



Career Pathways More Promising Practices

Entered Postsecondary Education or Training
Entered Employment
Retained Employment

Each year the Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Adult Education (Division) recognizes agencies that have the highest rate of students' transition to postsecondary education and transition to employment. The Division also acknowledges agencies with the highest rate of retained employment. This Promising Practices brief identifies programs and their area of recognition along with interventions and strategies that may contribute to their success.

The development of this resource was supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education. However, it does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education and no official endorsement by these agencies should be inferred.

Altoona Area School District

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Entered Postsecondary: 26%

Entered Employment: 49%

Altoona Area School District has established strategic alliances with education organizations and potential employers. In turn, students capitalize on these alliances to meet their goals. The foundation for most of the alliances is the PA CareerLink[®]. The PA CareerLink[®] not only refers students to the program but also communicates job opportunities. And when General Cable recently closed, former employees were sent to the adult education program for assessment--critical for proper academic and employment placement. Altoona Area School District provides a class at the PA CareerLink[®] and case managers from the District make regular visits to be updated on the most recent employment news.

Another potential reason for the successful entered postsecondary rate for Altoona Area School District are the established partnerships with the Greater Altoona Career and Technical Center, York Technical Institute, and Penn Highlands Community College. These institutions offer an array of programs where students can transition from the adult education program to one of these postsecondary providers to pursue their occupational goals. An LPN career pathway is currently in place and planning for a CDL pathway is underway. Having the established pathways for students who will be work ready and making the connections to postsecondary are promising practices for Altoona Area School District.¹

¹ Information provided by Tina Swineford, Altoona Area School District.

Bradford County Action

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Retained Employment: 79%

Bradford County Action takes a unique approach to having such a high retained employment rate. This agency immerses students in a culture of getting and staying employed. Students are exposed to information about the labor market in the Bradford County area almost daily. From the first day of class, Bradford County Action keeps students focused on getting and keeping a job. “If you don’t have a job, we will get you one,” is often heard at Bradford County Action. Helping students get jobs or maintain employment while improving their academic skills is accomplished through a partnership with PA CareerLink®. PA CareerLink® staff provides labor market intelligence about the region, which helps to inform both staff and students. A job developer at Bradford County Action is the chair of PA CareerLink® Business Services Team and interacts with business and industry to develop potential and existing opportunities for students.

Bradford County has numerous employment opportunities for their students across different industries. By providing career awareness and preparation for their students, a significant number of Bradford County students are able to maintain employment while pursuing their goals. ²

² Information provided by Penne Watkins, Bradford County Action.

Central Intermediate Unit #10 (CIU #10)

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Entered Postsecondary: 45%

Retained Employment: 77%

CIU #10 serves three counties (Centre, Clinton, and Clearfield) and has five classrooms located across the three county area. Consistency among the delivery sites and providing access to all the services was a challenge for CIU #10. As a result, a focused and intensive case management model was implemented. Staff believe that close monitoring of students' progress and establishing definitive career goals and pathways help students retain employment and enter postsecondary programs.

With a diverse student population, it was important for the CIU #10 staff to understand the challenges as well as the strengths of its clientele. Examining the barriers to employment was an area of focus, as well as assessment, career planning, and facilitation.

A potential reason for the high employment retention rate was an open class model where students could choose the time they participated in instruction. With flexible participation and focused case management, employment did not become one of the barriers preventing students attending class. ³

³ Information provided by Jenna Witherite, Central Intermediate Unit 10.

Employment & Training, Inc.

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Entered Postsecondary: 31%

Employment & Training, Inc. is located in the Huntingdon County, PA CareerLink[®]. This partnership has resulted in a “system of opportunity” that has provided more services for students as well as helping them meet their program and individual student goals.

The “system of opportunity” starts with both the Employment & Training staff and the PA CareerLink[®] staff being knowledgeable and informed about one another’s services and roles. Below are some examples of how this collaborative model works:

- Employment & Training staff members participate in weekly PA CareerLink[®] meetings.
- Employment & Training is a member of the Business Services Team.
- Employment & Training receives timely information on local labor market information, career fairs, and participates in PA CareerLink[®] trainings.

The Employment & Training program has been extremely successful in transitioning their customers to short term training programs such as CDL, CNA, and LPN. This success is attributed to a thorough initial assessment and on-going monitoring of the student’s progress.⁴

⁴ Information provided by Barbara Covert, Employment and Training, Inc.

Greater Erie Community Action Center (GECAC)

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Entered Employment 56%

Retained Employment 73%

GECAC's success in the areas of entered employment and retained employment may be the result of a comprehensive process that addresses both the social and the career goals of their students.

GECAC provides a class at PA CareerLink® and conducts the TABE testing for all eligible adult students at the PA CareerLink®. This relationship has enabled increased interaction with PA CareerLink® staff to learn about employment trends, job fairs, and potential job openings in identified sectors. Many GECAC students find employment in hospitality/tourism and healthcare sectors from the information received from the PA CareerLink®.

GECAC has also integrated and adapted several activities and lessons to prepare students for employment. Preparation starts with a two-day orientation where the participants discuss their first SMART goal plan related to employment or postsecondary. Classroom instruction includes labor market data for the Northwest region (High Priority Occupations) and City of Erie. Because GECAC staff has recognized that one of the barriers to employment for many students is the lack of a driver's license, much of the focus is on opportunities that exist within the City of Erie, where public transportation and jobs in hospitality/tourism and healthcare sectors are available.

GECAC also provides an ongoing introduction to career clusters by introducing one career cluster each week with related activities and instruction. Career and college

workshops are provided throughout the year and include resume writing, completing FAFSA, and examining entrance requirements for postsecondary schools for students to build their knowledge. GECAC staff and students learn from each other throughout the application and interview process. Staff also personally recognize students who are invited for interviews and celebrate together when a student has attained employment. This recognition encourages classroom discussion and provides hope to others to move forward.⁵

⁵ Information provided by Teresa Swoger, Greater Erie Community Action Center.

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC)

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Entered Employment 50%

GPLC has created direct pathways to employment for their students. For example, GPLC has initiated and cultivated relationships with the hotel and casino industries so that the agency has become a direct contact for many human resource departments' future employees.

Employers value their relationships with GPLC because staff have learned about the company's expectations and developed a supplemental class for students interested in applying for jobs at the casino. Once hired, employers are willing to work around students' schedules so they can continue to build their academic skills.

A transition manager has been added to the staff at GPLC to implement a more focused employment strategy which includes industry tours, mock interviews, and a career fair. Participation in these events increases every year. Recently, GPLC worked with Burlington Coat Factory (retail) and BNY Mellon (check processing); both have expressed interest in establishing a career pathway for interested students. It is interesting to note that many of the students are resettled refugees from Bhutan, Iraq, and Syria and have literacy issues not only in English but in their own language. ⁶

⁶ Information provided by Lori Como, Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council.

Lincoln Intermediate Unit #12

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Retained Employment: 76%

Although Lincoln IU #12 covers three counties (York, Adams, and Franklin), staff has been able to provide individualized attention to their students. With two full-time case managers and two full-time literacy coordinators, Lincoln IU #12 staff meet with students weekly to provide assistance and direction in their academic and employment goals.

A number of their students come from immigration court in the City of York and already have employment. Students have been able to attain employment fairly easily in the agricultural sector at chicken/turkey processing plants as well as other food processing plants. Given that students time for instruction may be limited during peak seasons, students are permitted to attend classes at any of the sites and times that are convenient to them.

Lincoln IU #12 is also expanding on-site instruction at the various work sites of students. They are currently providing services for students at Eldorado Stone to address any potential work or transportation conflicts. Lincoln IU #12 is fortunate to receive funding from various organizations such as the York Economic Alliance, Franklin County Coalition, and various corporations that enable them to provide special services for their students. Services such as providing transportation for

interviews and other situations allows Lincoln IU #12 to establish supportive relationships with their students while helping them reach their goals.⁷

⁷ Information provided by Sharon Hagenberger, Lincoln IU 12.

The Literacy Center

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Retained Employment: 79%

The Literacy Center in the Lehigh Valley is very fortunate to have many employment opportunities for their students. In fact, most of their students are employed in jobs that pay \$12 per hour or more and offer overtime; however, a majority of students want to obtain better jobs. As a result, providing access for students to continue their employment while attending classes is a priority.

Career pathways have been established in the warehouse sector (Amazon.com) and healthcare (home health) and are successful for bi-lingual candidates. Bi-lingual home health aides are in high demand as well as bi-lingual translators for parent conferences with the Allentown School District. By having classes that continually focus on the workplace and employment opportunities and paths, The Literacy Center creates a culture of continued employment.

By offering daytime and evening classes, students can balance their work and school schedules. The Literacy Center is also community focused and offers a supportive environment for many students. Specifically, immigrants who are in survival mode or immigrants that have professional training find The Literacy Center as a place to explore new opportunities and expand their skills. ⁸

⁸ Information provided by MaryAnn Przekurat, The Literacy Center.

Seneca Highlands IU #9

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Retained Employment 86%

Seneca Highlands IU #9 serves customers at the PA CareerLink® in Potter and McKean counties. In classes not on-site, Seneca Highlands IU #9 maintains a relationship with the partners, as direct communication and contact with the PA CareerLink® has led to the success of their students in retaining employment. The information from the PA CareerLink® is disseminated to the students so employment opportunities are always being presented and discussed.

Seneca Highlands IU #9 instructors serve on the PA CareerLink® Business Services Team. Seneca Highlands IU #9 staff are kept fully abreast of labor market sectors in the North Central Pennsylvania region such as oil & gas, wood products, powdered metals, and retail. The adult education program director is a member of the North Central Workforce Development Board and the PA CareerLink® Operator Consortium and has access to the business and industry leaders in the region.

Staff indicate that flexible scheduling may be a reason for the high “retained employment” percentage. In McKean County, the instructor and a partner agency’s employability counselor schedule early morning and evening classes to provide access for their students. This has resulted in decreased absenteeism and a healthier work-life balance for their students.⁹

⁹ Information provided by Kelly Okerlund Davis, Seneca Highlands IU 9.

Somerset Career and Technical Center

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Entered Postsecondary 38%

Entered Employment 48%

Retained Employment 74%

Somerset Career and Technical Center is one of three programs that have excelled in each of the three reporting areas of entered employment, retained employment, and entered postsecondary.

Somerset Career and Technical Center attributes their success to several areas:

- Case managers create client goals that are focused to career pathways (employment, transition to postsecondary, and retaining employment).
- Case managers emphasize documentation and track clients' goals which are ongoing and constant.
- Adult education instructors implement a "LPN Prep" program where much of the academic content that is taught is sector-focused (medical terminology and medical math.)
- Adult education instructors have access to CTE instructors in various fields to help contextualize instruction. For example, adult education instructors have collaborated with welding, building construction, and precision machining CTE instructors to integrate concepts into their instruction from the occupational areas.
- Adult education instructors contextualize a study skills program for entrance to the LPN an CDL programs.

Somerset Career and Technical Center also utilizes peer coaching and a critical friends group to improve instruction and student learning by providing a strong network of support and effective feedback. ¹⁰

¹⁰ Information provided by Jennie Jamieson, Somerset Career and Technical School.

Tuscarora Intermediate Unit #11 (TIU #11)

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Entered Employment 48%

TIU #11 employs certain strategic practices that enhance the number of students transitioning to the workforce. One practice is collaboration with their PA CareerLink® and partners. TIU # 11 ensures that adult education program participants are integrated into the PA CareerLink® customer flow process, enhancing the student experience.

Because TIU #11 is housed in the same building as the PA CareerLink®, there are numerous opportunities to create experiences for students to engage with employers. Events such as job fairs, career fairs, recruitment events, support for completing applications, and resume building are attended by students as well as non-students. The connection between adult education at TIU # 11 and the PA CareerLink® is seamless. In fact, students see themselves as going to the PA CareerLink® to access services, not just going to adult education classes.

In collaboration with PA CareerLink® partners, TIU #11 has developed a *Career Planning Seminar* that both adult education students and PA CareerLink® customers, such as adult dislocated workers and out of school youth, may attend. Adult education students are required to attend the seminar as part of their individual learning plan. The two-hour course covers local labor market data, major county employers, O*NET, and High Priority Occupations. The *Career Planning Seminar* sets a tone that students are not just here for a secondary diploma but also to gain employment.

TIU #11 has adopted the practice of continuous improvement of delivery of services and processes for its students. TIU #11 is always asking the question of “what happens next” from the time students enter the program to when the students’ goals have been met. By constantly examining their processes, TIU #11 has provided students an efficient and an effective pathway for students to meet their goal. ¹¹

¹¹ Information provided by Dyan Schauer, TIU 11.

Tri-County OIC

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Entered Employment 55%

Retain Employment 73%

Entered Postsecondary 29%

Tri-County OIC Adult Learning Center is one of three programs to have been recognized in all three categories. Tri-County OIC is a large program that encompasses three counties and includes five subcontractors : Employment Skills Center, Carlisle; Perry County Literacy Council, Newport; Catholic Charities, Harrisburg; Harrisburg Area Community College, Harrisburg; and Dauphin County Prison, Harrisburg.

With Tri-County OIC, it all begins when a client walks in one of its many doors. The question is asked, *“What is the person going to do after he or she gets the secondary diploma.”* Case managers have a laser like focus on helping students plan their career pathway either to obtain a job with one of the industry streams they have developed (UPS, Amazon, or health care providers to name just a few) or to transition to a postsecondary program like Harrisburg Area Community College. Tri-County OIC has established specific employment streams with local companies to provide their students with opportunities which are listed below.

For students who are unsure of their career path, Tri-County OIC case managers work with the local Capital Region PA CareerLink® on helping students understand their aptitude, strengths, and the labor market to make an informed decision about their

future. Whether a student arrives at Tri-County OIC with a career plan or not, Tri-County OIC will have students on the employment track from day one.

Some examples of transition streams at Tri-County OIC:

UPS

UPS is an active recruiter at Tri-County OIC. At informational events UPS grills hot dogs and provides refreshments for students while sharing information about employment opportunities with the company. UPS has a demand for employees who can work various shifts and hours depending on the seasonality of the year. These informal socials give UPS and the students a chance to see if there is a match between the two.

Amazon

Amazon has fulfillment centers near Harrisburg and Carlisle and actively recruits from Tri-County OIC for employees. Capital Area Transit offers bus service from Harrisburg to the Amazon fulfillment center in Carlisle with two roundtrips Monday-Friday to meet the shift times for Amazon employees. By providing transportation for employees, Amazon has maintained a consistent workforce with low turnover.

Forklift, CTL, CLA Certification

Tri-County OIC has partnered with Harrisburg Area Community College and Dauphin County Technical School for high demand occupations in warehousing and logistics. Since Harrisburg is a transportation and warehousing hub, Tri-County has arranged for its students to get the proper certifications for a career in logistics and warehousing. Additionally, OIC has worked with the Manufacturer's Association of York to help students obtain their forklift certification and their CLT (Certified Logistics Technician) and CLA (Certified Logistics Assistant) - two industry recognized certifications.

CNA Training

The Employment Skills Center of Carlisle offers free CNA training for students who are interested in a career in healthcare. The clinical component is paid for by a local health consortium. The pre-clinical academic remediation and work preparations classroom components are delivered by the adult basic education provider. Students who pass the CNA examination are guaranteed employment with a local healthcare provider.

Call Center Agents

Perry County Literacy Council has created a school-to-work program that prepares students to work as call center agents in its own for-profit business. Employment is waiting for them once they obtain the required customer service certifications and complete job readiness preparation courses. Students can also work to attain their secondary diploma while in the program.

Tri-County OIC and its subcontractors have established a culture of preparing its students to transition to the workforce and or postsecondary training immediately upon enrolling in the program. This focus results in promising employment opportunities for students. The reassurance that employment is a strong possibility upon earning a secondary diploma is very motivational for students. ¹²

¹² Information provided by Jeff Woodyard, Tri-County OIC.