrated to the United States when he was 5 years old with his mother and four older siblings. His mother has no formal education, is unemployed, does not speak English and is receiving SSI. Dang has participated in the Youth Employment Program for the past 4 years.

Dang applied to the program after attending a recruitment presentation by Workforce Resource staff. Due to low family income, Dang was eligible for this program. At registration he had not determined what his career goals were, but planned to complete high school and attend college. Prior to his participation in this program, Dang had no work history.

Dang completed work experiences as a donation attendant, a custodial assistant, and a warehouse attendant. As a donation attendant he was responsible for receiving material donations from the general public, sorting the merchandise, placing price tags on the items as directed by supervisors, and placing the merchandise on the sales floor. Dang's job duties as a custodial assistant included; sweeping and mopping hallways and stairways, cleaning offices, removing trash, and cleaning restrooms. As a warehouse attendant his job duties were as follows: organizing and palletizing customer orders,

tracking orders and warehouse inventory through handheld scanner, and moving palletized orders to the shipping department.

Because Dang was bilingual, he was sometimes asked to assist other Hmong students with their activities by interpreting the various directions. During the summers Dang participated in the program he worked up to twenty hours per week at his work sites and attended three to four hours of AE class per week. He was paid \$4.75 per hour for his work experiences and time he attended AE class. The services he received through this program were identical to that of the other participants in this program as indicated previously.

Through his participation in this program Dang successfully completed all Academic Enrichment activities described above. Following his last work experience as a warehouse attendant, "Dang" was hired by the employer and has maintained this employment for the past eighteen months. He is currently a senior in high school and is planning on attending UW – Green Bay. His long term career goal is to be a personal counselor.

Discussion

Limitations

Because only 25 persons participated in this summer employment program, the number of potential subjects was extremely low. Accurate data were obtained for 17 persons; this small sample size prohibited comparing participant demographic and other characteristics to program outcomes. Secondly, because most respondents were currently attending high school, it was difficult to measure the long term impact this program will have on them or the impact it has had on participants who have completed high school and entered into either post-secondary education or employment.

Conclusions

The results of this study are supportive of the view that the participants of the Workforce Resource Youth Employment Program strongly feel the program was beneficial to them and aided them in obtaining and maintaining employment. All seventeen of the respondents had no employment experience prior to participation. Following at least one summer of participation in the program, twelve out of seventeen respondents indicated they were currently employed. This reflects both the success of this program and demonstrates this program was effective with a wide range of individuals. The successful diversity of this program is demonstrated by the case studies of Cindy and Dang. As mentioned previously, “Cindy”, an individual with a learning disability, received her high school diploma, successfully completed a technical degree program and obtained full time employment during her participation in this program. “Dang”, who immigrated to the United States as a young child, began working with this program with no prior work experience. During his participation, he successfully

completed several work experiences, obtained employment through the employer of his final work experience and gained acceptance to the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay.

The main eligibility requirement of this program is family income at or below the federal poverty level. All individuals participating in this program are either from a lower income level family or persons with disabilities, who for program purposes is considered a family of one. In general youth who are in poverty typically have fewer opportunities available to them than those who are not in poverty. This program has demonstrated that although these youth may not have had the opportunities available to many of their peers in the general population, with appropriate supports and direction they are able to succeed in obtaining and maintaining employment. If it were possible to provide this program to a random sample of high school seniors three months prior to their graduation, it is highly likely the successful employment outcomes would significantly increase.

Summer employment is often the first employment experience for many youth. It is important to understand the impacts it has upon youth as they develop their employability skills. During the summer months there are no conflicts between employment and education or extra-curricular activities. Many studies have been focused on youth employment during the school year and at times included summer employment when youth have continued to work during the summer months.

The majority of previous studies have consisted of comparisons or cause and effect on resulting behaviors and impacts on school performance. Further study needs to be conducted on the long term impacts youth employment, summer employment in

particular, has on the development of basic job skills and the long term employment success.

Programs such as the one presented in this study attempt to demonstrate the advantages youth receive when they are provided a work experience through which they are provided the support to develop the skills necessary for ensuring long term employment success. Most often these work experiences are supervised closely by an adult, and the youth are given feedback on their performance on a consistent basis.

Dodge (2000) suggested:

the best jobs will have adults present on a regular basis, will be challenging and offer opportunities to consolidate existing skills and knowledge and learn new skills and knowledge, will involve a meaningful product or service, and will make clear the connections among job, school, and career. Accomplishing these goals will entail communicating with job site agencies and supervisors and encouraging them to look for opportunities to enrich the learning experiences of the youth working for them.

Summer employment is a major factor in most young peoples' lives. It is important for programs to continue to match youth not only with meaningful work experience but to also provide them with the direction and mentoring needed to develop long term employability and resulting life skills.

This program that was the focus of this study has provided meaningful work experiences to youth with consistent adult supervision and interaction. To this end the youth were given weekly feedback as well as classroom time in which job seeking and keeping skills were discussed to support them in their long term employment and vocational goals and looked at a specific type of summer employment. Additional

research, on a larger scale, should be conducted on similar groups and type of employment as well as on youth who obtain their summer jobs independently.

Recommendations

The Workforce Investment Act is a federal program, which mandates consistent performance and eligibility requirements nationwide. If this study were to be replicated elsewhere, it is likely these results could be generalized due to the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act at the Federal level. Due to the limited sample size of this study it is recommended that this study be replicated on a larger scale

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Appendix A: Survey**Demographic Information**

Age: _____

Highest grade completed: 9 10 11 HS Grad 13 14 15 16 17 18

Ethnic Background (check all that apply)

- African American
- Asian
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Hispanic

Living Situation

- With Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
- With Other Family
- With Friend(s)
- With Spouse
- Alone
- Cohabiting

Marital Status

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

Family Status

(are you a...)

- Parent or Pregnant
- Single Parent
- Non Custodial Parent
- Have no Children

Educational Status

- Attending High School
 Grade _____
 Attending Post Secondary
 # of years _____
 Post Secondary Certification (not diploma program)
 Associates Degree
 Bachelor's Degree
 Major _____
 Minor _____
 Year of Graduation _____
 Master's Degree
 Year of Graduation _____

Survey

1. Are you currently attending High School Yes or No
 2. Are you currently attending Post Secondary education? Yes or No
 3. Are you currently employed? Yes or No
 4. How many jobs do you currently have? 1 2 3 _____
 5. Where are you currently employed? _____

6. What is your current salary? _____ hr wk mo yr

7. What is your employment history since enrollment in the Workforce Resource Youth Employment Program?

Employer _____ Location _____
 Position _____ Wage _____
 Dates of Employment: From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___
 Benefits: Health Dental Life Disability
 (circle all that apply)
 Paid Vacation Sick Leave

Employer _____ Location _____
 Position _____ Wage _____
 Dates of Employment: From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___
 Benefits: Health Dental Life Disability
 (circle all that apply)
 Paid Vacation Sick Leave

Employer _____ Location _____
 Position _____ Wage _____
 Dates of Employment: From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___
 Benefits: Health Dental Life Disability
 (circle all that apply)
 Paid Vacation Sick Leave

Employer _____ Location _____
Position _____ Wage _____
Dates of Employment: From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___
Benefits: Health Dental Life Disability
(circle all that apply) Paid Vacation Sick Leave

1. What employability skills did you learn, through this program, that have helped you in your employment?
2. Do you feel benefited from this program?
Why or Why not?