

REFOCUSING THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH INTO LOCAL WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

Tennessee Economic Development Certificaiton Capstone Project



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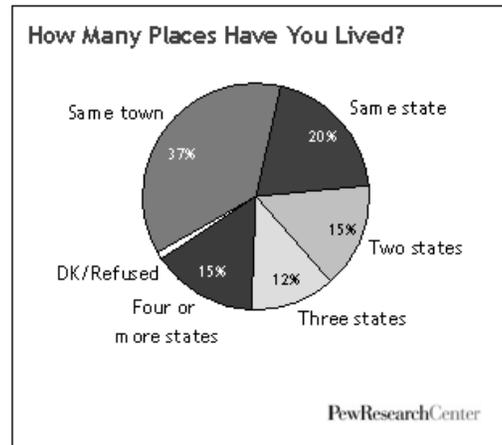
Refocusing The Education Of Youth Into Local Workforce Initiatives

When looking for an advantage to creating a sustainable workforce in the community, the local government and economic development agencies should try to examine all resources that are available to them to accelerate or increase its base. A priority of community leadership, local government, and economic development organizations is to make sure there is an adequate workforce to maintain the community business operations and the production of a tax base for services to those businesses and to the community at large. A great deal of thought by manufacturers and business concerns goes into the selection of a community because of its workforce availability. Those involved in correcting these issues had to figure out that the beginning of that effort needs to be through a partnership with Haywood County's education system and its youth. Lindsay Frilling, CECD, Chief Executive Officer of the Obion County Joint Economic Council calls this "Cradle to Career" mentality. She says this is especially important to "at risk" children that do not have the opportunity to education prior to Pre-K and kindergarten. According to Frilling, at the last Complete TN Leadership Institute, metrics used by groups at the event said there was a deficiency in kindergarten readiness and third grade reading ability. It stands to reason that Haywood County and others should address this in the efforts to add workforce awareness into efforts to train youth through external programs.

Communities must realize that when it comes to training new workforce, that youth should be a key consideration for expanding any training efforts. While some retraining is necessary to the existing workforce due to closures and attrition of jobs because of downsizing and closures of industry, a new pipeline is required to maintain what Haywood County currently has. With the Memphis Regional Mega site becoming a viable entity in the near future, the need to expand and seek a regional workforce has become clear.

Investments must be made by local governments, economic development agencies, and the Haywood County school system to prepare graduating students to enter the workforce, especially the local one. According to a study called "Who Moves? Who Stays Put? Where's Home?" by the Pew Research Center¹, more young people are now staying in their local communities. While this may be indicative of the nation, responses from Haywood County students disagree, with the majority indicating that they wish to leave. 74% of Americans said they stayed in their hometowns because their feelings were that their community was a good place to live, raise children, and be close to family. The major reason however, (44% of respondents) was because of a job or business opportunity. An interesting factor in the study said that the strongest pull for staying in home communities (48% of respondents) was rural America. This means that these respondents indicated that more people were likely to stay in their community, especially if it's a rural area. According to that same study, beginning in 2007, a large amount of the population of the Midwest began moving to the South. If so, it gives more credibility that manufacturers would move to a more rural, less taxed, and more economically viable area. The report identified that one of the states in the top ten for manufacturer location is Tennessee. The following chart reflects how those respondents answered the strongest pull factor in where to locate from the Pew Study.

¹ Cohn, D'Vera, and Rich Morin. "Who Moves? Who Stays Put? Where's Home?" *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, 16 Dec. 2008, www.pewsocialtrends.org/2008/12/17/who-moves-who-stays-put-wheres-home/.



In this figure, Pew Research identifies questions asked about how many people move from their home community.

The beginning phase that leadership and workforce training should begin is at the elementary level to instill those skills and values that carry on through later academic training. In order to want to remain in a community, one must first learn why that community needs them and others to sustain itself. Leadership training lays the groundwork to understanding the value of nurturing its workforce and the community. If one does not see the value in a community to continue to make it flourish, the interest in working there is much less. Jeff Sloan, Editor-in-Chief of *Composites World* said in a web article that we have too many old people and not enough young people involved in workforce development². Rapidly retiring baby boomers are taking a lot of knowledge and experience with them that cannot be easily replaced. For the most part, training has been focused on children to seek out four year college degrees without insisting that those careers be targeted on careers in the community. Many parents did not want their kids in "dirty factories" when they left their school training, not realizing that one day these factories no longer

² Sloan, Jeff. "Workforce Development: Let's Start in High School." *CompositesWorld*, CompositesWorld, 1 July 2015,

www.compositesworld.com/columns/workforce-development-lets-start-in-high-school.

operate the same way as they did because of technology. Studies in technology school are now yielding higher paying jobs that are more likely to cause staying in the local community more viable if the jobs are there. The problem? Retraining these young folks that this really exists right in their own community.

Youth should be considered as the beginning of a vital workforce solution in Haywood County as well as any other community, and the effort must be made to prioritize training to offer a reason to both enter the workforce and remain in the community as a positive choice. Regardless whether they choose their home community, the prospect of its value should be offered as a possibility. The reality of that came from asking Haywood County's youth leadership class one day how many of them were going to stay in Haywood County to complete their careers after graduation. No hands came up. When the question was asked why they wanted to leave, no one had a good answer. Even though they were considering an out of state university, they did not wish to return to Haywood County. They thought the fruit was riper in other places.

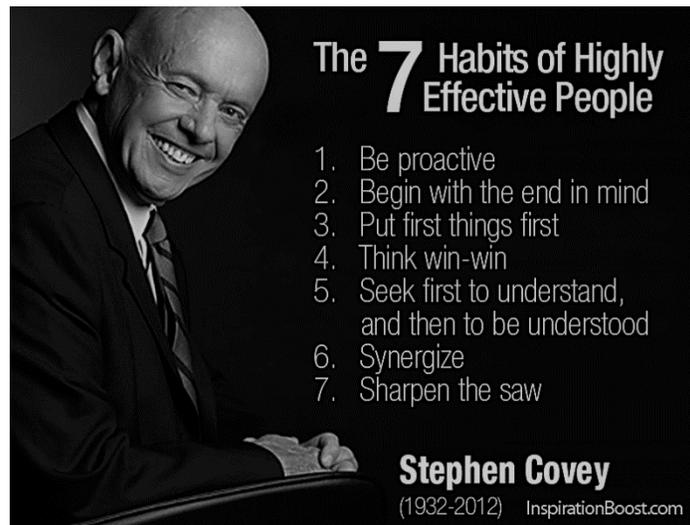
Haywood County had to make a substantial commitment and investment because of current industrial recruiting efforts as well as the impending landing of a major industry in the Mega site, with a key to that effort needing to be directed at area youth.

The effort began by adding Franklin Covey's "The Leader In Me" program³ into our intermediate school system to start building that foundation for training future leaders. As with any leadership training, workforce

³ Covey, Stephen, and Muriel Summers. "The Leader in Me." *The Leader In Me*, The Franklin Covey Company, 6 May 2014,

www.theleaderinme.org/.

sustainability is an integral part. Training leadership skills at an early age could open young eyes as they went through their school years and develop more than just “book learning” and add some practicality. Too many times the school system teaches what a book says versus what real life is sometimes creating a false impression when graduates enter the workforce. Instilling Stephen Covey’s “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” was the beginning place.



Stephen Covey's 7 Habits

The Chamber also took a hard look at what Youth Leadership was doing to address workforce and community retention as part of its curriculum and found it terribly lacking. There was very little interaction with business and industry. Not only was it lacking with Youth Leadership, but the same issues existed at the high school. Additional training was needed through new programs and an effort to bring in post-secondary education training. The weakness in technology training intermixing with local industry was very obvious.

Taking into consideration the need to make youth a vital part of workforce initiative and seeing what was being taught wasn't enough to attract interest in those programs that were in the system; a need existed to provide the proper tools or face continuous loss of the system's young people.

The initial investment made by Haywood County government and its economic development entities was through programs called "Skills to Build" from Brownsville's Workforce Initiative, "Career Ready" and "Kapstone training". Only Kapstone was specifically targeted to groups of high school seniors. These programs were specific certificate programs on soft skills training, with Certificate Ready offering ACT certification on three levels according to competency. Kapstone also introduced mentors to these students from local business and industry to explain their operations to them. The only problem was that they got to hear and not experience. Most of the youth we spoke to in our leadership classes that went through these programs openly stated that it had made no difference to them in considering Haywood County to further their careers, and that was alarming information to everyone who was making an effort to reach out to these young folks. Brownsville's Mayor, the Superintendent of Haywood County Schools, and other leadership wanted to make sure that when it comes to introducing the fundamentals of workforce to the school systems that there was agreement in what we were all doing.

The Chamber began to work on its Youth Leadership curriculum to strengthen it towards emphasis on the value of local workforce. Along with teaching leadership skills, students must be shown how their careers could be developed within their community by opening their eyes to workforce opportunity. This was accomplished in part by adding factory and business tours to their schedule along with asking if the students could serve as an intern during the summer to learn more about their business. That was followed up by creating a two year Youth Leadership

program with Juniors in the first year touring and learning about their community, and then Seniors becoming Youth Ambassadors in the second year actually serving in the community.

The Chamber is also currently in talks to bring a directed satellite college campus to Haywood County. This satellite is targeted for the 2018 school term and would concentrate on more direct technical training that would specifically benefit industry already located in Haywood County and a regional workforce to address the added jobs that the Mega site would bring. According to Jeff Sloan, opportunities like “dual enrollment” in college while in high school effectively reduces time required to earn a bachelor’s degree and therefore increases workforce opportunity.⁴

Realizing that Haywood County was losing leadership and workforce interest by prospective young people due to a lack of engagement, efforts to implement change was to attract them back to reinvesting in the community by offering and instilling those skills at the earliest possible stage of their education. If one considers that leadership and direct involvement is engrained into a person, then one understands that learning begins as early as possible with instruction and repetitive practice.

⁴ Sloan, Jeff. “Workforce Development: Let’s Start in High School.” *CompositesWorld*, CompositesWorld, 1 July 2015,

www.compositesworld.com/columns/workforce-development-lets-start-in-high-school.

THE LEADER IN ME

"The Leader In Me" was a program that Haywood County, the city of Brownsville and the Chamber of Commerce were both interested in bringing to the community in early 2015 after touring schools that had implemented the programs. Encouragement was given to local school officials to go and see it in operation, and they joined in touring those schools again. The excitement that the school officials had after seeing it in action was instrumental in getting it implemented that fall of 2015 in Haywood Intermediate School. It has since expanded into the middle school as well. After two years of incorporation, the impact in the level of responsibility and values of leadership shown in these young people has been phenomenal. After these young people were exposed to the Covey program, it was like a light came on. They immediately began to demonstrate responsibility, teamwork, planning and other skills in levels not seen before in 1st through 3rd grades, often at the surprise of their parents. The teachers who are involved in the program reported an increase in study habits, grades, and involvement in tasks like helping other children to catch up on coursework and making sure that the rules were followed. This is not only laying groundwork to being a more responsible citizen, but giving them a heightened sense of responsibility. That accomplished the first level of the community's change.



The Leader In Me Inaugural Class, 2016, Haywood Intermediate School

YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND KAPSTONE

Youth Leadership was revamped in the fall of 2016 and Kapstone was expanded into the whole of the senior class in the same year. Juniors were accepted for the first year of the Leadership program now for two years rather than the single year for seniors only. An emphasis on business and industry, with local plant tours and a deeper understanding of business process and operations are now being emphasized. Participating businesses are asked to also assist with community service hours to allow these class participants to experience what they were seeing. They are shown everything from how a business operates, fire-fighting and police training, government and judicial procedure, non-profit organization, and fund-raising and more. There is more emphasis on how and why rather than just visualizing it. The participants of this class then move on to the second year, called Youth Ambassadors the following school year. Kapstone now also offers soft skills training and exposure to industry to all seniors that had not been exposed before.



2017-2018 Youth Leadership Class

YOUTH AMBASSADORS AND JACKSON STATE



2017-2018 Youth Ambassador Class

Early 2017 inaugurated the Chambers Youth Ambassador program in conjunction with the Leadership program to offer a hands on second year. The participants, who went through the learning process of the first year serve their community by becoming ex-officio members of area boards and doing a minimum of 30 hours more

community service work and a project for the organizations that they are involved with for the year. Unlike the organized day for the Leadership class, these young people are on their own, learning how to be on time and develop pride in their work element. They are responsible for being at their meetings, doing their service work and reporting it, and preparing and researching their projects on their own. The projects must solve an issue their organization is facing or is in need of, with economic development and workforce being at its core. This year's students are serving on the boards of the city of Brownsville, Haywood County Commission, the Haywood County Board of Education, The Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Main Street Brownsville and the Chamber of Commerce. An example of how this has impacted these students is in the projects they are creating. Most are directed totally at workforce and community development and it has made them take another look at the impact they are making themselves.

Talks also began in early 2017 between the Chamber, the Superintendent, and members of the Haywood County Board of Education and officials of Jackson State Community College on a satellite campus directed towards further training in manufacturing skills. Space was allocated for college classrooms at the Sunny Hill facility located just off I-40 at exit 56. The hope is to create programs to help train immediate workforce and strengthen existing workforce by sharing resources with the local Career and Tech at the high school, the Tennessee College of Applied Technology, local industry, and Jackson State. This would also add additional "dual enrollment" class opportunities not currently available in the high school. The target for launching this program is in the fall of 2018.

These opportunities have been a focus of the Chamber since 2015 and tweaked to teach youth that Haywood County can be a key to their long term career growth, and to show them how to get involved and create

solutions to a continuing need to grow the local and regional workforce. Success in creating a supply of water has to start with drilling an abundant well while success in creating a supply of leadership and workforce begins with creating an abundant understanding of how to plant the seeds of growth. The key we have discovered to changing the way that high school seniors look at their community and remaining a part of its vitality is beginning as early as possible with leadership and workforce training and reinforcing it. Teaching these values were just as important as teaching the value of expanding post-secondary education.

CONCLUSION

Taking a thought and moving it into action requires a lot of people, effort and resources; figuring out the solution to involve the youth of Haywood County was well worth the effort it took to make it happen.

In order for any community to be successful, one has to take inventory of resources. In the report "A Well Educated Workforce Is Key To State Prosperity" by Noah Berger and Peter Fisher⁵ many states have been retreating from their responsibility to ensure state economic growth that benefits all residents in favor of a short-sighted approach to economic development. On the website, they say the reason is a failure to invest in education. (See figures A and B below) In this year's state of the state address, Governor Bill Haslam showed his State's commitment to changing that factor in the State of Tennessee.⁶ During his 8 years as governor, Tennessee now holds the

⁵ Berger, Noah, and Peter Fisher. "A Well-Educated Workforce Is Key to State Prosperity." *Economic Policy Institute*, Economic Policy Institute, 22 Aug. 2013, www.epi.org/publication/states-education-productivity-growth-foundations/.

⁶ Haslam, Bill. "Tennessee Will Lead-Education." *Accelerate Our Education Gains*, The State of Tennessee, 30 Jan. 2018, www.tn.gov/tnwilllead/education.html

distinction of the fastest improving state in K-12 education in the nation, with the highest graduation rates the state has ever recorded. There has been an investment of \$1.5 billion into K-12 education, as well as investing another \$500 million into teacher salaries to continue their efforts. Not only that, but the legislature has fully funded tuition and fees for two-year degrees for graduating seniors and working adults at no additional cost to taxpayers.

Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect are available to any two year state college or TCAT facility to any high school senior or adult in the state who wish to train at these institutions. According to Berger and Fisher, more and more states are cutting programs to offer economic incentives and packages to steal jobs from other states. Studies are showing that in the long term, this strategy is both inefficient and ineffective. Inadequate investments in education weaken the ability of a state to develop, grow and attract businesses that offer high skilled, high wage jobs. It is fact that education that hones one’s skills and productivity signals employers that an individual is motivated and completes tasks. The more educated, the more participation in the market and generally the higher the wages and salary. (Figure B below)

Figure A

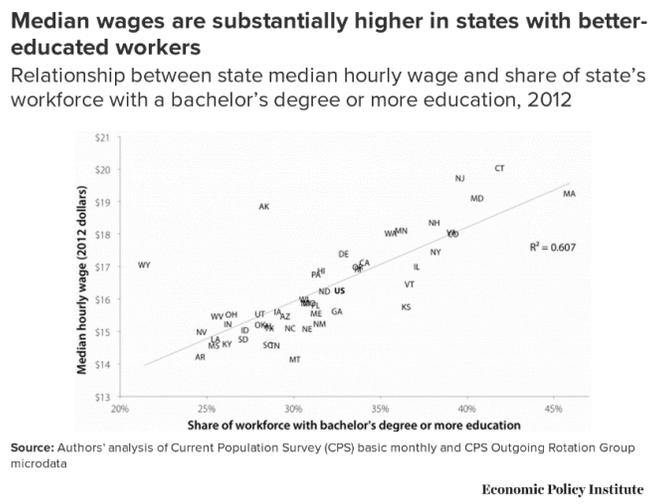
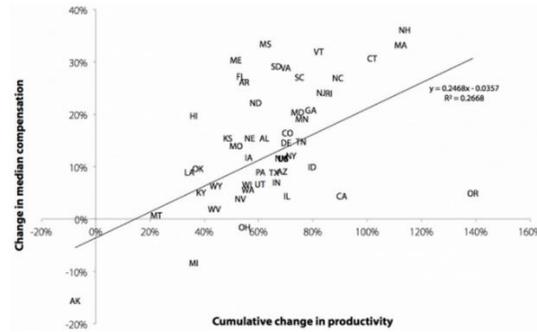


Figure B

Worker compensation has increased more in states with greater increases in productivity

Relationship between change in state median worker compensation and productivity from 1979 to 2012



Source: EPI analysis of unpublished total economy productivity data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Labor Productivity and Costs program, state employment data from BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics, state compensation data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis State/National Income and Product Accounts public data series, and wage data from BLS Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group microdata

Economic Policy Institute

If these findings are indeed true and the State is putting more money into education, then adding to that strength by including a concentration in understanding workforce and community in local schools are more important than ever. By strengthening the States commitment to vocational training in particular, educating Haywood County's youth in workforce and community development will add to the overall success of retaining more of them locally.

For a community's leadership and its well-being to continue and for its youth to realize their importance and potential in it, this conscious effort must be done. Not only does the school need to teach young people their ABC's and 123's, but they also need to be given the knowledge to make them and their community continue to thrive.

This not only opened the eyes of local leaders, economic development partners, industry and the school system, it actively started them to talking together to expand these programs and look into what else could be done to offer value to the students in Haywood County schools. Haywood County is very fortunate to have a state economic department that partners to improve the community footprint, but every community must realize that is

just not enough. If your community has a leadership program for its youth, attend it and ask them these questions.

Do you plan on leaving this area after you graduate high school? Why? It may surprise you also that the majority of the answers to the why question is "I don't know". This should be a reason for you to step in and tell them of the wonderful things that the community offers and the great jobs that are there. If you don't believe that, ask yourself why you are in economic development for your community. And, if you're serious about your youth leadership programs, you need to make sure that your new task in front of you is to make sure your curriculum contains a workforce component that allows them to take an active role. It's your choice to help change things for these young people and the community you serve.

Refocusing everyone involved in getting the community's youth better prepared to take the reins of leadership and community change and see the value in being a thriving member of its workforce has been rewarding beyond measure. However, there is a plus to the community when more of its homegrown talent becomes leaders and a vital part of its workforce; the realization of this discovery in the faces of young people whose eyes have opened to new possibilities right in front of them, right at home is justification for that reward.