

Workforce Development in Afterschool Prepares Youth for the 21st Century

Current research highlights an increasingly **unmet demand for skilled workers**, particularly for middle-skill workers – those who have some postsecondary education but not a four-year college degree – even as opportunities and salaries for middle-skill jobs continue to increase.¹ Labor market analyses predict that this **job-skills mismatch will only grow** without major changes in the educational and training pathways that lead to these jobs.² While technological advancements and globalization contribute to the drastic changes in the labor market, a growing number of employers across job sectors point to **deficiencies in essential skills** – skills such as professionalism, work ethic, oral and written communication, teamwork, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving – as one of the main causes of this jobs-skills mismatch.

Afterschool programs provide a powerful opportunity to mentor students on positive relationships, teach job and life skills, and give them the time to work on the kind of long-term projects that research suggests might be the most important way to prepare them for the realities of college and the workforce.³ These programs also **enhance social-emotional development and learning** that employers know successful workers need.⁴ Further, through afterschool opportunities, low-income students are provided the opportunities that **make relevant the connections** between academic accomplishments, post-secondary education and career options.⁵

Essential Skills Matter

- A large percentage of those youth who are preparing to enter the workforce over the next two decades lack the essential skills, such as communication, decision-making, and teamwork that they need to become effective employees and managers.⁶
- Nationally, 75 percent of executives believe essential skills will become more important in the next three to five years due to global competition and the rapid pace with which current businesses change.⁷
- The majority of workers report developing most of the skills they use in their current job outside of school.⁸
- Afterschool programs provide the activities and experiences that help youth learn how to think critically, act strategically, and communicate effectively - all skills required to be successful in the 21st century workforce.⁹
- Afterschool programs provide the real-world experiences, college and career engagement activities, and internships and mentoring opportunities that expose youth to career opportunities and develop the skills necessary to succeed.¹⁰

The Girls, Inc. Eureka!® Program at the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CSNE) in Albany, NY builds girls' confidence and skills through achievement opportunities in science, math, technology, sports, leadership and careers.¹¹

Girls participate in the program over five years from 8th grade through 12th grade over the summer and during the school year. The girls are placed at selected internships where they utilize the skills they have learned throughout participation in the program and get on-the-ground experiences based on their interests.

During each school year, girls participate in opportunities that vary from STEM related trips and activities to career and college development and exploration.

Among girls participating in the Eureka!® nationally, after just one summer, 98% of girls believe that they are smart and 75% say they can handle harder math. Nearly 75% completing the second summer listed STEM or STEM-related careers as potential plans for their futures.

Endnotes

¹ McKinsey Global Institute, *The World at Work: Jobs, Pay, and Skills for 3.5 Billion People*, 2012. [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/employment_and_growth/the_world_at_work]

² The Workforce Alliance, *Training Policy in Brief: An Overview of Federal Workforce Development Policies*, 2011. [<http://greenforall.org/resources/reports-research/training-policy-in-brief-an-overview-of-federal-workforce-development-policies-2nd-edition-by-gwen-rubinstein-and-andrea-mayo/>]

³ Sam Piha, *A Federal Study on Grit: An Interview with Researcher, Nikki Shechtman (Part 2)*, Learning in Afterschool & Summer, 2014. [<http://blog.learninginafterschool.org/2014/01/a-federal-study-on-grit-interview-with.html>]

⁴ Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., & Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), *The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills*, 2007. [www.lionsquest.org/pdfs/AfterSchoolProgramsStudy2007.pdf]

⁵ Alliance for Excellent Education, *Expanded Learning Opportunities: A More Comprehensive Approach to Preparing High School Students for College and Career*, 2011. [<http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/expanded-learning-opportunities-a-more-comprehensive-approach-to-preparing-high-school-students-for-college-and-a-career/>]

⁶ America's Promise, *Every Promise, Every Child: Turning Failure into Action*, 2007. [<http://www.americaspromise.org/resource/every-child-every-promise-turning-failure-action-0>]

⁷ ReadyNation and America's Edge, *Ensuring the Central New York Region's Global Success*, 2014. [<http://americasedge.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/RNAE-CNY-SG-Report-.pdf>]

⁸ Microsoft Partners in Learning, The Pearson Foundation, Gallup, *21st Century Skills and the Workplace*, 2013. [<http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/162821/21st-century-skills-workplace.aspx>]

⁹ Afterschool Alliance, *Afterschool: Opening Doors to Work and Careers*, 2009. [<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Workforce%20Brief%2036%20FINAL.pdf>]

¹⁰ American Youth Policy Forum, *The Potential of Career and College Readiness and Exploration in Afterschool Programs*, 2013. [<http://www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds/article/potential-career-and-college-readiness-and-exploration-afterschool-programs#sthash.FgnUXSP1.dpuf>]

¹¹ Girls, Inc. Eureka!® Program at CSNE, 2014. [<http://www.girlsinccapitalregion.org/programs/eureka/>]