



Imagine! Career Week—Pittsburgh Regional Compact Employer/Educator Breakfast

On April 22, 2008, the Pittsburgh Regional Compact Employer/Educator Breakfast brought together more than 100 employers and educators to talk about career education partnerships. Sponsored by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, the breakfast was a part of the second annual Imagine! Career Week - a coordinated series of events that focus on preparing the region's youth for 21st-century careers. A panel addressed career education projects, followed by table discussions between employers and educators. The main themes of the discussion are summarized below.

What do employers want schools to do to prepare students for careers?

- Make career education a priority and provide it to all students, as an embedded part of the curriculum, so academic skills are made relevant.
- Teach students basic work skills and work ethic including appropriate dress and behavior, time management, punctuality, preparation, collaboration, accountability and commitment.
- Teach students communication skills: how to interview, appropriate business language – both spoken and written – and interpersonal skills.
- Acknowledge the value and importance of technical and two-year college degrees (preparation for the skilled trades), not just the four-year liberal arts degree.
- Improve students' basic reading and math skills.
- Build connections with the entrepreneurial community.

What do schools need from employers to improve career education?

- A real commitment from employers to work with students.
- Help students learn about careers in the region and the pathways to those careers.
- Speakers in the classroom; job shadowing opportunities; workplace tours; career mentoring.
- Help develop programs during the summer months.
- Educator in the workplace programs.
- Assistance with implementation issues: transportation for workplace experiences, a clear point of contact to coordinate activities.
- Provide information resources about career fields.
- Provide information about the skills employers are looking for. What are the academic expectations?
- Work with teachers to make curriculum relevant to the workplace.

What are the biggest barriers to career education partnerships? For schools? For employees? In general?

Schools:

- Financial resources.
- Transportation for students.
- Lack of information about employers.
- Testing mandates emphasize reading, writing and math, not career readiness.
- Uncertainty about how to structure experiences.
- Disruption of school schedule.
- Teachers' buy in.

Employers:

- Many employers have small staff with limited time resources.
- Legal liability issues for students in the workplace.
- Workplace security/confidentiality issues for many employers.
- It is difficult to make the business case for working with schools, particularly in the short term.
- Lack of information about what schools need.

General:

- Technicians/trades are not valued but are much needed and highly important. Students do not get these messages.
- Need brokers to make career education partnerships easier; need training for educators and employers.

The experienced Career Education Panel provided useful examples of the partnerships the Pittsburgh Regional Compact seeks to foster.

Mark Dillon – Manager, Recruiting, American Eagle Outfitters, Inc.

Marcie Eberhart – Director, AE Foundation

Mark and Marcie spoke about American Eagle’s ongoing partnerships with schools to provide workplace experiences, and the company’s collaboration with Big Brothers Big Sisters for career mentoring.

Stormy Wolfe – Sales and Marketing Administrator, Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh (FHLB)

Stormy described FHLB’s “Mentoring Minds” program, which brings high school students into the workplace for a year-long, in-depth program of career mentoring with employees of the bank.

Scott Dietz – Manager, Workforce Initiatives, Catalyst Connection

Scott outlined Catalyst Connection’s “Adventures in Technology” program (AIT). AIT partners a group of students with an employer to complete a real-world business challenge. Students gain important career-related experience and businesses often find that the students make a real contribution to their bottom line.

Sally Mizerak – Director, Performance Drivers, Inc.

Sally explained the importance of teaching students about entrepreneurship and discussed the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, which has a group of students each year create plans for their own businesses.

Employers

AE Foundation - Marcie Eberhart
Alcoa Foundation - Dean Will
Allegheny County Airport Authority - David Jones, Thomas Long, Jack McGrogan
American Eagle Outfitters - Mark Dillon
Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC - Karen Wynn
Carnegie Mellon - Judith Hallinen
Catalyst Connection - Petra Mitchell
CBS Radio - Michelle Hartman, Tresa Slattery, Michael Spacc, Michael Young
CCAC - Reggie Overton
CH2M Hill / IDC Architects - Tracy Rapp
Crown Search - Tom Callahan
CTC - Bill Benusa, Mary Hiles
Dollar Bank, FSB - Michael O’Rorke
Eaton Corporation - Shane Jakubovic
Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh - Stormy Wolfe
Federated Investors - Kristen Boyd
Fifth Third Bank - Karen Hardt
Giant Eagle - Lori Miller, Carrie Reichl
Highmark - Sandy Edwards, Michele Valiska
Houston Harbaugh P.C. - Keith Cameron
Indiana University of Pennsylvania - Tracy Missien
Kennametal - Marc Lippa
Malin, Bergquist & Co., LLP - Mary Ann Fatheddin
MARC USA - Rob Throckmorton
MEDRAD - Gretchen Starcher
Mine Safety Appliance - Bethany Traugh
National City Bank - Ron Corradetti
Oxford Development - Laurie Byrnes
Penn State Greater Allegheny - Dr. Anthony Mitchell
Performance Drivers, Inc. - Sally Mizerak
Pittsburgh Pirates - Pam Nelson Minter
PNC Bank - Linda Gladziszcewski
Presenting Pittsburgh - Christine Prober, Megan Misgalla
Pressley Ridge - Janet Emery
The Grable Foundation - Gregg Behr
The Heinz Endowments - Wayne Jones
Thorp Reed & Armstrong, LLP - William Shipley, Kathleen Sullivan
University of Pittsburgh - G. Reynolds Clark
UPMC - Ruthie King
Value Properties - Gene Pash
Van Dyk Business Systems - Dr. Ronald Linaburg, Shawn Madden
Washington & Jefferson College - Tori Haring-Smith
WDUQ - Vicky Rumpf
WQED Multimedia - Karen Farmer-White

School Districts

Avonworth High School - Ken Lockette, Dave Como
Beaver Area School District - Brian White
Blackhawk High School - Leslie Kunkel, Tom Marsilio
Carlynton School District - James Bassano
Fort Cherry School District - Trisha Craig, Robert Dinnen
Fox Chapel Area School District - Anne Stephens
Freedom Area School District - Ronald Sofo
Greater Latrobe Senior High - Wendy Hager-Sigler
Homer-Center School District - Vincent Delconte
Lenape Technical School - Joseph Fullerton
McKeesport Area School District - Alice Saxon
Norwin School District - Edward Federinko
Penn Trafford School District - Melissa Sutmire
Peters Township School District - Nina Zetty
Pine Richland School District - JP Prager
Quaker Valley School District - Marianne Cibulas
South Fayette High School - Linda Hippert, Maureen Pedzwater, Ann Bisignani
Woodland Hills School District - Karen Rubican
Yough High School - Gina Hipps

Workforce Developers

Allegheny Intermediate Unit - Daniel Paul
Bidwell Training Center, Inc. - Eric Smith, James Reid
Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania - Terri Henderson
Catalyst Connection - Barry Nathan, Scott Dietz
Jobs for the Future - Lili Allen
Junior Achievement - Dennis Gilfoyle
National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship - Jerry Cozewith
Smart Futures - David Mosey
The Consortium for Public Education - Linda Croushore, Steve Seliy
Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board - Ronald Painter, Tim Aldinger, Bridget Barrett
United Way - Wendy Etheridge Smith
Urban Youth Action - Karris Jackson
Youthworks, Inc. - Dara Ware Allen