

January 2013 Minutes

Northeast Minnesota
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD MEETING
Iron Range Rehabilitation Center Auditorium – Virginia
Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Regularly scheduled meeting called to order by Chair Stone at 10:20 a.m.

WIB members present:

Bud Stone, Jill Anderson, Paul Carlson, Sue Collins, Janet Eichholz, Terri Nystrom, Allen Rasmussen, Roland Root, Mike Valentine

Excused: John Grahek, Betsy Harmon, Dave Hart

Absent: Tom Jamar, Craig Pagel, Kevin Pietrini, Mitch Robertson, Al Rudeck, Kelly Zink

Guests: Paula Frings, Deborah Hilde, Laverne Hakly, Jo Johnson, Amie Furlong, Roy Smith

Staff: Michelle Ufford, Renee' Marconett

Motion was made by Carlson, supported by Valentine to approve the November 28, 2012 minutes as written; motion carried unanimously.

Chair Stone began meeting by introducing guest panelists Deborah Hilde, Superintendent-Eveleth/Gilbert School District; Laverne Hakly, Principal-Virginia High School; Jo Johnson, Communications Teacher-Virginia High School; and Amie Furlong, Guidance Counselor-Nashwauk/Keewatin High School.

Ufford updated board members and panelists of two strategies the WIB will focus over the next 12 months. 1) Work towards development of a continuum of curriculum and career exploration opportunities from early grades on by connecting existing resources and developing new protocol and resources where gaps exist and, 2) Develop strategy to engage parents in thoughtful, educated career planning for their students.

The panelists were asked a series of questions with input from all Board members participating in a lengthy discussion.

Some of the top challenges students face in successfully transitioning from high school include as indicated by panelists include:

- *Money and repaying loans
- *Really understanding what kind of life they want to live
- *Emotional issues of attending a 4 year college and not getting a job
- *Not being ready for college and taking wrong programs resulting in lost time and money

Panelists indicated that the biggest need schools have are resources to connect students with the business community to provide meaningful career exploration opportunities. Additional responses to a variety of questions have been grouped into the four broad categories below:

Timing of Career Planning

- Begin career exploration before 8th grade level – start in the 6th grade with an initial assessment and have face to face meeting with parents/students/counselors to outline what the student interests include. Explore these opportunities over the next few years and by 9th grade, identify 2-3 careers that are of interest to the student and provide opportunities to explore those more in depth.
- Have a career day for elementary students in 5-6th grade. Give them a list of careers they want to learn about. Have presenters in groups to give an overview of each career. Learn about 3 careers and do again in 6th grade. Go more in-depth as they get older and coursework. Kids get excited to meet a professional for the first time, but not too in-depth at a young age.
- Develop an individualized learning plan at elementary level and discuss with parent and student. Then look at giving them an assessment, skill levels, and consider exploring further careers. Start with 5-6th grade.

Barriers Students and Schools Face in Accessing Career Exploration Opportunities

- Students don't believe what teachers/counselors tell them
- Too many choices for students is challenging and overwhelming
- Students in poverty need a positive role model in their lives. Mentoring or relationship with a teacher may be their most positive role model. No relationship/nobody cares, the student is lost. Every student needs a support system/mentor
- Not knowing the 'jobs of the future' and how to prepare students early for them
- The State dictates required coursework for high school graduation. This limits what additional electives are available for students, which takes away opportunities for career exploration.
- Students involved in after school activities and/or work, so this also takes away from career exploration on their own time.
- Seems to be a bigger struggle if student wants to stay in this area – perception of limited job opportunities
- Challenge of keeping a job – No people skills, motivation, procrastinators. Talk to employers to see what skill sets are missing. Specifically identify a list of skill sets.
- State requirements leading to kids not being ready; system not driven by workplace readiness
- Huge discrepancy between high school standards and college standards. Need to figure out as a region and close gap.
- Lack of resources for supporting job shadowing activities (schools face transportation issues for students, costs, etc.)

Suggested Methods of Providing Career Exploration Opportunities

- After school community education classes at a grade school level has a very successful attendance rate. After school programs for older grades will not be as well received because of other commitments like work and extracurricular activities.
- More opportunities to develop mentorships
- Teach 'invaluables' of self-discipline, hard work, and staying out of trouble
- Go to the workplace and observe the professionals working in specific fields; learning from people in the field is monumental and has a tremendous impact
- Divide groups of students according to their interest. For example, if 20 students interested in health care profession, bring in professionals in the health care field on a quarterly basis or take students into the work place; this could be done across districts to create cohorts of students with similar interests
- Develop ways of using technology - most career exploration is done by reading. There is a need for more hands-on experience. Professionals can answer specific questions and what classes students need to take throughout high school. 'Virtual' tours of career exploration – easy and cheap.
- Offer students incentives for job shadowing/internships, i.e. extra credit/money
- Teacher learning academies to learn about local industry and occupations such as the Regional Applied Math Project in order to get a better sense of what they are preparing students for.

Parents Involvement in Career Planning

- Working parents – work schedules prevent them from providing support and guidance
- Parents aren't experts on all careers. Suggest Workforce Centers provide small video clips of background information on a few careers and links for parents to access additional information on specific careers. This might encourage students to go into a different field.
- A personal telephone contact to parents regarding what their children may want to do, financial aid, etc. is very encouraging and appreciated by most parents
- Put together some resources for parents to discuss career planning with their children
- Look for a variety of ways to communicate with all levels of parents – senior parents, poverty, middle of the road, upper income. Email, district websites, and send home written notices.
- Make notices short and more direct – do not include a lot of attachments. Podcast showing what's new, email. If they want more information, click on link. Five minutes, short and sweet. No one has time anymore – fast paced lifestyles.
- Conference night – pair it with talking to parents about career exploration. Extend time frame. Engage parents with employers. Panelists noted, according to teacher contracts, there is not enough time for both conferences and career exploration. There are too many kids.
- Get more parents involved from K-12, continue to participate in kid's activities

Chair Stone thanked the panelists for their expertise and time taken in providing valuable information for the WIB to discuss and start strategizing further options to move forward.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Posted: Feb 27th, 2013 2:10 PM