



WORLD EDUCATION

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BROOKLINE TEEN JOB READINESS ASSESSMENT

Submitted to

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by

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BROOKLINE TEEN JOB READINESS ASSESSMENT

Purpose

The Town of Brookline contracted with the National College Transition Network (NCTN) at World Education, Inc. (WEI) to assess the workforce needs of the Town's youth. The purpose of the assessment was to create a more comprehensive and coordinated strategy to provide workforce training and basic career readiness skills and experiences to the youth in Brookline. There are local organizations that provide these types of services, but resources and capacity are limited. This assessment is the first step in starting to identify strategies and to make recommendations for a localized action plan aimed at improving Brookline's ability to provide all students with the skills they need to be successful in whatever career path they choose.

Scope of Work

The project was formally launched on May 4, 2017 with the first advisory group meeting and ends with the submission of this report. The deliverables were:

- Prepare and facilitate focus groups.
- Provide summaries of focus groups and advisory group meetings.
- Recommend practices or models designed to ensure that Brookline youth have opportunities for career exploration and develop confidence to pursue their chosen path.
- Assess the gap between education and career exploration.
- Recommend a local action plan to support the development and implementation of effective and interconnected services to help ensure that Brookline youth are prepared to transition into a productive working adulthood.

Data Collected

As the project developed, it became clear that additional ways to collect information beyond the focus groups were needed. Brookline Teen Center staff and Brookline High School (BHS) staff found it difficult, despite their strong effort, to get teen or parent participation in these groups. In order to collect responses from a greater number and variety of stakeholders, World Education staff conducted focus groups with advisory group members and BHS students; administered a survey to BHS students; and interviewed staff from the Brookline Housing Authority, BHS, and the Brookline Community Foundation.

The following data collection activities were conducted:

- Facilitated three advisory group meetings in 2017: May 4, June 21 and August 23.

- Interviewed Grace Watson, Director of the Next Steps Program, Brookline Housing Authority on July 17, 2017.
- Interviewed Jennifer Lemire, Director of Programs and Grants, Brookline Community Foundation on August 8, 2017.
- Interviewed Lisa Brown, Family Learning Centers Program Director, Brookline Housing Authority on August 17, 2017.
- Interviewed Arnold Marcus, Career and Technical Education Department Chair at BHS on November 7, 2017. (Mr. Marcus has since retired from this position.)
- Facilitated focus group with BHS students on November 29, 2017.
- Conducted an electronic student survey in December 2017. One hundred and forty-two (142) BHS students responded. There are approximately 2,000 students enrolled at BHS.
- Reviewed and analyzed youth workforce practices and models. Information was shared with advisory group during the fall and summer of 2017.

An analysis of these activities is embedded in the Assessment below, and summaries are included in the Appendices with more detail.

Assessment

Perception versus Reality: In the shadows of Brookline’s affluence live an increasing number of residents in poverty. More residents lived in poverty in 2017 than in 2000: the poverty rate increased from 9.3% to 12.4%.¹ Of the total population, 18.6% were persons under the age of 18.² The *Understanding Brookline: A Report on Poverty* (2014) by the Brookline Community Foundation notes that almost a third of Brookline’s residents lived at or below three times the federal poverty threshold at the time. Although this socioeconomic reality reflects a growth in financial instability and likely growing economic inequality, the prevailing perception of Brookline as an affluent town, according to people interviewed for this report, has not changed.

This perception creates a significant challenge in attempts to document and address the needs of low-income youth in Brookline. More than anecdotal and qualitative data is needed to ensure that all youth are supported to reach their full potential. The potential to build an integrated data system currently exists. However, the key challenge is in documenting how the absence of a coordinated and streamlined youth workforce development system impacts youth and the community of Brookline.

¹ Data USA <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/brookline-ma/>

² US Census <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/brooklinecdpmassachusetts/PST045217>

Lack of Employment Services for Youth: The key providers of education and career readiness services for youth are BHS, the Brookline Teen Center, and STEPS. STEPS sponsors summer youth employment programs aimed at low-income youth. The Teen Center offers limited internship opportunities for high school students in the health care field. There are work programs at the high school's cafe and copy center supervised by faculty in the Career and Technical Education department. Also, the Brookline Housing Authority has programs with limited capacity to help youth improve their job readiness skills. However, interviews with leaders of these programs revealed that all of these services are largely disconnected and have limited capacity to serve the needs of youth and young adults. There are limited job readiness training opportunities for low-income youth, including for both summer and post-high school employment. It is clear that Brookline presently does not have an integrated system or approach to developing the career readiness and employability of all of its youth, particularly youth who are not bound for four-year colleges.

Lack of Alternative Paths to the Four-Year College: Brookline's only high school appears to be exclusively focused on the four-year college and career path, which leaves little, if any, space for students to explore other options for postsecondary education and training. According to the informants, none of the four required college seminars at BHS present alternatives to a four-year college. This might be the reason why 97% of the 142 BHS student survey respondents indicated that they were interested in attending college. Students in focus groups expressed that the exclusive focus on the college pathway made them reluctant to express interest, even to their friends, in anything outside of a going to a four-year college. They felt that they would be looked down on if they pursued a gap year, a community college or technical school, or a career path not requiring college. While students of any social class might yearn for these alternatives, for students living in poverty, a four-year college and the expense and debt it entails may simply not be a feasible option. These youth would benefit from career coaching and planning that presents achievable steps, such as employment, community college and possibly leading to a transfer to a four-year college. Not surprisingly, these youth feel invisible with no structured ways for them to voice their needs or learn about alternative postsecondary education and career options.

Best Practices and Program Models for Serving Youth

Evidence-based Practices

A 2016 review of research, best practices and organizations by Jobs for the Future found³:

Research has consistently verified evidence-based components for effective workforce development programs: combined academic and technical training, including a focus on employability skills; comprehensive social and other support services (e.g., counseling, housing supports, job placement, academic advising); connections to employers; and

³ Jobs for the Future for the U.S. Department of Education (2016). *Youth Workforce Development*. jff.org

understanding viable employment opportunities in the local labor market. Early work experiences (e.g., paid employment, internship, or work-based learning) are especially critical for young people. The most effective place-based programs have significant and sustained employer engagement.

A scan of evidence of what works in youth employment by MDRC (2016) found that “successful programs share some common features. These include: opportunities for paid work and the use of financial incentives; strong links among education, training, and the job market; the use of youth development approaches; comprehensive support services; and support after programs end.”⁴

Key Soft Skills for Workforce Success by Child Trends, Inc. presents recommendations based on a multi-faceted study that includes an extensive review of research as well as broad stakeholder input. The authors of this report reviewed more than 380 resources from around the world, including rigorous empirical studies, employer studies, and findings of international consensus projects. These resources examined the relationship between soft skills and key workforce outcomes, including employment, performance on the job, wages, and entrepreneurial success.

For disconnected youth who are no longer enrolled in schools, there are numerous resources as well. The *Opportunity Youth Employment Toolkit* “offers resources that youth employment stakeholders can use to guide programming for opportunity youth facing the most significant barriers to employment.”

Program Models

As expressed by the advisory group members, BHS students, and community service professionals, Brookline youth would benefit from a coordinated approach to ensuring that all youth have a path to economic self-sufficiency. Fortunately, many innovative and integrative program models for serving youth do exist. Below are brief descriptions of three selected models to investigate further for possible adaptation to the Brookline context.

Iowa BIG initiative: Iowa BIG, in Cedar Rapids, focuses on bringing youth into work environments and fosters critical thinking to solve real-world problems in the workplace. This model allows youth to explore careers, build critical thinking and teamwork skills, and provides a concrete way to integrate the community in this effort. Students attend their regular school part-time, and commit several hours a day to Iowa BIG, where they work with over 100 local organizations (businesses, nonprofits and policy groups) to identify problems they can help solve. The focus on problem-solving and critical thinking has made the participating youth attractive candidates to employers and/or colleges.

Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. (OPP): The mission of this community-based organization in Hartford, CT is to help urban youth to become economically independent adults. The three pillars of their services

⁴ Treskon, L. (2016) *What Works for Disconnected Young People. A Scan of the Evidence*. Working paper. New York, NY: MDRC

are youth development, workforce readiness, and college preparation. Their Pathways to Careers Program, for example, helps youth to complete postsecondary career and Technical Education programs and land jobs in in-demand industries. They collaborate closely with local community colleges and they also provide post-employment support to the youth.

Rochester Works for Youth: This community-based initiative from Rochester, New York offers comprehensive employment and support services to youth ages 16-24 to help them enter and succeed in the labor force. Services include paid internships and other career exploration and preparation activities, as well as a navigator/coach. The important lessons to learn from this model are its shared expectations and successful coordination of the systems serving youth.

Recommendations

Brookline is fortunate to have a group of knowledgeable service providers who are committed to serving the needs of all youth and who recognize the need for a more inclusive, coordinated, and community-based approach. The following recommendations outline strategies and steps that would result in a systemic, sustainable, and inclusive youth workforce development approach. For this process to take hold, it requires champions who are able to communicate their sense of urgency to other key stakeholders and bring them onboard.

1. RECOMMENDATION

Convene a Youth Task Force: Secure the endorsement and support of key officials, such as Town Meeting and Select Board members, the BHS headmaster, the district superintendent, and other primary stakeholders and leaders. Ensure that the convener has both the authority, commitment, and appreciation- if not passion - for the task. These leaders need to be represented on this Task Force along with key service providers and employers, and youth themselves. A strong foundation and commitment to a shared mission is required to build an effective youth workforce system. Leveraging and coordinating local expertise and resources are ways to build this commitment. An external, neutral facilitator is recommended.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Consider a collective impact model: Increasingly, nonprofit organizations are building social impact networks to address complex issues that individual organizations cannot solve alone and, thereby, collectively improve outcomes for the individuals they serve. An important characteristic of social impact networks is that they bring together individuals and/or organizations *as equal partners* to advance a common agenda *through mutually reinforcing activities*. Each member contributes its unique strengths and partners with others who bring complementary capacities. A common action agenda with goals, activities, benchmarks, and timelines is key to network health and ability to

achieve collective impact.⁵ Networks require support and coordination either by an external, neutral facilitator or by one of the members that serves as a so-called “backbone” agency. Networks endure when they yield tangible benefits to the members. A collective impact approach thus builds stronger linkages among stakeholders and is driven by a common goal and action agenda, in this case to increase opportunities for youth’s success in the workplace and self-sufficiency.

3. RECOMMENDATION

Develop a draft plan for the planning process to be undertaken by the Youth Task Force:

- Begin by developing a deeper understanding of the needs and assets, including more outreach to the impacted youth.
- Collectively set a vision that is grounded in an understanding of the needs of low-income youth; that there should be multiple paths to diverse careers; and that a four-year college track is only one option.
- Explore promising models in other communities, even possibly visiting the most promising ones.
- Develop a multi-year action plan with annual goals, milestones, and a process that holds the Task Force accountable for them.

4. RECOMMENDATION

Aim to create a sustainable, permanent youth workforce development structure that is inclusive and systemic. Such a system would:

- Put in place and maintain a data collection and sharing system aimed at determining the needs of all youth and who is being served, how, and to what effect. Data currently exists that is not analyzed and that does not inform service provision as much as it should. As well, there are gaps in what data is collected. The sharing of data across systems needs to start with building the capacity of the high school and other youth-serving programs, driven by a mandate and sense urgency to do so.
- Engage impacted youth and train them for leadership positions. An important place to start in this effort is to create safe spaces in the high school and other youth-oriented programs where youth’s needs and aspirations about becoming self-sufficient are heard, respected, and supported regardless of their career aspiration or lack thereof.
- Raise awareness about the changing socio-economic landscape in Brookline and build public and political will for responding to it so that the trend toward increased poverty is reversed.

⁵ Plastrik, P., Taylor, M. & J. Cleveland. (2014) *Connecting to change the world. Harnessing the power of networks for social impact.* Washington, DC: Island Press

5. RECOMMENDATION

Leverage the resources of the local MassHire Workforce Board: Title I of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides a funding stream for job readiness and employment services for out-of-school and some in-school youth, ages 16-24, and is administered by local MassHire Workforce Boards. The extent of services varies from region to region, but the most innovative of boards seek multiple private and public funding opportunities and partner with school districts, local city governments, community colleges, community-based organizations, and business and industry to prepare youth for employment in high-demand industries and occupations. Brookline is in the Metro Southwest (MSW) catchment area. Career Connections is the MSW services component for youth ages 17-24. The Public Schools of Brookline is listed as a MSW Network School in connection to an in-school program that is designed for in-school youth that allows students to experience the world of work through internships. The program helps youth see the relationship between what they are learning in school and their career aspirations. It is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's "Connecting Activities" initiative. How these services can be made more accessible to BHS students should be explored.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Build partnerships with area community colleges and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs: Many technical career pathways exist in Greater Boston that lead to high-demand jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. For example, in Boston good jobs go begging in IT and health care that require certificate-level training. Ensure that career guidance by all stakeholders shines the light on these types of pathways without undue stigma. This can include informational sessions and field trips as well as one-on-one counseling about education and training requirements, cost and length. It can and should be supplemented by employment technology solutions such as WorkBay that "provides visibility and motivation for local career opportunities and a roadmap for accessing them."

7. RECOMMENDATION

Build partnerships with key employers: Engaging employers is a key feature in a successful youth workforce development system. This engagement should take the form of internships, short-term job shadowing, mock job interviews, and other connecting activities, as well as hiring and training youth for entry-level positions. In addition, interviews by youth with people in occupations to which they aspire will help young people gain a more realistic sense of different jobs and work settings. This strategy can and should also be supplemented by technology solutions such as Nepris that connects students and teachers virtually to industry experts and virtual mentors.

APPENDICES:

Advisory Group Meeting Notes

BHS Student Focus Group Notes

BHS Student Survey Summary

Interview Summaries

Notes from Advisory Group Meetings

May 4, 2017

Brookline Teen Job Readiness Assessment Project

Kick-off Meeting

Present

Andy Martineau, Elon Fischer (BHS), Brittany Stevens (BHS), Brandon McCarthy (Teen Center), Kara Lopez (BHS), Ellen Hewett (WEI), and Ebony Vandross (WEI)

Context

This meeting marked the formal launch of this project with the Advisory Group. The agenda was organized as a dialogue focusing on these key questions:

- What are the purpose, priorities, approach and timeline of the project?
- What does WEI need to know about your experiences, challenges, and lessons in order to help develop a strategy to deliver workforce training for youth.
- Is there research that may be useful in informing this assessment and strategy development?
- How can we best utilize the stakeholder focus groups to collect the information needed for this project?

These notes capture the key points made by each group member

Andy (Economic Development Planner, Town of Brookline)

- No strong examples of college success and/or job readiness with graduating classes (within this population). Observes gaps in skills in underserved populations
- Project goals are:
 - Develop localized action plan that will actually be implemented to aid faculty and teen centers
 - Decide how these findings will assist workforce training development in the short term
- WEI is our assessment and focus group facilitator
- Looking to develop new programs with the Teen Center focused on workforce and skills training
- Lack of resources limits the current programming
- Soft skills training vs Hard skills training:
 - What are employers looking for and how is this being addressed in this community?
- More attention should be drawn to the rapidly changing socioeconomic landscape of the town.
 - *Understanding Brookline: A Report on Poverty* (2014) published by the Brookline Community Foundation provides additional data.

Elon Fischer (English Faculty, BHS)

- Would like to see more focus on trade skills rather than “projects”
- Believes there is not enough focus on job readiness for underserved communities, especially with youth who are not college bound
- Believes an aim should be focused on tracking data from post secondary students
 - *Steps to Success/CSI* has some data
- Career interest survey exists but is not often used by students
- Where would funding be best utilized (school budget vs outside programming)?
- Are community businesses a possible resource for additional funding?
- What employment opportunities could the town itself provide?

Kara Lopez (Guidance Counselor, Alternative Choices in Education Program, BHS)

- Working on developing a tracking document/form for graduating classes
- Steps to Success (grade 4-12) includes summer internship programs with hospitals, law offices, groundworks and other programs involving summer camp/counseling work (Work Connections)
 - Addresses the needs of students in public housing
 - Advisors work with students in local high schools
 - Demand/need is much greater than population that can be served
- ACE is pursuing internships for academic credit
- Wants to see more networking opportunities for these students (regardless of their post secondary plans)
 - Issues are to mitigate the reduction of FTEs

Brendan McCarthy (Transitions Services Coordinator, Special Education Staff, BHS)

- Utilization of job coaches
- Wants to include families in the data assessment in regard to what services they want to see offered for their children
- Works with programs for students with disabilities sometimes opt for additional/5th years of high school to ensure their success)
- Works with programs for students with disabilities sometimes opt for additional/5th years of high school to ensure their success)
- Works with pre-employment agencies

Brittany Stevens (Business Faculty, BHS)

- Tracking data for students enrolled in tech ed classes should be included in the narrative (culinary arts, IT, etc)
- No clear career pathway for students enrolled in these classes
- Wants to see tech ed included as an option for students
- Are students pursuing education related to fields in which they want to work?
- Working on parent and community engagement
- Narrative should include the data supporting the idea that students who do attend college are not necessarily prepared for careers/general job searches

Additional Question Requiring Consideration

- What is the connection between data/findings and how it case be used to mobilize a call to action?
- Are students aware of the career paths related to their interests?
- How can students find out what kinds of jobs are available?
- How can existing data be framed in a way that will change the focus (in regard to funding/general support)?
- Is there a way to present needs in community to resonate in comparison to more blatantly underserved communities (or get people to pay attention to these populations in Brookline)?

Suggestions for Focus Group Approach

- Ask questions structured around data
- PTO, Steps to Success groups should be utilized
- Support existing data
- Direct participants to possible next steps following report

Next Steps:

1. Organize a meeting of the Advisory Group for the third week in June
2. WEI to consider and present examples of best practices in youth workforce development for the group to consider at June meeting
3. WEI to read Understanding Brookline: A Report on Poverty; STEPS to Success, The Giving Common, an initiative of the Boston Foundation; and continue to investigate BHS data in the MA School District Profiles.
4. Synthesize emerging themes from group discussion and research to present at the June meeting

Next Meeting: June 21, 2017

June 21, 2017

Teen Job Readiness Assessment Project Meeting Notes

Present: Kate Cordner, Elon Fischer, Andy Martineau, Brendan McCarthy, George Zahka, Darby Neff-Verre, Ebony Vandross, and Ellen Hewett (WEI)

Review Project Goals:

- Develop localized action plan that will actually be implemented to aid faculty and teen centers
- Decide how these findings will assist workforce training development in the short term
- Complete an assessment that confirms the gaps in service and pinpoints what actions the town needs to take to expand services

Both the information shared within this group and in the *Understanding Brookline Poverty* report by the Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) indicates that analyzing the gaps and lack of coordination in services is the easier part of demonstrating the need for action. The more challenging part is documenting how not having a coordinated and streamlined Youth Workforce Development system impacts youth and the community of Brookline.

How do we strategize this campaign to demonstrate that youth workforce development and gaps in services is a problem?

We need to determine:

- How does it impact youth?
- How does it impact the city?
- What data is needed?
- How do we incorporate national figures into Brookline comparisons?
- How would our work address poverty issues in specific?
- How to demonstrate that this is a problem for the community of Brookline?
- Can we call the college track an anti-poverty measure?
- What happens when students graduate BHS (data we need)?

Action Steps

WEI to conduct one-on-one interviews this summer with services providers and receivers

- Grace Watkins - Next Steps Director (George to make connection with Ellen)
- Staff from Brookline Community Foundation (Andy to make connection with Ellen)
- Other names to be shared from group to Ellen

WEI to conduct focus groups in the late summer/early fall with:

- Youth - mostly 18-24 (George to help build group among Teen Center youth)
- Parents of population (Darby to help make connection with WEI to executive board of PTO, other parents she thinks might be interested)
- Business Owners

Ideas/Resources to Support Strategy Development

Are there any existing models with elements that fill the gaps in BPSs?

(Be mindful of which regions/communities are included in research - need to reflect Brookline's demographics and identity)

- Cambridge
- Lexington
- Concord
- Wellesley
- Newton

How can we connect findings from the BCF to our effort? (Note: This is a key question for Ellen to explore in BCF interview.)

How might the Town serve as an employer in the school to work pipeline?

- Why is Brookline not hiring recent graduates?

How to build/integrate BHS Career Exploration efforts and the need for additional staff?

Could the BTC's [YouthScapers](#), and Green Construction/Maintenance summer youth work programs be expanded as a possible model for YWD in Brookline?

How can use Brookline's changing demographics to support our goal?

Most effective place-based programs have significant and sustained employer engagement.

Report by BCF advocated for more youth focused workforce development, but there does not seem to be concrete evidence of any working initiatives in the 3 years since publication

Postsecondary education is only part of the solution. Need more local data to help support this claim.

August 23, 2017

Teen Job Readiness Assessment Project Meeting Notes

Present

Elon Fischer, Andy Martineau, Brendan McCarthy, Darby Neff-Verre, Ebony Vandross, and Ellen Hewett

Agenda

- Welcome and announcements
- Review progress of action steps
- Add to current interviewee list
- Plan a question-posing presentation at a social service executive directors meeting convened quarterly by Jenny Armory, Brookline Community Foundation,
- Determine plan for teen and parent focus groups
- Set fall advisory group meeting times (virtual and/or in person)

June Action Steps Progress Review

- Since the last meeting Ellen has met with Grace Watson, Lisa Brown, and Jennifer Lemire to learn about what information they have in relation to our assessment project goals.
- Common themes among interviewees: STEPS to Success is important source of data for assessment, Brookline's self-image is a challenge to address for this project, and belief that gaps in services means that more students are in need of youth workforce development programs. Highlights from each conversation follow:
 - **Grace** directs the Next Steps Program of the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA),
 - Stresses the need to continue to strengthen collaboration with other programs serving youth and young adults (especially the Teen Center and STEPS) to strengthen communities' capacity.
 - Reinforces importance of remembering that that Next Steps also works with youth (i.e., people aged 16-24).
 - Indicates that 5 from STEPS are a part of Next Steps each year. Grace is sure that there are more out there.
 - Believes the community needs to overcome the sense of shame when acknowledging the people who "fail".
 - Shares an interest in serving on advisory group.
 - Confirms that STEPS is the key player and a likely source of longitudinal information on parents and youth.
 - Suggests that Ellen interview Ann Brackett of Women and Girls Thriving and Surviving, Lisa Brown of the BHA Family Learning Centers (Done), Megan Smith of the ROSS (Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency) program of the Brookline Center, and present research questions at quarterly meeting of social service executive directors convened by Jenny Armory, BCF.
 - **Lisa Brown** is director of the BHA Learning Center and has experience with Brookline PS and a strong connection to the community. She grew up in Brookline public housing. She believes this experience informs her practice.
 - Networks with students regularly and observes the needs of population such as thinking strategically, problem solving, and work habits.

- Believes there is need for a more integrated system between existing services for youth.
- Works with 300 students per month across learning centers and believes at least half would benefit from YWD services.
- Receives outreach support from social service team in BHA and collaborates with the Teen Center.
- Sees benefit in services that focus on alternatives to college.

Brendan added that getting data on family goals and plans for their students would help to shape possible model and Lisa could help with polling these users with targeted questions on what is working and what more is needed. Elon suggested that approval will likely be needed to conduct this type of polling and research (Possibly through Shoma Haque, Patrick Dober, Arnie Marcus, Wendy Ryder.)

- **Jennifer** is the director of programs and grants at the Brookline Community Foundation.
 - Confirms no additional research regarding system alignment and poverty in Brookline has been done since Understanding Brookline Poverty.
 - Agrees system needs more integration and connection and that Brookline needs to better consider at-risk populations in their work.
 - Shares challenge in documenting above and the needs of low-income youth in Brookline.
 - Supports the goals of this project.
 - Suggests advisory board participation in quarterly meeting of social service executive directors convened by BCF.

Ebony shared update on her model research.

Interviewee Additions

- All agreed that we need “big players” to gain traction on this project.
- Patrick Dober is the executive director of BHA. He can provide a broad picture of public housing, Andy will talk with him about the assessment project.
- Misti Jaynes is very active in connecting the high school with BHA. She knows a lot as an activist, community member, and parent. Misti needs to be interviewed. Elon will connect Ellen to her.
- Arnie Marcus (Career and Technical Education, BHS) is on the advisory group mailing list, and needs to be interviewed. Elon will connect Ellen to him.
- Shoma Hague, director of Steps to Success, needs to be interviewed ASAP. Darby is meeting with Shoma Haque on Thursday (8/24) and will give her a heads-up that Ellen will be contacting her within the week.
- Wendy Ryder, Special Education, is excited about the project. Brendan will connect Ellen with her.

Social Service Executive Directors Meeting Plan

- Agreed to ask to present at meeting with executive directors convened by BCF once we have substantive research to share with them.

Teen and Parent Focus Groups Plan

- Our aim is to hold both groups in mid-October. Likely to meet around 6 pm with pizza.
- Parents need to sign consent forms for any participant under 18 years old. Ellen will send a draft of one for Brendan to review.
- A timeline with tasks is needed. Ellen develop and share it by September 1.

Immediate Action Steps: Focus on organizing focus groups and conducting next round of interviews.

- Andy will meet with Patrick Dober.
- Elon will connect Ellen with Arnie and Misti. (Done)
- Darby will explain our project to Shoma and let her know that Ellen will be contacting her.
- Brendan will connect Ellen with Wendy.
- Ellen to develop and share focus group time plan and send Brendan consent forms needed for youth under 18; conduct tasks outlined in focus group plan; and conduct interviews with Arnie, Misti, Shoma, and Wendy.
- Ebony to continue her model research and schedule next check-in phone meeting.
- Anyone who was unable to attend this meeting needs to let Ellen know of anyone he/she thinks needs to be interviewed in September and to share any questions and/or suggestions.

Meetings with Brookline High School Students
November 29, 2017

The initial focus group was originally set to happen on the evening of October 18, 2017 i at the Brookline Teen Center. Unfortunately no one showed up for this session; although teen center staff did promote it. As a result, we agreed to try to conduct two focus groups at Brookline High School on November 29, 2017. The agenda created for the Teen Center remained the same.

Teen Focus Group Agenda

15 mins.: Pizza and mingling time
15 mins.: Welcome, introductions
1 hour Focus group time
Group ends with thanks and words of appreciation.

Welcome and Introductions

Andy to welcome students and provide an overview the focus group process/purpose.

Overview of Topic

You were **selected** because you have information and opinions about youth employment that we need to hear.

The **results** will be used to help the advisory group consisting of BHS faculty and staff, Brookline Teen Center Staff, and Brookline's Economic Development planner. This group is identifying strategies and developing an action plan to ensure that students have the skills they need to be successful in whatever career path they choose

Guidelines (Ellen)

No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view. You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.

We're tape **recording** the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. We won't use any names in our reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

We're on a first name basis

Please turn off your cell phone

My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion

Let's Begin the Questions

Meetings with Brookline High School Students
November 29, 2017

How prepared did you feel at starting your first job? If you do not have a job yet, how prepared do you feel to start one?

EH: Probe for challenges and ideas about how to address the challenges.

How did you obtain your job? If you do not have one, how do you think you'll get one?

EH: Probe for challenges and sources of support.

How satisfied are you on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being not satisfied at all, and 5 being very satisfied) with the current options for classes at BHS?

Do you think students could benefit from classes and programs focused on vocational tracks (e.g., automotive, carpentry, electrical engineering, etc.)?

EH: It is a yes/no answer - so I will probe for details.

Think about your experiences and observations in Brookline - what job readiness resources and services would you like that are not available?

Ending Questions

Suppose that you had one minute to talk to the Town Leadership about making sure that students have the skills they need to be successful in whatever career path they choose, what would you say?

The purpose of this focus group is to learn from you about the quality of the current career services and resources for youth and what possible improvements could be made to the current system. Have we missed anything?

Thank you!

In addition to the students, the group included Andy Martineau, Ebony Vandross (WEI), Ellen Hewett (primary questioner) and (BHS)

Group 1: 3 Students (White, Black, Jewish), Seniors, Female

Meetings with Brookline High School Students
November 29, 2017

- Student 1 had summer job and stopped because of athletics
 - o Didn't need much preparation so couldn't speak to
- Student 2 has had a job for 2 years at local grocery store
 - o Was encouraged to apply from Teen Center Staff
 - o Was worried about time management but developed a plan
 - o Felt a bit overwhelmed from the start
 - o Started as sophomore
- Student 1 added that having a job helped a bit with school work
 - o Studied Spanish for years and found that she could use it at work were many staff spoke Spanish
- Student 3 was summer camp counselor
 - o Got job through synagogue
 - o Believes time at BHS helped with work because of the daily interaction with diverse background
 - o Didn't feel that any classes in particular helped prepare her for the job
- Students 1 and 2 added that diversity in classes was helpful for her at her job as well
- Student 3 doesn't know if she believes that there are enough resources for students who want to pursue opportunities beyond high school
- Student 2 feels that the school should provide a more community based effort to support all students
- Student 1 pointed out that the school focuses on college as a priority as opposed to other opportunities and avenues
- Student 2 also agreed that BHS needs to do more to help students who are not prepared for or interested in college by putting them in touch with examples
 - o Also added that she believes some students feel shame attached to the idea of not choosing to go to college
- Student 1 felt that the required senior seminars (which are currently all college focused) should diversify to include non-college related topics
- Student 3 said there is a gap year fair that is not publicized much and believes more reps from gap year programs and similar things

Transcript of Session:

EH: The first question I have is if you have a job right now, how well prepared did you feel at starting it? And if you don't have one right now, or you haven't had one yet, how prepared do you feel even approaching and getting to get one?

Student 1: I worked over the summer and I stopped working because of athletics during (?) school.

EH: Did you feel prepared for the work this summer?

Student 1: In some ways, yes, but in other ways, no. But I don't think the school or administration could have helped me for that kind of job. I was working in a burger store. It's pretty-- you just have to be able to work super-fast, which can be hard.

EH: And how did you get it? Did you get it yourself?

Student 1: I just went in a filled in an application, and as I was filling it out, the boss just interviewed me right then.

EH (to Student 2): And you have a job now. And how prepared did you feel, and tell us a little bit about it, too.

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Student 2: It was over the summer, I forget how long ago, but it was-- I've had this job a few years now and I was at the Teen Center and Kate made me apply to Trader Joe's. They had sent applications over to the Teen Center because they needed teens to work there. So she said I should try it and I did and then two weeks later, they wanted me to come in for an interview and I got the job on the spot.

When I first started, I was actually nervous because I didn't know if I'd have time to do homework and hang out with my friends and do normal stuff, but once I got into the habit of it, of working and also going to school and hanging out with other people, I created an organized thing of certain things I needed to do.

EH: Did anything at the school help prepare you? Kate made the connection with Trader Joe's, so that's a big help, but did you feel when you started that first day, how did you--

Student 2: I kind of felt overwhelmed because I didn't know what the heck I was doing and if it was important-- what I was doing. But the workplace actually made me feel comfortable, took it step by step, and when I had homework a certain night, or tons of homework, I would do it during the break or, I would tell my teachers that I would have work, and they would say "do as much as you can."

Student 1: Just to add on really quickly, I actually think that in a way, school and stuff helped me a little bit with the job because everyone in the kitchen at Lee's (?) spoke Spanish which was weird to me, but I've been taking Spanish since the sixth grade, and I actually went to Spain last year and stayed with a host family. So it was just cool to be able to use that in the real world and it not just be in a classroom.

EH (to Student 3): Are you working now? Have you had your first job yet?

Student 3: I was a camp counselor this summer and before that had been doing childcare for my local synagogue every Saturday morning. I think that (???) has helped me prepare for especially camp counselor because at school we have-- because of the diversity here, we have the chance to interact with many different types of people, and it helps when you go into the outside world. Like if you're working at a store, and you're interacting with customers, or as a camp counselor you have to interact with parents or kids, it helps understand other people who don't necessarily agree with your point of view. So I thought that was really helpful.

EH: So you got the job really through your synagogue because of your working in the Judaic or Hebrew school? How did you feel when you first started? It was really based where you knew the community well. The camp really. I'm assuming the synagogue felt that you knew it.

Student 3: I started working there because I knew most of the kids. The camp, I felt really prepared. I didn't know many of my co-counselors, but I felt prepared well enough to interact with them and interact with my bosses.

AM: So you mentioned you felt prepared because of your experience here at the high school. You mentioned diversity of the student body and the course offerings and that sort of thing. Were there specific courses that you think helped you?

Student 3: I don't think there was anything specific I can think of. I wasn't at the high school all four years, so I think relative to where I was before the high school was a lot more helpful just given the diversity of the student body. But I can't think of one specific course.

EH: What year are you in now?

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Student 3: I'm a senior now and I joined.

EH: So this is your first?

Student 3: Second and last year.

[At this time students 1 and 2 also confirm that they are seniors]

AM (to Student 2): So you mentioned that you felt overwhelmed on your first day. Are there specific experiences or classes or anything that you've encountered here at the high school that helped you sort of communicate and navigate that first day where you were just trying to understand what's important?

Student 2: I was a sophomore when I first got the job, and my math class was very diverse and it had different personalities in each class. So in that class I would study everybody in that room and see how they interacted and then the way I would interact, and they really liked my vibe and I liked the vibe of the class. So I took that into my workforce (?) and I saw different personalities and different-- a lot of diversity at my job so I made it seem as if I was in a classroom and interacting with different people and having different kind of communication.

EH: Each of you have talked about the importance of diversity and I'm thinking for you in terms of language, the importance of having that language. So why is that important, do you think, as a skill? And what ways could the high school do it better, and what ways does it do it well? Because one thing is being in a room full of folks who are different and sorting it out for yourself and having someone really kind of help you. You may have intuitively and wisely known to do that, but if it's not guided, not everyone might know that.

Student 2: I think diversity is important, to answer your question, because being in the same group of people, you start to get bored and you kind of want to explore new things. So me being in the setting of diversity and thinking it's very important is because I want to step out of my comfort zone and get to know different people who are not like me or have different views of the world. And I think that helps because you start to understand where different people are coming from.

Student 1: And [if] people with different personalities and different perspectives don't agree with you, it challenges your ideas of how the world's supposed to work and how-- what is fair and what isn't fair. Different opinions help challenge you and help you grow as a person.

Student 3: Also when you're thrown in a hard situation where everyone in a room disagrees with you or the majority of people disagree with you, I think BHS is really good at preparing us to stay strong to what we believe in because of these situations that we're in already.

AM: It seems to me that you guys have had a great experience so far in terms of being exposed to diversity. I think each of you touched on that (???) theme that lends itself to being ready for the workplace and success in that regard. So I'm wondering if everybody has access to those same types of opportunities and do they take advantage of it? Or is that something that maybe not everyone is aware that's a resource for them or if it's something that people don't see as a tool that they can use?

You guys are clearly very astute and picked up on translating your experiences here in school to success in the workplace. Treating it like a classroom, for instance, navigating it that way on your first day. That's a great strategy. Do you have a sense of whether or not your peers are prepared or are able to do that?

Student 2: Are you asking if we're trying to be ambitious?

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AM: Not necessarily trying to be ambitious. It seems to me like you guys, based on your experience have one-- taken advantage of the experience that the high school offers, and two--

Student 1: I think that the high school offers a variety of services. For example, college counseling, the career center-- different things that some people get outside of high school, and the kids at the high school are very diverse in the sense that some people's parents might be able to afford a college counselor.

EH: A private one?

Student 1: Yes. Some people's parents will push them-- "You need a job! You need an internship!" Some people's parents will work in hospitals and be able to help them get those internships, and some people are more privileged (??) that way than others. But in terms of the school, you do-- you have to push yourself to go to the school to get those resources. They don't just come to you. If you're not able to outside of school, if your parents don't push you super hard to have those resources, you have to push yourself to get them. You have to want them. You can't just expect them to come to you. They'll be offered to you, but if you just sit back and don't do anything, you're not going to have those resources available to you.

EH: Assume that everyone was pushing. All the students were pushing and understood it. Would there be enough resources, do you think, instead of supporting students with diverse interests to be able to find that they want-- whether or not it's going on to a career or going onto a four year college. Assuming that everyone is motivated in the way you described.

Student 3: When you say everyone, do you mean... ?

EH: If the resources were pushed to the max. Are there enough resources to support if all students felt encouraged and directed to use the services, do you think there'd be enough for them?

Student 3: I think, to be honest, if all two thousand plus students were pushing, I think already now guidance counselors offices are so busy, and the school does really the best they can with what they have. But I think really, if everyone was taking advantage of that, and going to the college counselors and the guidance counselors see (??), I really don't know, honestly, if there would be enough guidance counselors or career people at the career center to help out.

Student 2: Yes and no. Because you never know if two thousand plus students are able to push and get different resources, but then also yes. [Because] I feel like a community together can distribute those kinds of opportunities. If one person doesn't want this opportunity, and the other person has this opportunity that that person wants, they could find a way for both of them to have opportunities. I don't think this is a thing to be alone with. It's a community based thing.

Student 3: On top of that, a lot of us also have parents in different fields who can use (??) student support. "Oh, I know someone in the medical field". (??) connect, and it might not be directly through the school.

EH: So I'm going to ask you to put on your lens that you used in order to see the importance of diversity, because that was really helpful for me. Now think of folks who are different than you, who may not have the kind of encouragement that you've described, and are interested and have a diverse kind of interest in terms of what they may want to do. For example, college may not be what they're wanting to do. They may want to work after school. How would you describe what they have available to them, and do you think it's adequate, just with what you've observed?

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Student 1: I think at the high school, since we're all seniors, I actually did a college meeting about stress and how seniors feel senior year about college and all that stuff to parents. I think it's hard because people think that the right choice is college. They just assume that that's the right path to take.

EH: And the only one sometimes, right?

Student 1: Yes. That's how people feel. But we were just talking about how that's not true at all. I just think it's hard because in terms of resources for after school, [if] you don't go to college, I feel like it's a little bit frowned upon.

I just think it's hard because so many-- I think that most of our class will end up going to a school next year, and then it's hard for people who just aren't ready for college. I've thought about taking a gap year.

Student 2: I think, adding onto what [Student 1] said, that what the school does is, yes, college is important, and this is what you need to do. But also I feel like they say that's the only choice. And other people who are not as prepared as other students who want to go to college, they feel pressured to do things they feel like they shouldn't do. [As if] they shouldn't step back or say out loud "I don't want to go to college because I don't want people to look at me differently (??) like 'why don't you want to go to college?'" I think that's something that BHS could work on and say "yes, college is very important, this is what you need to do, but if you're planning not to go to college, then this is what you need to do," so you can stay on track to what you want in your career.

EH: And what would that look like? What would you say to the town? What would you suggest for what would need to happen?

Student 2: I think that we need to have-- the same way that we're preparing the senior class for college is the same way that they should prepare students who are taking a gap year. So have workshops and have people speaking saying "this is what happens when you don't go to college and try to take a gap year. These are the people that did so-and-so rather than going to college." Have them have a conversation. Have people come in who are successful and didn't have to go to college or anything like that, so that it can make them feel comfortable and that they're able to share their views. Because if you really think about it, they're not talking. Someone says "where are you going to college?" All they'll probably say is "Oh, I don't know."

EH: Or "I haven't heard yet."

Student 2: We just need to make a more friendly community (??) people who are not going to college.

EH: So part of what you're also saying is to make sure that there's a space for them to have a voice.

Student 2: Yes. A space for them to have a voice because I feel like that isn't the case. I have a couple of friends who do not want to go to college, but they're not saying anything about it because they feel as if people are going to judge them if they say something about it.

Student 3: We have four required seminars for our senior year to talk about college and that seems to me that kind of like what she said, that college is our only choice. Most people in my community go to college, but there's also a big part of the Jewish community that also takes a gap year before they go, and they go to Israel for a year. And that's something that I've wanted

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to consider, but for me, when I'm here I'm saying "oh, of course I'm going to go to college," because that's what the school tells you to do.

EH: So I think you hear that we're concerned about the group you were talking about-- folks who may not want to attend college and are interested in other options. What is the biggest suggestion or issue that you believe the town should pay attention to?

Student 1: I think it shouldn't be called "college counseling". It should be called "post high school graduate"-- something like that. And let's say there were two senior seminars where one is [focused on] gap years, one is [focused on] going to college, and then one is [focused on] job and work force, so that people who want to do different things can learn about those different things. And if you are thinking about two, maybe you go to two seminars. And if you're not sure, maybe you can go to all three, or maybe you meet your guidance counselor and they can tell you "I think you'd be best going to this one or this one."

EH: It also begins to give the space that it's ok to want another option.

Student 2: Instead of the college seminar being required-- let all of them be required as a matter of fact. Let's say I want to or want to go to college, but am curious about the gap year and the work force-- let it be more variety and not just one option for everyone, because everybody's different.

Student 3: Also, throughout the fall, they have college reps that come during school. And I know they have gap year fairs that they don't really publicize that much. But it might be important to have representatives come in from those gap year programs, or different speakers who didn't go to college at all and were successful rather than just having university reps coming in.

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Group/Interview 2: Only 1 Student student joined us, Sophomore, Female, Non-white

- Has not yet been employed (not eligible until 16)
- Has friends with jobs and says that their places of employment do not provide enough structure and preparation for students in these roles
- Is hoping for a practical work experience (as opposed to baby sitting and dog walking as the adults in her life suggest) in the hopes that it will help her learn more about careers and finances
- Says that teachers and class experience are factors in what determines students interest in curriculum topics
- Feels that there is a focus on college bound students at BHS and not much alternatively
- Participated in an on campus internship that felt it was helpful in seeing what a job may be like, but that there was no real orientation or preparation for the tasks

Transcript of Session

EH: Have you had your first job?

S: I'm young for my grade so I'm still 15.

EH: And you have to be 16?

S: Yes, at least.

EH: Do you hope to get a [job]? Do you feel like you're prepared, or what would you want to make sure you've received or you know about before you start?

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S: I have some friends who have jobs and some of them work at the Brookline Rec Department. So they ref kids in sports or work at an ice hockey rink and things like that. I've heard that they don't give a lot of structure.

EH: To the job?

S: Yes. Things like "here's what you have to do"-- they don't really give people a lot of structure, so I think that would be helpful. And also knowing where to look for a job.

EH: That's pretty much where you'll be in a year-- "Ok, I'm wanting to work. What would be my first step?" Do you know what that might be, or is that part of the question?

S: It is part of the question because for most parents that I've asked, or other adults, they just say "babysitting" or "dog walking", which is not really a real job-- I mean, it's a job, but it's not...

EH: I know. It's different. It seems like you're looking for a real work experience. What would you hope to get from that work experience?

S: Especially at the beginning, I'm not looking for a super nice job because I know that's just unreasonable. But I would just want the experience of having a job and earning money and the managing (?) that money.

EH: Part of what we're curious about is the service you were talking about at the rec center-- that it would be helpful if the employment was more structured, so that was helpful because we're trying to figure out how we can improve things. When you're here, are there classes that you're taking-- I know it may be soon because you're a sophomore, but are there classes that you're taking or you hope to take that you think will be helpful for you in terms deciding what career you want or what kind of employment that you might want?

S: There's a lot of classes. There are five core classes, and that kind of helps me get a base (?). But for a bunch of things, it really depends on the teacher that you have and the class experience that you have. So I think if you liked math last year, that doesn't necessarily mean you're going to like math this year. It's a hard question when somebody asks you "what are your favorite subjects?" because this year they're very different from last year.

EH: And it has to do with the teachers and how they're teaching?

S: Yes. And I think depending on the teaching style, sometimes I'll really like a class, and I'll feel like I learned a lot more from the teacher even if in previous years I didn't like the class.

EH: I could go into examples of my own life too, so I understand the importance of that. So, I come from a large family, and some of us went right to college and some of us didn't, and there's a whole range just depending on personality and other things as well, [such as] what kind of support they did or didn't get.

So, if you're a student at Brookline High School, and you're not really thinking that a four year college is what you're interested in or you're not even sure, but even in the doubt-- what would you do? And I don't know if that's your situation or not, but I'm sure there are some folks that is true for.

S: I don't know a lot about this, but my brother's a senior this year, and he has applied [to] early admissions. So I know that a lot of his friends, and a lot of seniors that are getting really stressed about getting into a good college. A "good college" meaning something people have

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heard of. So a lot of people I feel like-- especially if you have successful parents, a lot of people feel like they also have to a good college that people know of.

I definitely know some people who are not applying to any safety schools, and if they don't get in they'll just take a gap year. So I do know that there are people doing that.

EH: What about someone who might be interested in doing something that might not be academic orientation? Do you know of one, and if you do, do you think they're getting-- is there a way that they can be better supported to find what to do next when they finish high school?

S: I'm not entirely sure. I know of people who do post graduate years. They do that for a year, then go to college. I've heard from people who've done that, that it's good, but I think definitely not for everybody. I think if people take a gap year, they want to do something productive and that's going to better their chances of getting into the college that they want to go to.

EH: What if I didn't want to go to college?

S: There are a lot of professions that you don't need to go to college for. So I know there are some schools like technology schools that prepare kids better for--

EH: Technology high schools that prepare--

S: For carpentry or plumbing and things like that, which make a lot of money. I think if somebody didn't want to go to college and knew that from a while ago, they could go to a specialized high school.

EH: And then they would have those options available for them.

S: But I think it's hard here because I think a lot of teachers here want their students to go to college. There's definitely a push for going to college here.

AM: I have a follow up question to something you said at the beginning of the session. You talked about your friends who have jobs-- there wasn't a lot of structure where they work, there wasn't a lot of guidance offered. Sometimes, depending on where you work and what you do, that's just the nature of a job. You might get a job and your boss or employer might just expect you to take on your responsibilities with limited supervision. I know that's something that has happened to me in my work experience-- I'm sure it has happened to a lot of other people.

So a lot of the guidance you're going to get for any given job varies, and I'm wondering do you have a sense of-- based on your experience here at the high school, are there skills that you or your friends are obtaining that are helping you navigate situations like that? Or do you think that it was a situation where with no structure it was a bit overwhelming and just didn't know how to navigate it or weren't sure?

S: One of my friends worked at the rec center. She was a ref for second grade soccer or something. She didn't really have that outline of rules she was supposed to follow. So they didn't cover any of the--

AM: The rules of the game.

S: Yes. So, I think for that it's difficult because you could ask (???), but I think it's difficult because most people don't remember what it's like playing second grade soccer, so the rules have changed progressively as you get older. So I think that was difficult for her because she wasn't entirely sure what she was supposed to be doing. But I think if it's something that's self-explanatory, you shouldn't have to ask your boss about it (???).

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EH: So are there courses here or resources that you think would help in what you're talking about? Because you're talking about what's happening at the rec center, but here: Do you have suggestions about what might help?

S: I've heard that interning-- it doesn't really matter where you go, it's more-- at least the first few stages, it's more "busy work". She [mother] said if you're interning at a place-- say a huge law firm, you're not necessarily going to be doing things in law.

EH: You might be making copies.

S: Yeah. I took copy center for a little bit and then I got switched out because of a schedule change, so I don't take it right now, but I took it for about a month or two.

EH: And that's in-house, right? There's a copy center here? It's like an internship, but you do it at the high school?

S: Yeah. And so basically we delivered paper to offices that needed paper and we make copies and laminated things for teachers. It was very boring, but it's something that I think was good to know because now I know that my first job that's not working in a restaurant or something is probably going to be very similar to that.

EH: And also gives you an idea about what an entry-level position looks like. What else happened besides the actual work? Was there an orientation? Was there a time to talk?

S: It was more like the teacher said "I need to laminate this," and we just laminated it.

EH: Was there a way for it to have been taught that would have been more helpful, or it did the job?

S: I think it was fine. On the first day it wasn't like "this is how the lamination thing works," or "this is how the copy [machine works]." It wasn't like that. It was more like when we needed to laminate--

EH: You learned how to laminate.

S: Yeah. Also, there was a kid in my class who had also taken it before, so she explained how to do a lot of the stuff.

EH: Do a lot of students take advantage of having opportunities like the copy center? I also know that there's a restaurant-- I had breakfast one time in the cafe and... and most of the people working there except for the teachers are students. But I didn't have a sense of how many people take advantage of it.

S: There are a lot of restaurant classes. I think restaurant is a more popular class. And I don't exactly know what they do, but I've heard that there's a lot of cleaning and it's not [food prep] because then you have to clean up everything, and all of the dishes. They do have classes on sanitation and things like that, so I think they learn a little bit more about the actual [logistics of working in a restaurant].

EH: In addition to the copy center and the restaurant, is there another in-house employment--

S: No, those are the only two.

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EH: If you had a magic wand and you could make the school work in a way that you think would work for all students really well depending on different interests and different learning styles. What would you think would be really important to reinforce or to change if you had that ability?

S: As you get older you have more class options, so that's definitely something--

EH: Does that start in your junior year?

S: No, it starts in your sophomore year. So freshman year there's honors or standard, there's the five languages, there's a dance class, and then there's electives. And then sophomore year there's alternative math, there's some alternative English programs, alternative science. So it fits better for other people. It's [School within a school] a student run program on the fourth floor.

EH: Like a student government?

S: Yeah. It focuses more on English classes, so they all have their own classes. And then for english they take semester classes. Here we have the core ones, then we have two alternative, but they have a ton of different classes. They have things like classic or british literature that are all semester classes. They have a lot more options for that and they also have a bunch of other programs that help students with their needs.

I think it's hard to find a good balance for this school because there are going to be more people who want to take classes so they can get into a good college. So they might take all of the regular classes and not choose the alternative because they might be thinking about their future. Even if a class is honors credit, a lot of the time it's easier than the mainstream class. I'm in a few of the non-mainstream classes-- math and english. I was in science, but then I switched out into mainstream, so I'm in mainstream chem now, and it's definitely a lot harder than the alternative chem which was also honors level. It's harder and it's a different learning style, so depending on learning style, people--

EH: --will pick what kind of option they want, at the same time keeping their eye on what their goal is.

AM: You said that you had a sense students were taking classes based on what college they want to get into. Do you have any sense of students taking classes based on the career they want to pursue? Even just starting to think about potential careers or jobs.

S: There aren't that many different classes that you can take [as a sophomore], because no matter what classes you take, you have to take each class. But I think especially junior year it's more focused on that because then you can either take AP history or AP chem, and that's definitely a big push towards [career paths] more towards the english history more towards math and science (???). And there are some electives like Intro to Money or Business. But I think a big turn off for kids is that I heard it gives homework, so a lot of kids don't wanna take that because they'd rather take something like Cooking.

EH: Where it's done right in the classroom.

S: Yeah. I would rather take Baking than Intro to Money just because it's more interesting. But I think Intro to Money is going to be more useful (?).

EH: But it's also a different kind of learning experience too. One is much more hands-on. Are there enough hands-on options in the curriculum?

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S: Yeah. There are a lot-- there's everything from Cooking to Woodworking to Visual Arts, Drama programs. So I think Brookline High does a good job of having a lot of options for electives, but I think a lot of the options are not crucial in life.

EH: Is there any encouragement from the instructors? If it's a Baking class, do they say "This is what type of job you would have if you were a baker," or the Woodworking class-- do they have that angle, or do they just teach you how to do--

S: No, it's just-- I took Baking last year, and we just make food. So it's not "you could be a chef when you grow up."

EH: It's not connected to a career.

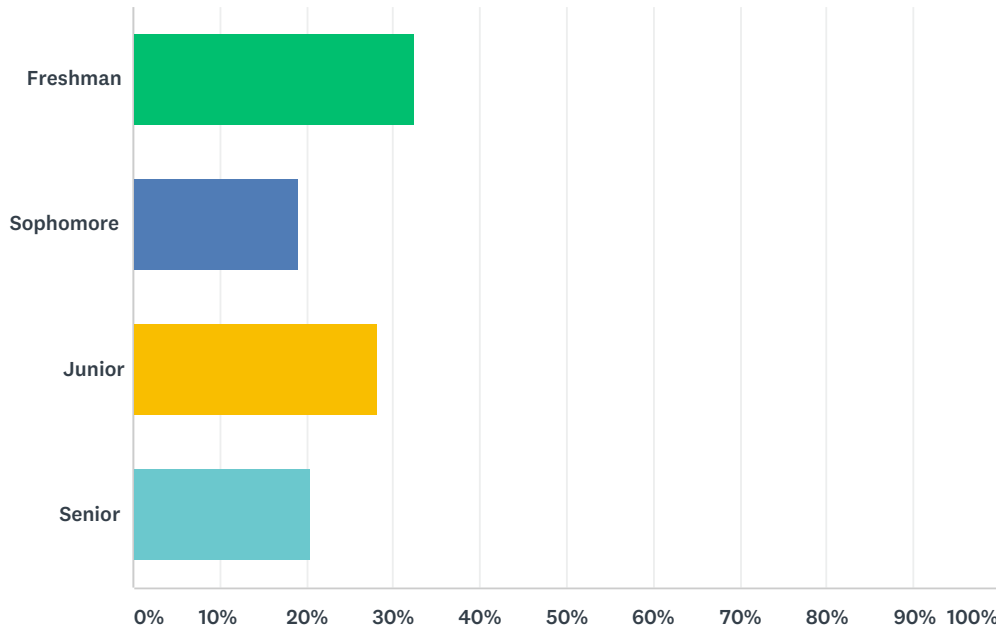
S: Yeah. It's more like "this is how you make creme brulee".

EH: Do you think it would be helpful if it was more connected to a career? Not just for you, but also when you look at the big picture, do you think as a whole it would be useful?

S: I think people underestimate how many jobs there actually are in the food industry or whatever industry they're in. Things like cooking-- there are a lot of jobs, but they're just not known. A lot of people might think of cooking as a job, they think of restaurant chef. But really there's a lot of options, including being a teacher, a cooking teacher or a lot of other things that a lot of people just don't know of.

Q1 What is your year of study at BHS? Please mark the correct answer below.

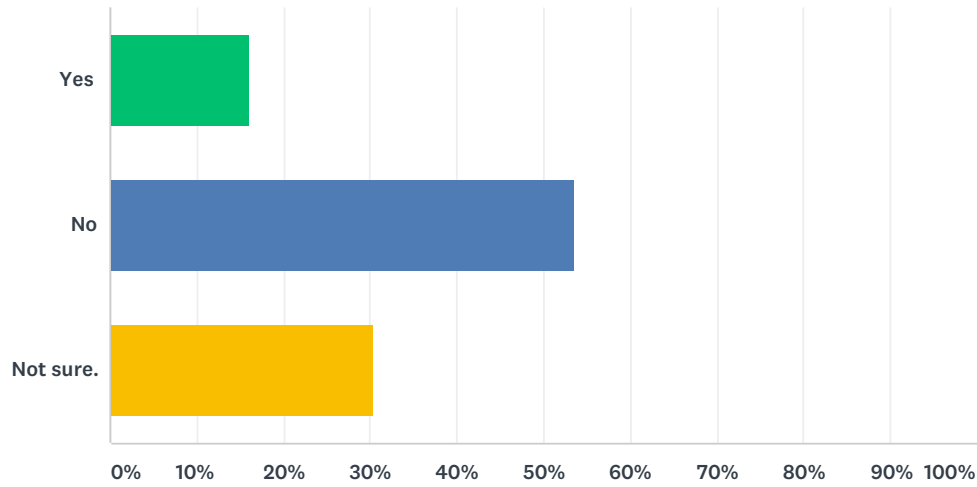
Answered: 142 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Freshman	32.39%	46
Sophomore	19.01%	27
Junior	28.17%	40
Senior	20.42%	29
TOTAL		142

Q2 Do you plan to be employed full-time upon graduation from BHS?

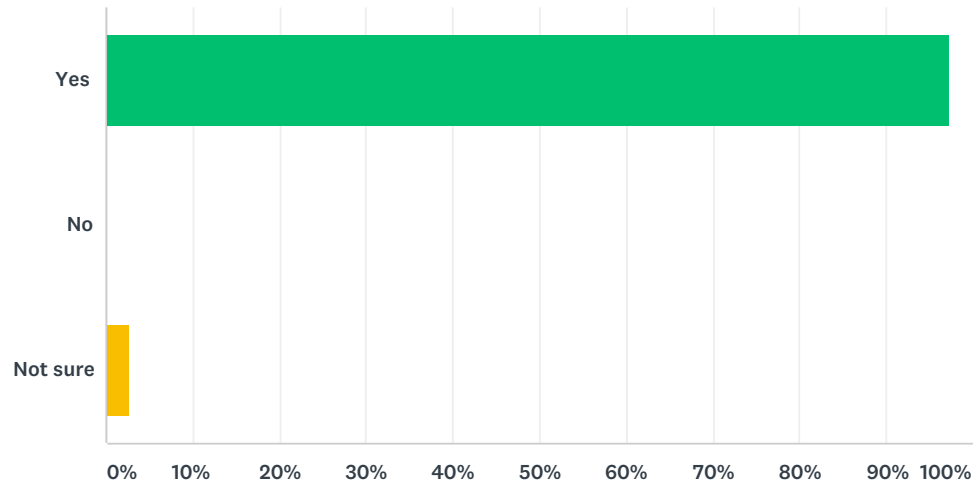
Answered: 142 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	16.20%	23
No	53.52%	76
Not sure.	30.28%	43
TOTAL		142

Q3 Do you plan to attend college after your BHS graduation?

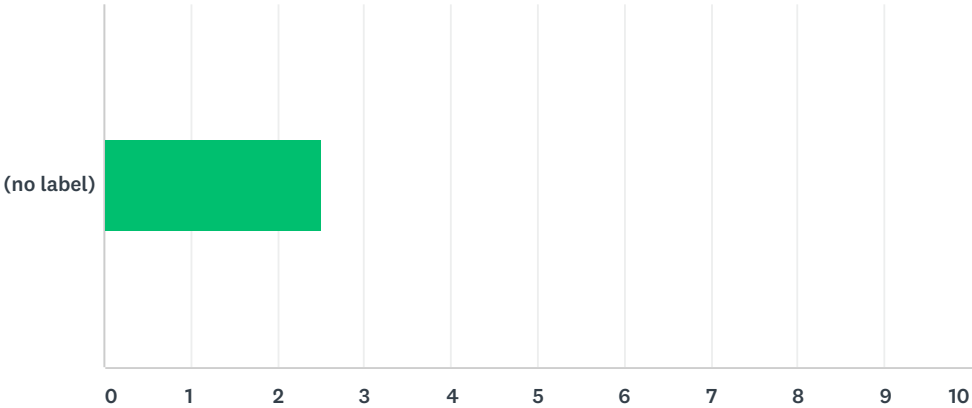
Answered: 142 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	97.18%	138
No	0.00%	0
Not sure	2.82%	4
TOTAL		142

Q4 Answer this question only if you have or had a job. If you have not started a job, please go to question #5. How prepared did you feel when you started your first job? Check the answer that best fits your experience.

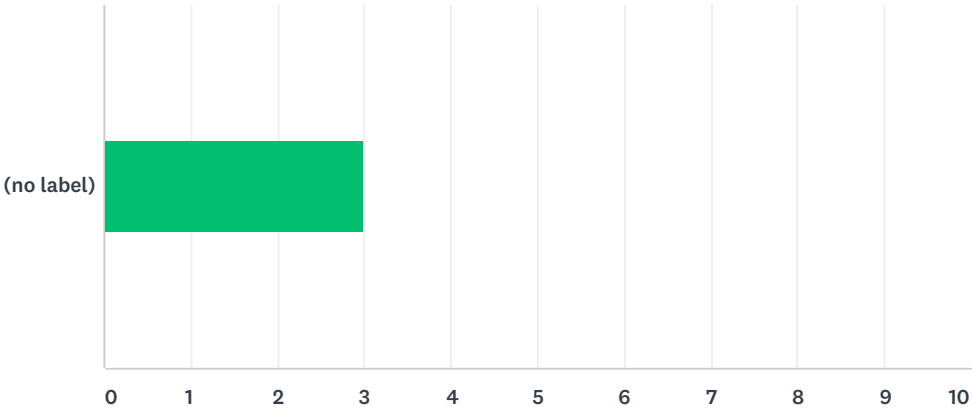
Answered: 63 Skipped: 79



	VERY PREPARED	PREPARED	NEUTRAL	UNPREPARED	VERY UNPREPARED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	14.29% 9	39.68% 25	28.57% 18	14.29% 9	3.17% 2	63	2.52

Q5 If you answered #4, please skip this question. Since you have not had a job yet, how prepared do you feel to start one?

Answered: 82 Skipped: 60



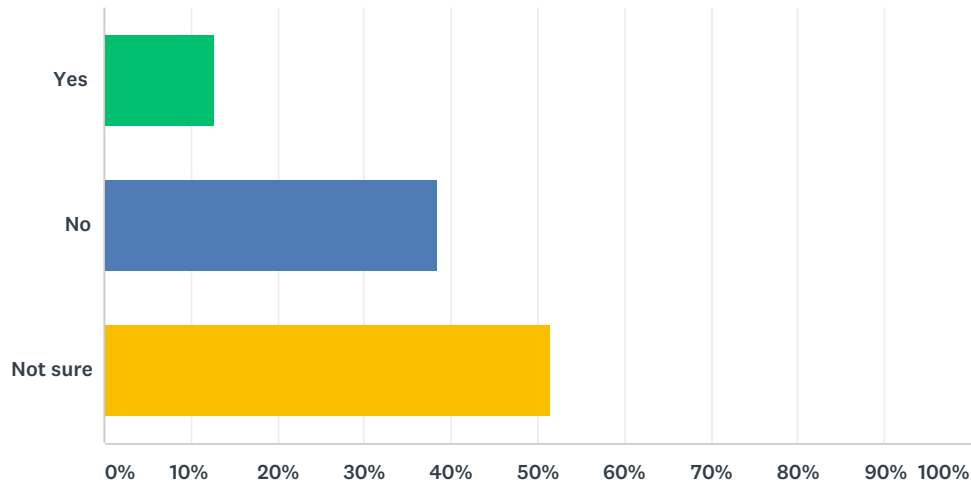
	VERY PREPARED	PREPARED	NEUTRAL	UNPREPARED	VERY UNPREPARED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	4.88% 4	30.49% 25	31.71% 26	26.83% 22	6.10% 5	82	2.99

Q6 How did you obtain your first job? If you have not worked yet, how do you think you'll get one? Write your answer one of these questions in the box below.

Answered: 121 Skipped: 21

Q7 Do you think there are enough course options for students choosing employment and not college after graduation? Please mark the answer that best shows your opinion.

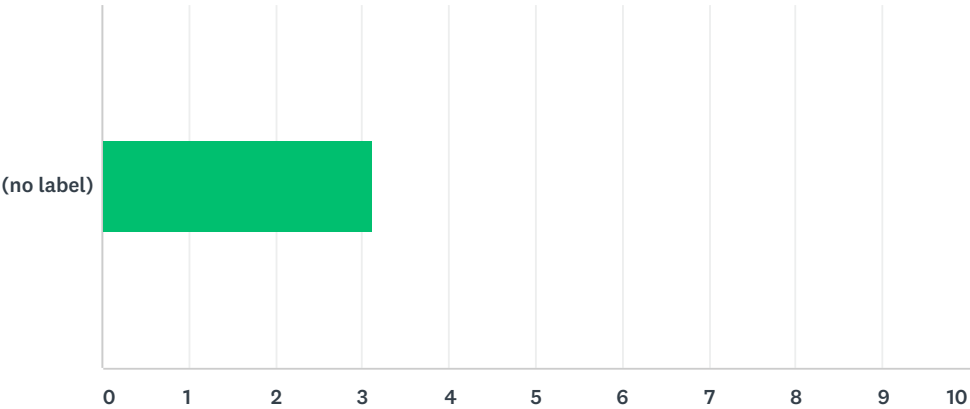
Answered: 140 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		12.86%	18
No		38.57%	54
Not sure		51.43%	72
Total Respondents: 140			

Q8 How satisfied do you think students needing programs focused on employment are served?

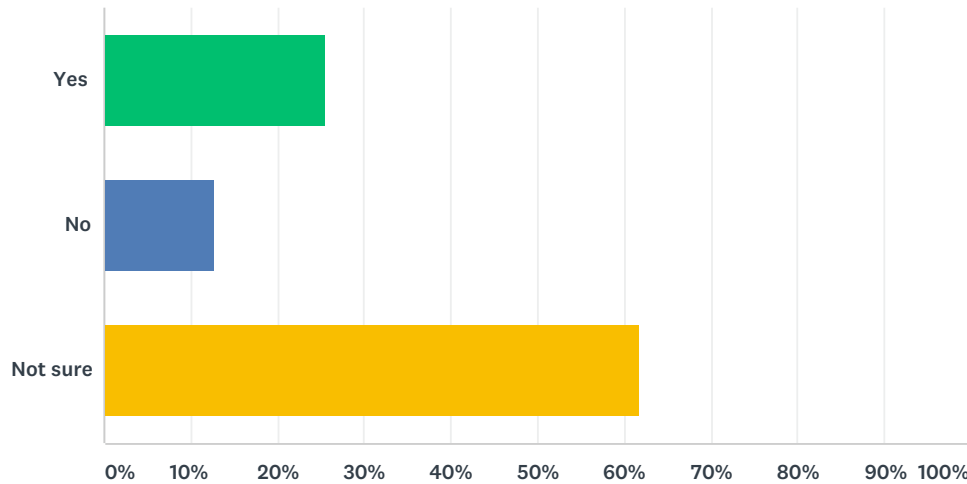
Answered: 137 Skipped: 5



	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	UNSATISFIED	VERY UNSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	2.19% 3	18.98% 26	48.18% 66	27.01% 37	3.65% 5	137	3.11

Q9 Think about your experiences and observations beyond BHS, are there job readiness services that you think need to be available by other organizations in Brookline?

Answered: 141 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	25.53%	36
No	12.77%	18
Not sure	61.70%	87
TOTAL		141

Q10 The aim of this survey is to learn about the quality of career services and resources for Brookline youth and what needs to be done to improve the system. If there is something we need to know that you did not share yet, share it in the box below.

Answered: 28 Skipped: 114

BROOKLINE TEEN JOB READINESS ASSESSMENT

Interview Summaries

Interviewee: Grace Watson

Director of the Next Steps Program, Brookline Housing Authority

July 17, 2017

Interviewer: Ellen Hewett, World Education

Context

The **Next Steps** program is a career/employment/training resource and referral program of the Brookline Housing Authority funded in part by the Brookline Community Foundation and a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The program is designed to meet the employment and job training needs of low-income Brookline residents (adults age 18+).

The goal of the interview was to understand Next Steps in relationship to the project's goals, and to learn about other sources of information and people to interview for this project.

Highlights

- Important to remember that Next Steps also works with youth (i.e., people aged 16-24).
- Need to continue to strengthen collaboration with other programs serving youth and young adults (especially the Teen Center and STEPS) to strengthen communities' capacity. Five from STEPS are a part of Next Steps each year. Grace believes that there are more out there.
- Brookline needs to overcome the sense of shame when acknowledging the people who "fail".
- Grace shared an interest in serving on advisory group. (I told Andy Martineau and he will contact her.)
- Need to interview Lisa Brown of the BHA Family Learning Centers
- Grace suggested that these research questions be shared at quarterly meeting of social service executive directors convened by Jenny Armory (Brookline Community Foundation, Executive Director)

Interview

After a reviewing the project's purpose to assess the Town's workforce training programs for youth, describing the role and membership of the advisory group, and explaining that a key issue emerging is to document the need to have a YWD system.

Ellen:

What are your initial thoughts after hearing about the project's goals?

Grace:

My point of view is informed by working with adults 18 plus with a focus on helping these adults find permanent employment to make they can Mae ends meet with their families. I have been in job 4.5 years now and have found that when we talk about employment there is, at times, an unconscious sense of competition between youth and adult employment - A false sense of competition. Service provision brings some reality to that sense. It is not necessary. It comes down to a sense of lack resources an urgency, Rather than it be service providers to find service provision for youth and adults.

Creates an unconsciousness that questions which programming is more important. There is an unconscious mentality that unskilled adults are too far gone and that all of the potential is with the youth. The youth is really seen as the future. This shows an unconscious sort of bias. Also, people need to remember that young people between ages 18-24 are considered youth. Next Steps works with this age group, too. I am interested in how we can we create more abundance that would benefit everyone.

I talked with Kara Broutin. She is a part of the negotiating process for Homewood Suites, and other Cleveland Circle hotels when they were under development. I went to the Town to see if we could guide employment hires by making demands of incoming retail and other employers to make hiring Next Step participants a priority. Town said could not allow for making a preference list.

The relationship between Next Steps and Steps to Success is evolving/changing. Emphasis on the youth that are not college bound and are falling through the cracks. That is, they may not be meeting the standards that Steps has. These youths may have dropped out, stepped away from accepting help from Steps to Success. Also, I would love to reach out to these kids in the fall of their junior year. In the cohort of students who are active in Steps - most go to college. Only a handful do not."

Ellen:

How many STEPS grads. do you work with each year?

Grace:

As you know, I work with people/youth between the ages of 16-24. I work with youth who are struggling. Every year work with 5 from STEPS - sure there are more out there.

Grace gave an example of a young man she is working with who was kicked out of high school - complicated story. He earned his GED and is not interested in college. She is encouraging him to do so. He came to Next Steps when he was aid off. Grace thinks that he might have a learning disability.

Questions I have regarding STEPS include: How is involvement in STEPS measured? There are kids who fall by the wayside - not college bound. What do they do with the stats of the juniors who drop out of school? Once a kid drops out of STEPS - there is a statute of limitations with kids' participation in steps once they drop out. What is the policy on this?

Ellen:

Where do you think that I might find data to demonstrate the need of a youth workforce development system?

Grace:

There might be information in the STEPS - Summer Employment and CDBG reporting, and other grants might be a source of this data. Also, it might be useful to pose this question at the Executive Directors Round Table - once a quarter. Key service providers are there. BCF's Jenny Amory convenes it. It is for everyone's benefits to talk about this explicitly and talk about boundary lines to benefit everyone to the maximum. Need to define the boundary lines to collaborate and not standing on each other's toes. Responding to Teen Center awkwardness.

Reciprocity. Mutual referrals. In Brookline there is a siloing. It there is a way to enter into a conversation that is more pointed - directed. Defining parameters, Would enrich work. Create a greater efficiency and capacity. There might be longitudinal information on parents and kids re: STEPS

How to strategize having the conversations to make it more collaborative?

Love to overcome the sense of shame when it comes to acknowledging the people who “fail”. Love for the town to embrace it.

The interview ended with Grace sharing some referrals: Brookline Housing managers (big one), mental health center, STEPS for success (parents), food pantry, public health. Brookline Housing does have open houses for service providers, etc. There are outreach opportunities. SOL program has referred many people to Grace, too. Also, Megan Smith at the **Ross Service Coordinator** with Brookline Community Health Cenyt. megansmith@brooklinecenter.org . **Women and Girls Thriving and Surviving**: Brought together every service provider in town as well as key leaders like town selectman, church leaders, etc. Contact: Ann Brackett brackettgroup@gmail.com July 17, 2017

Interviewee: Jennifer Lemire
Director of Programs and Grants
Brookline Community Foundation
August 8, 2017
Interviewer: Ellen Hewett

Context

The Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) is a non-profit organization established in 1999 with a mission to shine a spotlight on community needs, inspire philanthropy and award strategic grants to build a more equitable Brookline. The BCF produced two reports: *Understanding Brookline: Emerging Trends and Changing Needs* and a follow-up report *Understanding Brookline: A Report on Poverty* that explains who makes up the 13% poverty rate (based on the 2010 U.S. Census) in Brookline, what factors cause financial stress, and highlights Brookline agencies already addressing poverty and the resources they currently provide. The second publication helped create a context for WEI’s assessment effort.

Highlights

- No additional research regarding system alignment and poverty has been done since *Understanding Brookline: A Report on Poverty* (2014).
- System needs more integration and connection with at-risk populations.
- Goal of the project supported affirming the challenge involved in documenting the need for change to address the needs of low-income youth in Brookline.

Interview

The interview started after reviewing the project’s purpose to assess the Town’s workforce training programs for youth, describing the role and purpose of the Advisory Group, and expressing appreciation for the report, *Understanding Brookline: A Report on Poverty*.

Ellen:

What are your initial thoughts after hearing the project’s goals?

Jennifer:

There are gaps in services. I readily agree there is a need to better offer all youth more post high school options. A key challenge is documenting the need to expand options. As you know, we are dealing with two different worlds: families with means, and organizations with youth from low-income families.

Ellen:

Do you know of research that will be useful to this project?

Jennifer:

There is no additional information has been collected since the report on Brookline poverty. Most of what I know is anecdotal. I hear that there is an increase in requests for summer program slots. A key challenge of BCF is that when speaking of gaps and low-income issues one hears, "There is not this need in Brookline." When, as you know, the 2010 census data report indicated a 13% increase in poverty since the prior census.

Ellen:

Please expand on what you hear anecdotally.

Jennifer: The Emerald Necklace Conservancies project is seeing an increase in the number of applications. The Brookline Interactive Group (BIG)* provides media and employment training to students. I understand that there is an increase in applications there, too.

Note: Jennifer then shared programs aimed at people with intellectual disabilities. Since it is not the scope of this work, I am not including the information.

Interview closed with appreciation.

*EH followed up to learn more about BIG. In the fall of 2017, they hired 10 BHS students to be a part of their media team. The pay was \$11/hour for 2-5 hours/week. The work included filming community event, editing video footage, designing graphics, and programming code for VR

Interviewee: Lisa Brown

Program Director, Family Learning Centers, Brookline Housing Authority

August 17, 2017

Interviewer: Ellen Hewett

Context

The **Family Learning Centers**, located in three family developments of the Brookline Housing Authority, provides free computer access and training to BHA residents. Staff also provides homework help and assistance in filling out forms like job applications, looking up information online, applying for jobs or any other computer related activity you have in mind. The goal of the interview was to understand more about the needs of youth, and better understand the dynamics among the different social service organizations in Brookline.

Highlights

There needs to be an integrated system linking opportunities, information, and resources.

STEPS (high school program) needs to be more connected with community services and look beyond college as the measure of success. (See brief description of STEPS at end of interview document.)

Interview

The interview started after reviewing the project's purpose to assess the Town's workforce training programs for youth, describing the role and purpose of the Advisory Group, and reminding Lisa that her colleague, Grace Watson, encouraged this interview.

Ellen:

Please tell me about your background and what inspires you in your work.

Lisa:

I am new in my position as the Program Director for the BHA Family Learning Centers. Prior to taking this job, I worked for 15-16 years with Brookline Public Schools with early education, middle school, and the high school programs. I worked two years at the high school as the in-school suspension coordinator. My growing up in a BHA home and my work in the public schools give me a unique way to be a bridge between the BHA and Steps to Success (STS)*. I was once one of these kids. Someone helped me become strong. I want to do the same for others.

Ellen:

Do think that youth need help in finding a job? If so, what do you see as their needs?

Lisa:

Yes! They need support. A common issue I see is the challenge of their needing to know how to sit for an interview and do a job application. They need help in not only filling out the form, they need to be able to think strategically and to ask questions.

Ellen:

Right. Go on, please.

Lisa:

There was this high school student who wanted to work at Star Market. He needed an adult to speak to his character and be a contact. When he asked me to be this person, I agreed but also told him that first he needed to problem solve around issues of professionalism with me. He needed guidance on how to dress, how to make sure to be on time, and topics like that. These kinds of guidance are needed for most of the youth I know when it comes to work. They need to know how to do follow-up and to communicate with their supervisor once they get the job. Be prepared to deal with a school and/or life issue that might conflict with their work.

I want the Family Learning Center to do more. The three centers are open three days a week for two hours each day. Using the computer lab is popular. About 300 <residents>pass through the centers in a given month. Close to half would benefit with work skills, soft skills, and how to get work permits. Coaching is important. It would be good to structure job training more, coaching them to follow-up on their interview, etc.

Ellen:

Right. That is good to keep in mind. What about Career Place in the high school? Other services?

Lisa:

They are helpful at the Career Place, but maybe folks would be more comfortable here or at the Brookline Teen Center. The Teen Center offers an alternative to college day for youth not interested in college.

Ellen:

Thanks. This is good information for me to have. What else do you see is needed to support youth employment?

Lisa:

There is a need for an integrated system linking opportunities and resources, and more connection with STEPS. In the summer STEPS does a lot for summer employment, but many outgrow the jobs and STEPS can not grow it. It would be good for kids to have a choice.

In Brookline, students are expected to go to college. Kids in general think that this has to happen. When the need arises, I talk with kids to let them know that there are choices: learn a trade or a skill. Go to a community college. I am sure that there is a percentage of students that need to make a choice between playing a sport and needing a job. It is hard to do both.

I meet mainly with boys about jobs after high school. They seem to be the most interested in becoming an automotive technician. Perhaps they could start by being oil changers. Girls seem to be more interested in the college path. Also, they seem better in negotiating the tasks.

Ellen:

Would you speak more about the need for an integrated system?

Lisa:

Sure. It seems that more people are doing more about this issue. But there is no formal sharing of information. The Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) did pull together a meeting in May 2017 to see how to help the community do a better job coordinating information and efforts.

Ellen:

I will check this out more with Jennifer Lemire at BCF. Thanks for giving me the information so that I can do that follow up. I am interested in having a chance to talk with the youth and parents, separately, to learn more about their experiences. It would build upon what you have shared with me. Do you think it is possible to hold a focus group here before school ends to help me learn more about their needs?

Lisa:

Holding it here is not a problem. I will canvas the possible participants when I am at the three centers to see if there might be interest. Most STEPS participants are from the BHA and it is rare for them to have a group meeting. Having it at the Brookline Teen Center might be a better option because of their summer youth employment programs.

Ellen:

Thanks for checking this out, Lisa. I will talk with Brandon at the Teen Center about it.

Closed interview with a tour of space and my appreciation.

Overview of STEPS to Success from the Brookline High School website:

Steps to Success (STS), originally created in 1991 as the Brookline School-Community Partnership, is a comprehensive educational achievement program that provides academic support and enrichment and year-round youth development activities for students of low income. Working with young people in Grades 4 through college, STS seeks to create educational equity and to help end generational poverty. Prior to Steps to Success, only 30-50% of students living in public housing matriculated to college. Now, with eight cohorts of STS high school graduates, over 90% of these students are accepted to institutions of higher education. Though nationally only 6-8% of the lowest income quartile of students graduate with their college degrees in six years (by age 24), 70-75% of STS college students are on track to graduate in that timeframe.