



Engaging Out-of-School Youth



One of twelve training packets created for Texas Workforce Board regions as part of the Texas Workforce Commission Youth Program Initiative.

1. Powerful Partnerships
2. Getting Your Youth Advisory Group From Here to There
3. You and Youth in the Middle: Effective Case Management
4. Employer Engagement
5. Youth at Work: Making the Most of Work-Based Learning
6. Youth Investment in Rural Areas
7. Windows on the Workplace: Mentoring, Youth, and WIA
8. Community Resource Mapping: Knowing Your Youth Services Landscape
9. Letting Numbers Guide: Labor Market Information and Youth Services
10. Engaging Out-of-School Youth
11. Building Your Year-Round Youth System
12. Evaluate It!: From Policy to Practice to Performance

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Evaluate It!: From Policy to Practice to Performance



TRAINING GOALS

- Understand what works for out-of-school youth and what doesn't.
- Explore strategies for reaching out-of-school youth and maintaining their engagement in services and support.

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Spotlight on Out-of-School Youth

Most people hear the term “out-of-school youth” and immediately think “dropout.” However, under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the term is actually broader.

A WIA ELIGIBLE OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH IS:

A school dropout or an eligible youth who has received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent but is basic skills deficient, unemployed, or underemployed.

These days, many of us have sons or daughters, brothers, sisters, or friends who could fit the “unemployed” or “underemployed” part of the definition! Stay with that thought for a moment, and your brain makes an important mental adjustment: the term “out-of-school youth” is a catch-all for a wide mix of personalities, skills, and needs. In addition to the classic high school dropout, out-of-school youth might include:

- A college “fade-out” – often a smart, directed student who started college but dropped out for financial reasons
- A pregnant or parenting teen who successfully graduated high school
- A high school graduate with a part-time job
- A student needing income who has opted to work by day and do GED courses by night
- A high school-age student unable to pass the standardized test for graduation, who sees GED or adult education as a viable option
- A college graduate unable to find a job or working only part-time
- A runaway or homeless youth
- A 19-year old dyslexic youth who struggles with reading
- A youth from a migrant family, with limited English skills
- A former juvenile offender

¹ From Youth Development and Research Fund June, 2002 Perceptions of Out-of-School Youth: Findings from a National Poll Funded by: The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Of course, the intent of WIA is to provide services to those who most need it. For most communities, this means targeting extremely difficult to reach youth – young people who, for a wide variety of reasons, live their days and nights with little to no connection with formal community systems and organizations.

Many people fully expect out-of-school youth to fail, as a matter of course. A recent poll showed that only about 9% of voters believe this type of young person will “make it” in life. Most people see nothing but economic hardship, criminal activity, substance abuse, resignation, and poor quality of life ahead for them.¹ If you work with youth programs, you’ve no doubt encountered pessimistic perceptions like these. On the other hand, you’ve hopefully also worked with young people who turn gloomy predictions like these upside down.

This packet is designed to help you identify youth in your community who qualify for out-of-school youth services under WIA and craft service strategies that help your toughest-to-serve young people build a more stable foundation for personal and professional growth.



Drift to Shift: Youth Programs Yesterday and Today

Designing services for out-of-school youth – especially older youth – is extremely challenging. And we have much to learn about what works and what doesn't. However, out-of-school youth are very much in focus these days. It's estimated that the current high school dropout rate costs the U.S. \$88 billion in lost earning potential each year. Dropout-related crime costs another estimated \$32 billion². Recent program evaluations and studies can't always provide solutions, but they definitely give a better snapshot of what's going on.

WHAT HAVE YESTERDAY'S PROGRAMS TAUGHT US ABOUT SOLUTIONS WE DESIGN TODAY? HERE ARE A FEW BROAD FINDINGS:

- After-school and out-of-school opportunities decrease dramatically for older teens and often drop off completely for youth over age 18.
- Evening and weekend hours aren't heavily used for programming. The majority of opportunities are available directly after-school or in the summer.
- The bigger the program, the narrower the focus and the weaker the impact.
- Academically rich alternative programs have been "slower to emerge."
- Youth employment programs didn't necessarily have the impact on employment, earnings, and educational outcomes one might expect – or results have been mixed.³

Lessons like this are very much driving today's program design. In fact, what started as a gentle drift has now become a decided shift in how people approach youth programs, regardless of the type of youth served. What's changed?

² Youth Development & Research Fund, 2002.

³ Employment Programs and Youth Development. Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Washington, D.C., May 2002.

⁴ State Youth Development Strategies to Improve Outcomes for At-Risk Youth. Thomas MacLellan, Employment and Social Services Policy Studies.

TRADITIONAL YOUTH SERVICES⁴

- Our program will help you with this specific need/single solution
- Our program (one agency) will support you
- We care about you
- What's wrong with you (deficit-based)
- Diagnostics measure weaknesses & failures
- Remediation

NEW YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

- Our program will work with the "whole you" – all support needs and a holistic solution
- We'll collaborate with other organizations to support you – interagency/interdisciplinary approach
- We care about you and your family/living context
- What's right with you (asset-based)
- Assessment discovers strengths and needs
- Growth/prevention

Many youth program staff, if not their programs, were already moving toward more holistic approaches. It was almost impossible not to! They saw firsthand that a job or a GED alone seldom provided the single, powerful life catalyst clients needed. Reality was tougher – and many staff found themselves helping clients over and through a number of employment hurdles, ranging from daycare to health to transportation to basic skill issues.

Now it's official. Policy and funding streams like WIA even reflect the shift to a more comprehensive, year-round approach. It's time for program elements and organizational relationships to reflect the shift as well.

take action! asset-based, 'wrap-around' support

New to asset-based youth development or have staff who are? Use the Search Institute's 40 Development Assets for Teens and other materials at www.search-institute.org to train key youth staff on asset-based assessment and service approaches.

Out-of-School Youth Specifically: What Works and What Doesn't

For out-of-school youth in particular, the shift to a youth development approach is a very good thing. Existing programs that serve the most high-risk youth – teen parent, substance abuse, runaway programs – already tend to be very intense and comprehensive. What about more general employment and training services?

WHAT WORKS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

Many youth interventions of the past twenty years have achieved success with youth who are at least partially plugged into school. Perhaps it's because there is just enough connection, just enough structure there. You've solved one of the biggest challenges: getting youth in the door and keeping them there on a day-to-day basis. The same programs, however, haven't always been as effective for dropouts and other out-of-school youth.

However, the practices embedded in some of those programs can work very effectively with out-of-school youth...you just need to embed them in a different environment.

HERE ARE PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SERVICES:

PROACTIVE OUTREACH

Out-of-school youth usually don't come to you – to sign up for services in the first place, or after they're "in the door," to advocate for themselves. More often than not, you need to go to them physically, emotionally, and repeatedly. There's no statistic on this, but it seems fair to estimate that a youth worker supporting a high-risk or out-of-school youth will put in at least twice as many calls, emails, and visits to manage the relationship.

However, part of the goal is to teach young people that they CAN and MUST reach out and advocate for themselves. So, even as you reach out, you deliberately build in moments where youth have to reach out also.

INDIVIDUALIZED ADULT ATTENTION AND COACHING

It is as true now as it always has been: the support young people value most is the person who got to know them and who challenged them.

There's a saying that many hard-to-reach youth are "serviced by many but supported and encouraged by few." For this type of young person especially, regular, sustained interaction with a person or a personal "support team" is essential. Individualized assessment and case management alone are not enough. They need to form bonds with people for authentic coaching, skill and relationship-building purposes, not just case and program administration.

They also need to:

- Know that staff are there working with them because they want to be, not because they have to!
- Form strong one-on-one relationships with people outside your program or service – employers, community members, family members and other people in their lives – relationships they can sustain after they leave your program.

Needless to say, the relationships youth form are so important that out-of-school youth programs need to carefully manage staff turnover and transitions.

take action! what works and what doesn't

If you run a program or service for youth, assess your methods. Are your methods truly out-of-school youth friendly?

Do you fund programs? Create a set of program or service "standards" you expect from out-of-school services you support. Include these in proposal requests (RFP's) and program evaluation tools you use with providers.

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Personalized feel, structured deal.

STAFF WHO UNDERSTAND MOTIVATION

The needs of out-of-school youth can be so tangled and complicated. On the other hand, sometimes their needs and reasons behind behaviors are so basic. In the battery of assessments and interviews we do with out-of-school youth, it's easy to miss important details about what actually motivates a young person to do what they do.

TEN REASONS WHY PEOPLE DON'T PERFORM AS EXPECTED⁵

1. They don't know why they should do it.
2. They don't know when to begin and end.
3. They don't know what they are supposed to do.
4. They don't know how to do it.
5. They think they are doing it.
6. They think your way won't work, or their way is better.
7. They think something else is more important.
8. They aren't rewarded for doing it.
9. They are punished for doing it.
10. They think they can't do it.

If a young person isn't motivated or performing, there's a reason – and staff skilled at working with out-of-school youth will go right after it. They know how to peel away layers and layers of issues possibly affecting a young person to get at fundamental behaviors and choices he or she can control.

Skilled staff also have a clear understanding of their own motivational philosophy and practices, as well as those of their program (praise, incentives, disincentives, punishments) – and they are able to communicate this clearly to young people. When youth test them on it – as many will – they act consistently, across youth and from situation to situation.

STRUCTURE – WITH SCAFFOLDING

Out-of-school youth need structure. Services alone aren't enough. Services have to hang together in a consistent framework that young people understand.

In the world of out-of-school programs, you see everything from community-based programs to “boot camps” to very self-directed models where young people work with a counselor or team to plan services. Structure is less about this than it is about having an overarching and explicit logic to program expectations, elements, methods, and messages. In other words, there's an explicit method (or model) to your madness!

You get structure by having:

- A focused set of program outcomes
- A coherent, developmental set of program components – it's clear what happens when a young person first arrives, program elements and stages they'll experience along the way, and how the program will grow with them as they grow
- Challenging milestones or “deliverables” you expect youth to achieve while in your care
- Well-designed activities, tools and support strategies that scaffold youth as they work toward milestones
- Explicit guidelines about behavior and consequences
- A message of achievement and participation that youth hear at every turn

This sounds so obvious! But take a lesson from the past: less effective high-risk and out-of-school youth programs provided informal support or a general set of activities. Youth succeeded if they showed up and participated. Or the program wanted to support the whole youth (a

⁵ Fournies, Ferdinand. Why Employees Don't Do What They Are Supposed To Do and What To Do About It. McGraw-Hill, 1988.

good thing). Yet, program creators didn't necessarily identify "bottom line" youth outcomes and design program and accountability elements to match. Alternatively, they set the bar too low. Getting a job was good enough (vs. positioning them for further training, education and advancement). Tutoring, as an activity, was important (vs. mastering particular skills).

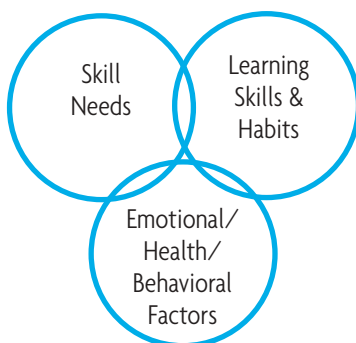
ACTIVE & AUTHENTIC LEARNING

Out-of-school youth often have checkered academic and educational backgrounds. Unfortunately, their most recent educational experiences are usually the worst – classes they couldn't pass or hated, bad grades, low test scores, a decision to drop out.

Strong out-of-school youth programs place a high priority on lifelong learning and figure out what's behind educational issues:

- Boredom or lack of interest
- Learning disabilities
- Lack of discipline
- Weak basic skills
- Weak study skills and habits
- Weak testing skills
- Poor English skills
- A conscious choice, i.e., work over school, GED over high school, pregnancy
- Health-related issues

They tease out emotional or behavioral factors from skill-related issues and target support accordingly.



They then use highly interactive learning methods, work-based learning, and relevant "real world" projects to work on skills. They avoid larger class-like settings. If the nature of the program – for example, an occupational training program – calls for structured class time, instructors use small group activities, hands-on projects, even independent projects, to make sure that young people are DOING, not just watching (the instructor, a video, etc.). They also make sure that on-the-job training is equally active, skill-focused, and project-oriented.

When it comes to educational methodology, out-of-school youth have some of the most discriminating palates out there. They want learning experiences that are relevant, authentic, and interesting (even exciting). Good programs put a high priority on educational outcomes and skill development – they even identify specific competencies youth must master – and make sound methods a high priority. They also ask young people to play an active role in making "good education" happen and prepare them to better navigate traditional educational settings.

EXIT AND FOLLOW-ALONG STRATEGY

Because so many out-of-school youth programs are very intensive and the relationships formed so strong, it's important that the design of your program include thoughtful exit and follow-along support. This goes hand-in-hand with efforts to track longer-term outcomes – educational and job advancement, higher earning – for high risk young people.

There are two key needs here:

First, something in the services and support you offer youth while in your program must lay a foundation of stable relationships and opportunities once they leave. Otherwise, youth leave the secure cocoon of your care and advocacy and have no broader support system to tap.

Assess for success indicators, not past failures.

Second, you need to maintain regular contact, perhaps even helping program participants identify new services and opportunities – and young people need to know you’ll be back in touch to check up on them.

WHAT DOESN’T WORK FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

DASTARDLY DIAGNOSTICS

Diagnostics and assessments shouldn’t measure only failure and weakness. For every barrier out-of-school youth face, they bring at least one skill or asset. You need to find out what they are and build off them. Train yourself and staff to use an “asset-based” or comprehensive youth development approach. The Source Institute’s 40 Development Assets for Teens and related tools are the place to start if you are unfamiliar with this approach.

NEW WINE, OLD SKIN

Don’t put young people right back into the same setting or structure where they struggled or failed in the first place. Design your program or curriculum using traditional classroom or job placement methods, for example, and you’ll undermine your impact. The same is true if you hire a youth service specialist but make youth come to an adult service center, an adult setting, to find them, or if you place adult services staff in a youth center.

IMPORTS

Because out-of-school programs tend to be intensive and rely heavily on area resources – like employers and other service providers – you can’t always import an entire program model used in another community or designed for another age range. Adaptation and individualization is the name of the game in out-of-school youth program design.

SOLO SERVICE

Work experience or job placement with little counseling support and no educational component may help today but it will have little impact on longer-term outcomes for out-of-school youth.

LAST CHANCE MESSAGE

Be careful about the messages your program or services convey. “If you don’t do this, you’ll be a failure all of your life” or “This is your last chance” and other punitive messages and scare tactics usually don’t work. The last message you want to convey is that past failure means future failure. And as for life’s chances, a more appropriate message is that chances don’t run out – youth just need to deal with the consequences of their choices and actions.



Out-of-School Youth Circle of Engagement

Some out-of-school youth come looking for services. They enroll in a GED program or seek out an employment office – even a very youth-friendly one. Many, however, do not come looking. They wouldn't know where to start. Once in the door – be it a program or job – highly at-risk young people often have a difficult time latching on. The Workforce Investment Act requires that communities target 30% of WIA funding to out-of-school youth, perhaps 40% with reauthorization. This is a challenge – not because there aren't plenty of out-of-school youth out there; rather, it's difficult to reach them in the first place and keep them in services once they're there.

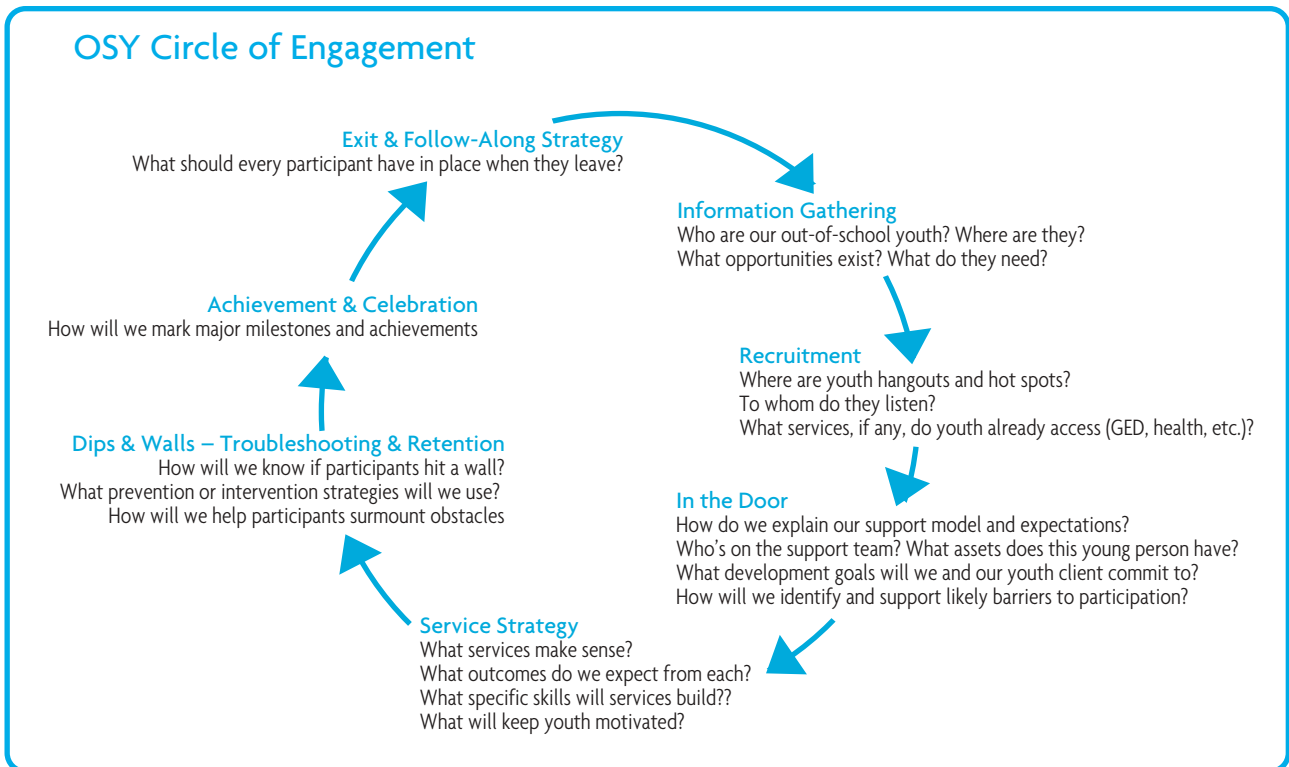
So, in addition to careful program design, many communities have a significant engagement challenge to manage.

INFORMATION GATHERING

There are many different types of out-of-school youth. At a minimum, under WIA, you serve at least two distinct types: youth between 14-18 and those 19-21. Start by understanding your market. Who are your out-of-school youth? Where are they? Equally as important, what opportunities exist for them? When? By day? After-school or evening? Find out. Interview counselors at several high schools and colleges, talk to young people in an area GED program, or meet with staff in community or neighborhood-based groups. Identify places in your community where out-of-school youth might go; for example, an area health clinic might have a program for teen mothers. You don't have to do a massive survey of your community – but a little research up front is well worth it. You'll uncover excellent program partners, recruitment resources, and people already connected to your hard-to-reach audience.

take action! engaging out-of-school youth

Use the OSY Circle of Engagement to help you examine your engagement strategies at key moments along the way, from recruitment to participation dips through completion.



RECRUITMENT

Deepen your knowledge of programs and places that already serve young people or places young people (not just out-of-school youth) hang or live. Make a list. More importantly, identify people – other youth, neighborhoods, and local business people – who would be effective messengers. Youth you hope to target would be more apt to listen to them. Too often, recruitment is done only with flyers, posters, and brochures. Out-of-school youth are fairly unaffected by this type of marketing. An engaging presentation to a youth in a local GED program will get you farther, faster. In addition to handouts, make sure you have a tried and true script, something people can use to clearly articulate the opportunity your program represents.

IN THE DOOR

Even if you piece together services from different providers, you want young people to feel enfolded – by a program, by a support team. Their first steps in the door are the most important relationship-defining and building moments you have.

At the same time, you have two other important goals: assess and strategize. Look for the “You and Youth in the Middle: Effective Case Management” packet in this series for tools and resources that will help you collect important asset and other information during this stage – and create a coherent services plan.

As you assess and plan, watch for “barrier drift”: a tendency to focus on issues, needs, and barriers. Conversations with high-risk youth inevitably, often rapidly, move in that direction. Instead, give yourself and other staff this challenge: for every barrier or need, identify at least one asset, one skill or interest; for every past failure, help the young person envision one future success.

Many programs also try to “seal the deal” at this point. They ask young people, their support team (including a job supervisor, mentor, etc.) to agree on a set of performance and learning goals and sign the actual document that articulates them. A handful of programs make this an official or celebratory moment. Youth and support team members take an oath (before a judge even) or formally present a completed learning plan to a group of peers, staff, family members, and employer or mentor. The idea is to make sure youth are invested in their goals, make themselves publicly accountable, and know that key support people are equally committed.

Finally, remember to give as much information as you get during this initial stage: in particular, make certain that youth and other people (significant others, family members) understand your service strategy and your role and/or the role of their case manager or support team.

SERVICE STRATEGY

All WIA-served youth must have an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) – a plan that outlines a support strategy that will help them meet goals. Writing up the strategy is the easy part! Finding the right program or placements is more challenging. You want to place out-of-school youth in situations that are developmentally appropriate. If they aren't ready to work, do not place them. Identify an interim step – perhaps a short-term project with a volunteer employee serving as a coach. If they aren't ready to make the most of a GED program, start with tutoring.

It's important that providers and employers understand, within the bounds of confidentiality, the young people you serve – and that they willingly accept the challenges and rewards of working with them. As you profile referral resources and recruit youth opportunities, flag referral sources, mentors, and employers who have a particular knack for supporting high-risk youth.

In addition, make sure your work at this stage doesn't stop at matching youth with services. Identify the specific skills or outcomes that services should help a young person achieve and how you'll measure progress. As you outline goals and "deliverables," talk with each young person to get a sense of meaningful 'motivators' – little things that they themselves, you, peers, and others can do to acknowledge moments of progress, grit, growth, and gumption.

DIPS & WALLS – TROUBLESHOOTING & RETENTION

Out-of-school youth can be incredibly resilient. On the other hand, even a minor setback can sometimes knock them completely off track. And they will encounter setbacks and surprises during WIA-related services. It's not a question of if, but of when. Anticipate possible barriers and progress dips, and structure program support so that you're ready for them.

Not surprisingly, youth don't usually drop out of services, here one day, gone the next. Instead, they "fade out." Interest or resolve wanes, disillusionment creeps in, issues arise or relationships fray. Look for signs of these 1-2 months into services and at regular points throughout. People are calendared creatures! A change in season, from spring to summer, summer to fall, or the new year often bring about changes in behavior. These are perfect times to sit with program participants to recommit to goals and troubleshoot issues, small or large, that might be chipping away at resolve.

It's also not surprising that many youth report that financial issues are a huge factor in shaping their decisions – about work and how far in school they can go. If your program isn't staffed or equipped to help youth learn how to manage money or

find scholarship and other funding sources, find a partner who is!

Finally, as part of "fade out" patrol, identify an intervention strategy to handle bigger issues and crisis moments. If a young person is having trouble with a job, mentor, educational program, etc., how will you know? Who will step in to help the young person and others resolve the issue? Make sure that each young person and his or her support team members fully understand this process.

ACHIEVEMENT & CELEBRATION

Many programs have natural milestones and completion moments – tests, a semester ends, you get a certificate of completion, etc. It's often easier to identify these moments in some services – educational support – than in others – like health or employment. But, in the name of youth engagement, identify them you must! What might youth in your care achieve in the course of support activities? What performance or personal improvements do you hope to see? How can you mark these moments or use them to instill confidence and pride?

Programs tend to use a combination of:

- Incentives – discounts, goodies
- Cash rewards or awards; mini-grants, scholarships, pay increases
- Increased privileges or opportunities
- Recognition
- Prizes; contests
- Credentials
- Performance tests; pride in a job well-done! (intrinsic motivators)

Achievement and celebration aren't always about rewards – the use of incentives is still debated in the youth field – so don't be afraid to "celebrate" achievement by putting young people to the test.

For example, ask young people to present a project or portfolio of work they did to other youth, staff, supervisors, and family members, or take people on a guided tour of their worksite – anything that allows them to demonstrate mastery in a way that is authentic and “public” (in front of people that matter to them).

WIA-served youth should also have, at a minimum, a 6-month follow-up services plan that includes additional referral resources and a strategy for updating you on their whereabouts and progress. Use the “Effective Case Management Strategies” packet in this series for a more detailed look at follow-up strategies.

EXIT & FOLLOW-ALONG

Out-of-school and disconnected youth are often used to bouncing from service to service, program to program. If your support has served them well, they should start to feel re-engaged and connected – not just to you or to a single job, but to community people, institutions, and a network of services.

As services draw to a close, take a “connectedness reading”: does each young person you serve feel he or she has a good base of personal and professional relationships? Does each feel more equipped to seek out resources? Don’t just take yes and no answers. Talk about future scenarios and how youth would handle them. Talk about ways they might maintain and use professional and other contacts.

You should also make sure that youth have their “bags packed” for the next stage of their journey; for example:

- A new resume
- Transcripts or a list of courses taken, if appropriate
- Recommendations from a mentor, employer, instructor and/or staff, and/or a portfolio of their work
- A savings account
- A “professional development” plan – advancement goals and strategies for the new opportunity they are starting





Activity One: Getting Them in the Door

Goal

- Identify who the out-of-school youth are in your community, where they go (organizations and places) and how you might connect with them.
- Identify messages, methods, and messengers that would engage out-of-school youth.

Materials

- Out-of-School Youth Outreach Map
- Flip chart paper, markers, and masking tape

Time

- 45-60 minutes

Instructions

1. Working at your table, quickly brainstorm all of the youth “hot spots” and “hot service spots” in your community – places where out-of-school youth, or youth more generally, go for fun, services, support, or just to hang. Jot them down on your flip chart. Make sure you think about spots for different age ranges: youth ages 14-18 and older youth, ages 19-21.
2. Next, put a ✓ check mark next to places where you currently market your WIA youth services.
3. Then, using the Recruitment Map, jot down your top 5-8 youth outreach “markets” – places you already reach – in the left hand column on the map. Indicate the methods and messengers you use. These might include:
 - Flyers or brochures
 - Referral, enrollment, or eligibility forms
 - Public service announcements
 - On-site informational meetings or presentations
 - One-on-one information opportunities
 - Peer or youth-led sessions
 - Motivational or guest speakers
 - Incentives – for example, food, movie tickets, local mall discounts, etc.
 - Open houses
4. Take a few minutes to analyze your list and discuss what’s working and what isn’t with your current youth outreach methods. What might you stop doing, start doing, or do differently?
5. Now go back to your flip chart notes to look for other great outreach possibilities or partners. Where haven’t you done outreach? Are there service providers that already serve your target audience? Is anything missing from the list? For example, think about spaces and places where families, perhaps young families, are highly visible or might go. Make a large ★ star next to the top 5-8 new “hot spots” you have identified.

Activity One: Getting Them in the Door, Continued

6. Brainstorm methods you can use immediately - including people, materials, equipment, space, etc. - in order to connect with young people in your top new “hot spots”.
7. Finally, look over your hot spots and methods list. Pick two hot spots where you might encounter youth with particular needs (GED participants, teen parents, etc.). What “message” would be most powerful for marketing to and engaging this type of youth? What are the best connection between their strongest interests and what you offer? What about your services would most appeal to them?

See if you can come up with a “lead” or hook for each type of potential participant – imagine the sentence you might put on the cover of a brochure or use to kick off a presentation. Be ready to report to full group.

Out-of-School Youth Outreach Map

Hot Spots Youth Outreach Markets	Methods Outreach Strategy, Materials, Tools	Messengers Youth-Friendly People, Partners, Referrers	Lead Message Hook or Lead for this Market

Activity Two: Asset Builders

Goal

- Understand asset-based youth development approaches.
- Distinguish assets your effort can best support.

Materials

- Asset Builders Worksheet
- Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents

Time

- 45-60 minutes

Instructions

1. Working alone, review the Search Institute’s list of 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents. Think of yourself between the ages of 14-21. Which assets did you have? Put a ✓ check mark next to each. (5 minutes)
2. Compare notes with other people at your table. How many checkmarks did you each have? Looking back now, do you view any of the assets as particularly important for you at the time? Which assets were hardest to come by? (5-10 minutes)
3. Now think about your program, services, or youth you serve. All of the assets are important – the more of them a young person has, the better. Even still, your program or services may be in better position to support or affect some more than others (because of staff expertise, activity focus, etc.). Which ones? Put a + plus sign next to them.
4. Look at the list of assets again. Which do you feel least able to support or affect? Put a - minus sign next to them.
5. As a table, pick three of the assets table members marked with plus signs and three marked with minus signs and jot them down in the left column of your Asset Builders worksheet.
6. With your table, brainstorm 3-5 ideas for how you might affirm, support and/or build these six assets in out-of-school youth – or more particularly, youth you serve. Be as concrete and specific as you can (feel free to appoint someone “Specificity Police”)! (20 minutes)

For example: Cultural Competence

Specific Building Idea: Run a workshop on diversity in the workplace with youth participants

Vague: Ask youth about their comfort working with people from other cultures

7. Share your best ideas with the full group. (2 minutes)

40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents – Search Institute

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

	Category	Asset Name and Definition
External Assets	Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family Support - Family life provides high levels of love and support. Positive Family Communication - Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. Other Adult Relationships - Young person receives support from three or more non parent adults. Caring Neighborhood - Young person experiences caring neighbors. Caring School Climate - School provides a caring, encouraging environment. Parent Involvement in Schooling - Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
	Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Community Values Youth -Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. Youth as Resources - Young people are given useful roles in the community. Service to Others - Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. Safety - Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
	Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family Boundaries - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. School Boundaries - School provides clear rules and consequences. Neighborhood Boundaries - Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. Adult Role Models - Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. Positive Peer Influence - Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. High Expectations - Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
	Constructive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Activities - Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or Use of Time other arts. Youth Programs - Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. Religious Community - Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. Time at Home - Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.
	Commitment to Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement Motivation - Young person is motivated to do well in school. School Engagement - Young person is actively engaged in learning. Homework - Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. Bonding to School - Young person cares about her or his school. Reading for Pleasure - Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
Internal Assets	Positive Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Caring - Young person places high value on helping other people. Equality and Social Justice - Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. Integrity - Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. Honesty - Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." Responsibility - Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. Restraint - Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
	Social Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and Decision Making - Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. Interpersonal Competence - Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. Cultural Competence - Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. Resistance Skills - Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. Peaceful Conflict Resolution - Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
	Positive Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Power - Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." Self-Esteem - Young person reports having a high self-esteem. Sense of Purpose - Young person reports that "my life has a purpose." Positive View of Personal Future - Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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Activity Three: Your Coaching Style

Goal

- Understand the dynamics between coaches (staff, supervisors, etc.) and out-of-school youth.
- Learn how to match coaching styles and strategies with particular situations or youth needs.

Materials

- Youth Scenarios
- When Coaching Meets Performance handout

Time

- 60 minutes

Instructions

PART I: THE WORLD’S WORST COACHES

1. Start this activity with some improvisational fun that will expose the “world’s worst” youth coaching practices and behaviors. Ask 5-6 volunteers to come to the front of the room and stand together in a group. Ask one person to serve as Scene Setter. The remaining volunteers will play the parts of Coaches – the world’s worst Coaches. Send Coaches out of the room for 2-3 minutes.
2. The Scene Setter should ask participants for 10-12 examples of coaching or planning situations that involve a youth worker, coach, or supervisor and an out-of-school young person. Write suggestions down as people shout them out. Examples:
 - Young person wants to find a job
 - Figuring out a young person’s strengths
 - Young person wants to quit a job
 - Checking in with a young person’s job supervisor
 - Describing services and support opportunities to a potential client
 - Young person wants to drop out of school again
3. Ask Coaches to return and take their place at the front of the room, facing everyone else.
4. When the Scene Setter calls out a situation, any Coach ready with an appallingly bad (and laughable) example of how to handle the situation should step forward and quickly portray the scene. Let 2-3 coaches play each situation. Then, call out another situation. Keep going until Coaches have played through all suggested situations (or add a few more now that everyone is warmed up). Laugh and applaud as appropriate! (15-20 minutes)
5. Ask Coaches and the Scene Setter to take their seats. Quickly debrief. See if your group can identify at least 5-8 good Coaching Do’s and Don’ts based on the worst that you just witnessed.

PART II: WHEN COACHING MEETS PERFORMANCE

With your table or in small groups of 3-4 people, pick one of the Youth Scenarios. Using the “When Coaching Meets Performance” handout as a guide, analyze your scenario.

- How would you rate the young person on the Knowledge vs. Desire scales?
- What coaching style(s) fits your situation well?
- How might the scenario continue (imagine the scene that unfolds)?

Youth Scenarios

Paul is 17. He quit school because he figured getting a GED would be a lot easier than passing tests and classes he needed for graduation. Besides he could do the GED program at night and work during the day. Only, he's been out of school for 3 months and he hasn't signed up for the GED yet.

Christina is a 19-year old high school graduate. Until recently, she had a job at a clothing store in the local mall but got fired for showing up late too many times and for letting friends make calls from the store phone. She has a few pretty big debts to worry about – cell phone bills, part of the rent she's supposed to pay, and car payments. She's been plowing through the want ads every day and has filled out three job applications at other retail stores. She's not sure how to handle the details of her last job with prospective employers.

Areya is 19 and has been working in her family's Thai restaurant since she was 14. The economic downturn hit area restaurants hard, though, and her family had to close down. Areya is smart and has a good head for business. She would love to take courses at the local community college; however, her English skills aren't very good. They're better than she thinks but still need work.

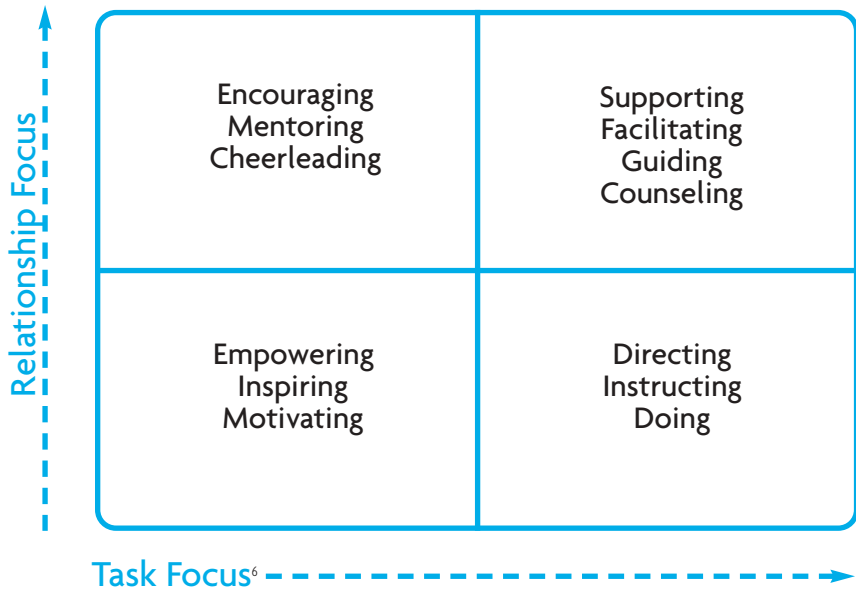
Mike is a headstrong 20 year-old who has had a fair number of run-ins with the law. Petty theft mostly, with one drug-related offense, all before age 18. His uncle recently got Mike a job with a friend – on a freight loading dock – and told him he would buy him a good used car if he kept totally out of trouble and held the new job for at least a year.

Tiffany is a 20 year-old single mother of two children. She dropped out of high school in the 10th grade. There's a WIA-funded Out-of-School Youth program at the area community college, where eligible youth can earn a GED and then continue on for an associate's degree. Tiffany's mother dragged her to an informational meeting to learn more.

Melena turns 18 in a few months. With the help of an Out-of-School specialist at the local youth center, she started a GED program and landed a part-time job. She's been on the job two weeks, and she's already bored stiff. She doesn't get to do much but watch company training videos, copy reports, and surf the web. She's not sure she can stand a job like this.

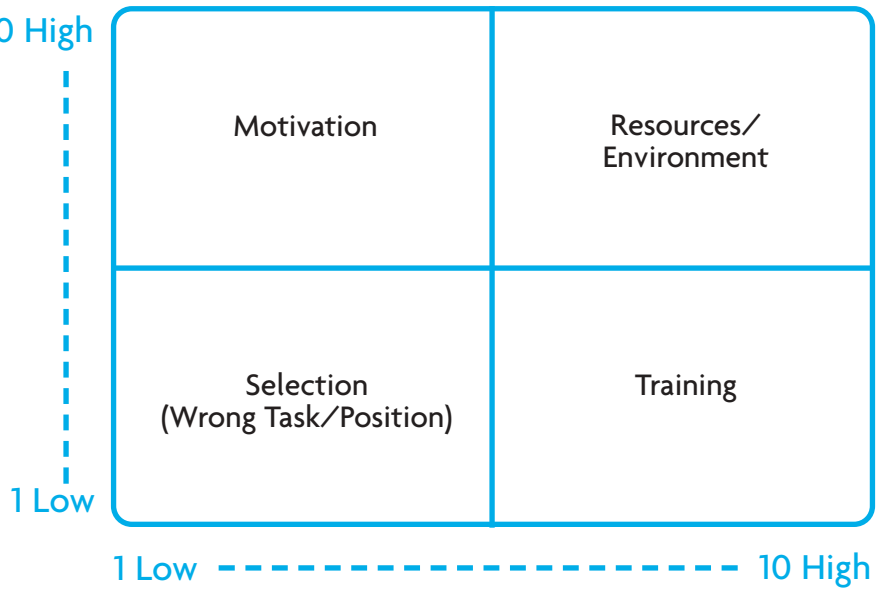
When Coaching Meets Performance - Handout

COACHING STYLE



YOUTH PERFORMANCE 10 High

DOES THE YOUNG PERSON HAVE ADEQUATE ATTITUDE/DESIRE TO PERFORM THE TASK?⁷



DOES THE YOUNG PERSON HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS TO PERFORM THE TASK?

⁶ Adapted from the classic “Managerial Grid” by Robert Black and Jane Mouton. The New Managerial Grid. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1978.

⁷ Adapted from the Performance Analysis Quadrant. Donald Clark, Big Dog's Performance Coaching Page

Activity Four: Engagers & Energizers

Goal

- Look at your programmatic relationship with youth you serve to see where and how you sustain their level of engagement.

Materials

- Your Out-of-School Youth Engagement Strategy worksheet
- Flip chart, markers, and masking tape

Time

- 30-60 minutes

Instructions

If you're from the same program or organization:

Divide and conquer! Break into smaller teams of 3-4 people. Each team should pick one of the engagement stages on the Youth Engagement Strategy worksheet. Your mission is to:

1. Review the main things you do with youth at this stage. Jot down important activities or elements. (5 minutes)
2. Identify engagement methods at this stage – existing or new. See if you can come up with at least five different methods. Record your ideas in the Engagers & Energizers column of your worksheet and on flip chart paper. (10-15 minutes)
3. Create a quick 2-3 minute team presentation that showcases your best idea.
4. Demonstrate your idea to the full group.

If you're from different organizations and/or communities:

1. Count off by fours. Join other people who share your number in a designated corner of the room. Bring flip chart paper and markers with you.
2. Appoint one member of your team Recorder. Appoint a second member of your team Presenter.
3. Each team should pick ONE of the first four engagement stages – Information Gathering, Recruitment, In the Door, Service Delivery. Compare notes with your team on how you currently handle this stage. Jot down important activities and programmatic elements. (10 minutes)
4. Briefly let each team member describe their current engagement practices at this stage. If your team hears something that sounds like a “best practice,” jot it down in the Engagers & Energizers column. Next, add to the list! What other ideas does your team have about nurturing and sustaining engagement at this stage? See if you can list five additional methods.
5. Put a ★ star next to your “top three” best (favorite) ideas.

Activity Four: Engagers & Energizers, Continued

6. Ask your Presenter to stand next to your list. The rest of your team should rotate clockwise to the next team's corner. Presenters describe your team's best ideas. After two minutes, teams should rotate to the next corner to hear another team's Engagers & Energizers.
7. Continue until your team has listened to the Presenter in the last corner. Then stay in that corner (instead of returning "home") and welcome the Presenter to your team.
8. Appoint a new Recorder and Presenter. Repeat the team brainstorming activity for the last three engagement stages. Because there are only seven stages, two teams will work on the same topic. Take 15 minutes to outline key program and engagement practices.
9. Visit other teams to hear Presenters describe ideas. This time, move counter clockwise around the room until you've visited each team.

Your Out-of-School Youth Engagement Strategy

Engagement Stage	Main Program Elements or Activities	Engagers & Energizers
Information Gathering		
Recruitment		
In the Door		
Service Delivery		
Dips & Walls		
Achievement & Celebration		
Exit & Follow-Along		

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Homeless youth in San Francisco have more than temporary shelter at [LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES](#). Because more than half of youth served aren't able to return to home, staff wanted to move beyond emergency services to longer-term support strategies and expand to "overage youth," ages 18-23. Youth can now participate in "Wire Up" classes, where they develop computer and project management skills and complete a "client-driven" project; Hire Up, a job readiness and GED program; and the Institute of Hire Learning, hands-on training with industry experts. Employees from an area clothing store even helped youth organize & revitalize the HIRE Style Boutique so that youth would have access to professional business clothing.

The [BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND YOUTH COUNCIL](#) hosts a one-day Annual At-Risk Youth Symposium each spring – a communication, networking planning, and professional development opportunity for area youth providers, job coaches, counselors, youth program directors, probation officers, and others. Local officials and celebrities kick off the event. Participants choose three sessions on a wide range of practical topics related to working with high-risk and out-of-school youth, i.e., engaging resistant youth, helping court-involved youth, increasing family involvement and more.

[OUR PIECE OF THE PIE \(OPP\)](#), [HARTFORD, CT](#), gives youth on parole, on probation, in foster care, or in other institutional settings a chance to try their hand at small business. The program uses 12 "Youth Business Incubators" – like Junior Art Makers or River Wright Boat Builders, the Crunch Time Recording Studio, and a newspaper venture called "Echoes from the Street" – as the context for learning, counseling and pre-employment training. Each business is led by an entrepreneur, a youth development specialist, and a young person from the program. And how about this for a business? Youth Employment Co., an employment service operated for and by youth.

The [MOVING UP PROGRAM IN NEW YORK CITY](#) is run by an organization with more than 60 years experience working with high-risk and out-of-school youth. Nationally known for their extensive follow-up and job retention services, career advisors use a "whatever it takes" approach to make sure youth stay on the job. After an intensive five-month course of remedial math and reading, computer instruction, workplace readiness, and GED preparation – treated as if it were a job with a workplace dress code and rules and a "paycheck" (stipend) – youth are placed in full-time jobs. For the next two years, advisors call or visit employers to check in, do business lunches with clients, and intervene if problems arise (about one in eight placements requires intervention). And if a young person drops out of the program, career advisors keep them on their "inactive" list and try to find them again by phone, email, or by talking with family or friends.

In King County, Washington, six Seattle area community colleges sponsor the [CAREER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY \(CEO\)](#), a second chance program for youth who haven't completed high school. As part of the program, youth visit different sponsoring colleges and pick a training program in a career pathway that interests them. They work on basic skills, job readiness, college survival skills, a GED, and a certificate or Associates degree in their pathway area.

RESOURCES

General Out-of-School & Youth Development

- Moving an Out-of-School Agenda: Lessons & Challenges across Cities
<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/grasp/execsumm.htm>
- Powerful Pathways: Framing Options and Opportunities for Vulnerable Youth (pdf)
<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/pwrf1pthwys.pdf>
- Finding Fortune in Thirteen Out-of-School Time Programs (pdf)
<http://www.aypf.org/publications/Compendium2003.pdf>
- How Can We Help? Lessons from Federal Drop-Out Prevention Programs (pdf)
<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/PDFs/Howhelp.pdf>
- More Things that Do Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices, Vol. II (pdf) <http://www.aypf.org/compendium/comp02.pdf>
- Out-of-School Experiences Model Programs – National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/outschol_exp/outschol_modprog.htm
- Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country's Most Vulnerable 14-24 Year Olds (pdf)
<http://www.hewlett.org/Archives/Publications/connectedBy25.htm>
- Search Institute's 40 Development Assets <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>
- Connecting Vulnerable Youth: A Municipal Leader's Guide (pdf)
http://www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/files/reports/vulnerable%20youth.pdf
- Youth Development Programs and Educationally Disadvantaged Older Youth: A Synthesis (pdf)
<http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/EducDisadvOlderYouth.pdf>

Youth Employment

- The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Evolution and Devolution of Youth Employment Programs (pdf) http://www.ppv.org/pdffiles/ydv/ydv_9.pdf
- Supporting Youth Employment: A Guide for Community Groups (pdf)
<http://www.ppv.org/pdffiles/SupportYouthGroup.pdf>
- Employment Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis (pdf) http://www.childtrends.org/what_works/clark-ww/employ/employrpt.pdf
- Getting In, Staying On, Moving Up: A Practitioner's Approach to Employment Retention (pdf)
<http://www.ppv.org/content/reports/movingup.html>

Skills for Working with Out-of-School Youth

- The Road to Self-Sufficiency: An Income Growth Strategy for Out of School Youth (pdf)
<http://www.nyatep.org/pubsresources/IncomeGrowthStrat.pdf>
- At-Risk Youth Planning Guide – Levitan Center (pdf) <http://www.levitan.org/planning.pdf>
- Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum for Building Skills for Work and Life
<http://outreach.missouri.edu/tough-life-skills/index.htm>
- Want to Resolve a Dispute? Try Mediation (pdf) <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/178999.pdf>
- Pay Attention: Twelve Suggestions on Counseling in an Educational Setting
http://www.dropoutprevention.org/resource/feat_article/payatten_12sugs.htm
- Incentives and Disincentives (pdf) – National Dropout Prevention Center
http://www.dropoutprevention.org/resource/solu_strat/SS4.pdf
- Do Bad Grades Mean Doom?-Princeton Review <http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/articles/grads/badgrades.asp>
- GED Preparation Resources – Job Corps http://www.jccdr.org/html/cd_academic_ged.htm
- Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most. Douglas Stone, Bruce Patten, Shiela Heen, Roger Fisher
- Co-Active Coaching: New Skills for Coaching People toward Success in Work and Life. Laura Whitworth.
- Teens Can Make It Happen: Nine Steps for Success. Stedman Graham

Youth Back in School

- CBO Schools: Profiles in Transformational Education (pdf) http://www.aed.org/publications/cbo_report.pdf
- Student Perspectives on Juggling Work, Family, and College <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/260/overview.html>
- Transformational Education <http://www.tedweb.org/>

Financial Literacy

- NEFE High School Financial Planning Program and Web-Based Training for Educators – National Endowment for Financial Education <http://www.nefe.org/webtraining/index.html>
- Planning to Stay Ahead (pdf) <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1924.pdf>
- Money Smart – FDIC <http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/index.html>

Juvenile Offenders

- Juvenile Mentoring Program <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/jump/index.html>
- Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/workforce_youth_dev.pdf
- Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising <http://www.ncjrs.org/works/>
- Investing in Girls: A 21st Century Strategy – Juvenile Justice <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/178254.pdf>

Foster Care

- It's My Life: A Framework for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Successful Adulthood (pdf) http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/PDFs/It's My Life Book 3_1_02.pdf
- Promising Practices: Supporting the Transition of Youth Served by the Foster Care System (pdf) http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/PDFs/Promising_Practices-1.pdf
- Promising Practices: How Foster Parents can Support the Successful Transition of Youth from Foster Care to Self-Sufficiency (pdf) <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/PDFs/PP11.pdf>
- Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program – Texas Dept. of Protective and Regulatory Services http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/default.asp
- Foster Club – National Network for Youth in Foster Care <http://www.fosterclub.org/index.cfm>

Teen Parents

- Advice from the Field: Youth Employment Programs and Unintended Pregnancy (pdf) <http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1062008662.9/Advice.pdf>
- Leveraging Youth Employment Systems to Prevent Unintended Pregnancy (pdf) <http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/997294128.51/leveraging%20youth%20employment.pdf>

Funding Resources

- ACT Grants for Supporting At Risk Students <http://www.act.org/research/awards/>
- Grant Resources – National Dropout Prevention Center/Network <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/resource/grant/funding.htm>
- William T. Grant Foundation – Youth Services Grants http://www.wtgrantfoundation.org/info-url_nocat3042/info-url_nocat_list.htm?attrib_id=4399
- Hispanic Scholarship Fund <http://www.hsf.net/>
- American Express Economic Independence Fund Grant <http://www.nefe.org/pages/multimedia.html>
- Sources of Funding for Youth Services (pdf) http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/pdf/sources.pdf

Learning from Others

- Case Studies – Alliance for Excellent Education <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/CaseStudies.html>
- The Big Picture Company – Metropolitan Career & Vocational School – Rhode Island <http://www.bigpicture.org/MetPortfolio2001-2002.html>
- Program Profile Database – Dropout Prevention Programs <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/scripts/search/progsearch.asp>
- Youth Net Teen Program Standards – Greater Kansas City, MO http://www.kcyouthnet.org/standards_teen.asp
- Friends of Island Academy – Rikers Island – New York <http://www.foiany.org>
- ProjectPaycheck - Wyoming <http://dwsweb.state.wy.us/dwsnews/releases/pepnet.asp>
- Regional Out-of-School Youth Program - New York <http://www.workforcenewyork.org/promisingpractices/hmoyouth.htm>
- Fresh Start Program – Living Classrooms <http://livingclassrooms.org/PROGRAMS/fresh.html>
- New Start – King County <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/WorkTraining/newstart.htm>
- Ladder to the Future Initiative – Workforce Board of Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida Counties, New York <http://www.workforcenewyork.org/promisingpractices2/hmo5desc2att.htm>
- Opportunity Passport – Foster Care Transition <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/opportunitypassport.htm>
- American YouthWorks – Austin, TX <http://www.ail.org/ayw.html>
- STAR Program – Tulsa Technology Center, OK <http://www.tulsatech.org/star/star1.htm>
- Street Soldiers - Omega Boys Club- San Francisco, CA <http://www.street-soldiers.org/contents.htm>
- Youth Connection Charter School - Chicago, IL http://www.lqe.org/profiles/charter_youth.html
- National Guard Challenge Program <http://www.ngycp.org>
- PartnerShops – Ben & Jerry’s http://www.benjerry.com/scoop_shops/partnerships/
- Moving Up Program – Vocational Foundation – New York <http://www.vfinyc.org/via.htm>
- Community Youth Corps (CYC) - Southeast Los Angeles Workforce Board <http://www.selaco.com/Youth/Youth.asp>
- The Spot – Denver <http://www.thespot.org/default.htm>

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- Board members and staff of Texas' 28 local workforce boards who were easily accessible, frank and thoughtful about their work, and eager to share lessons learned and examples.
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- Texas youth program staff, educators, and workforce professionals who participated in or facilitated training courses using field test copies of packet materials.
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