“Expanding Career Exploration for Seventh Graders”

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ATP Project Dates

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PROJECT FOCUS: Zane State College will propose and implement activities necessary for seventh grade students to explore career opportunities in the Muskingum County area of Ohio in order to increase the likelihood of high school graduation, college enrollment, and/or employment.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Course Number, Name, and Instructor: EDUC 2950, Appalachian Impact Seminar, Lindsay Carr

Community Partner: Appalachian Ohio P-20 Council

Need: Problems Addressed:
U.S. Census Bureau data shows that 14.8% of Appalachian residents drop out of high school and 76.6% of Appalachian residents do not have college degrees. Therefore, when 64% of jobs in Ohio require a college education, the Appalachian region suffers a massive unemployment epidemic. This data reflects the ongoing issues that continue to plague Muskingum County and surrounding areas. The most devastating effects to the local economy can be directly linked to low high school attainment and college completion compared to national and Ohio county averages.

Numerous factors contribute to this chronic cycle of hopelessness: 1) The dropout rate for high school is too high; 2) students are continuing the cycle of generational poverty; 3) and, students are not aware of the vast opportunities available in the Appalachian region.

The Appalachian Ohio P-20 Council (AOP-20) brings together educators, businesses, and stakeholders to address similar concerns. Previously AOP-20 identified barriers that students and educators face throughout a student’s educational career and in transitioning beyond education. In addition, the AOP-20 Council works together to innovate and propose new strategies to aid students in overcoming obstacles they may face from preschool to college degree completion.

Zane State College’s proposed ATP student team has recruited the AOP-20 Council as a community partner. Students participating in this project will be pursuing degrees in education and preparing to be future educators for Muskingum and surrounding counties. As such, Zane State’s Appalachian Impact Seminar will have a unique opportunity to help middle school students learn about career pathways. The goals of the project align with the needs that have been identified both by the AOP-20 Council
members as well as middle school guidance counselors and principals. The goal is to expose middle school students to more career possibilities at an early age so that, hopefully, they later choose a career field that is a good match for their personality, interests, and goals.

Solutions Implemented:

In order to meet the need of career exploration within our area, Zane State College proposes to implement a two-step plan with the potential to address an additional two steps if time and resources permit. The plan will meet a variety of goals and strategic objectives as identified by the Appalachian Regional Commission in the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan.

Step One – Zane State College (Zane) students will research and explore various employment opportunities in Muskingum and surrounding areas to gain a better understanding of the local job market. They will continue by identifying and contacting area businesses to recruit a variety of representation of area employment opportunities. Zane students will attempt to recruit a wide variety of businesses that effectively represent diverse opportunities for career and employment interests. In addition, the businesses will be recruited throughout the county to highlight opportunities located among the 673mi² of Muskingum County.

ARC Goals met:

Goal 1: Increase Job Opportunities and Per Capita Income in Appalachia to Reach Parity with the Nation,
  Strategic Objective 1.1: Develop Leaders and Strengthen Community Capacity.

Step Two – After Zane students have recruited twenty-five area businesses to participate in the project, all business names, primary service/industry classifications, and addresses will be compiled into a passport that will be administered to area middle school students. Participating businesses will be provided a unique stamp to be utilized in conjunction with the passport to be distributed. Middle school students will be encouraged to visit any/all of the businesses to learn about the skills necessary to successfully be employed at the business, as well as, the specifics surrounding the services/needs of the community that each meet. By visiting area businesses, area middle school students will begin to better understand the vast career options available to them as they continue with their education both into high school and into post-secondary endeavors. Once the student has learned about the business and heard the information pertaining to the specific career type, the unique stamp will be used to indicate that the student interacted with the business. Middle school students will be rewarded for their participation in collecting stamps for their passport by entering the stamped passport into a drawing for a prize. All aspects of this step will be organized
and maintained by the Zane State College students enrolled in the Appalachian Impact Seminar course.

ARC Goal Met:

Goal 1: Increase Job Opportunities and Per Capita Income in Appalachia to Reach Parity with the Nation

Strategic Objective 1.4: Develop and Market Strategic Assets for Local Economies.

It is the expectation of the course instructor and organizing parties that Zane students will complete steps one and two by the end of the fall semester of 2015. However, due to the continuous nature and sustainability expectations which are dependent on continued exposures of middle school students to career exploration attempts, Zane students will move on to steps three and four as soon as step one is completed and the passports are created in step two. Distribution of the passports can also be completed in conjunction with step three.

Step Three – Having completed steps one and two, meeting the requirements of this proposal, the Zane State College students will then create an interactive table display to present to middle school students about career clusters. Zane State College will visit two or more middle schools per semester, during available opportunities determined by participating school districts, during which the middle school students can visit each table and learn about career opportunities. Each exhibit, hosted by an ATP project student, will include posters, informative materials, and a hands-on activity geared to better help middle school students to understand the career. At each table there will be a memento each student can take to represent the career(s) explored. In addition, the ATP project students will prepare information to honor the historical careers of the Appalachian region to help middle school students understand how career opportunities have evolved over time.

Each Zane State College student will be assigned to one particular career cluster. For example, one Zane State College student would be responsible for a table about careers based on agriculture and food. The cluster will consist of farming, food industry, and dietitian careers. Middle school students will then have the opportunity to explore each of the employment avenues by learning about the profession, identifying ways in which school content relates, and completing hands-on activities to help them identify areas of interest. Other career clusters that Zane State College students will consider presenting are: engineering, healthcare, oil and gas, public service, and manufacturing. It is the expectation that through a broadening of career exploration, students will better understand the value of their education and importance of earning a high school diploma and college degree.

As Zane State College students are visiting area middle schools during step three, the passports will be distributed, discussed, and participation encouraged.
ARC Goals met:

Goal 1: Increase Job Opportunities and Per Capita Income in Appalachia to Reach Parity with the Nation,
   Strategic Objective 1.1: Develop Leaders and Strengthen Community Capacity.
   Strategic Objective 1.4: Develop and Market Strategic Assets for Local Economies.

Goal 2: Strengthen the Capacity of the People of Appalachia to Compete in the Global Economy
   Strategic Objective 2.4: Increase Educational Attainment and Achievement.

Step Four – As Zane students’ progress through the steps of this project, they will collect and analyze data that reflects the impact of their efforts. Based on the collected data students will be able to develop and alter plans of action. Data will be collected through the submission of the passports, both in looking at the trends surrounding stamp collection and through completed surveys provided at the end of the passports. As a result, Zane students will be improving their own data-based decision-making skills, which is a necessary skill in their field of choice. In addition, Zane students will be interacting with middle school students, school administrators, and businesses to complete the entirety of this project. These interactions are extremely important for Zane State College students who will soon be responsible for educating future generations and to understand obstacles middle school students face including how to overcome them.

ARC Goal met:

Goal 2: Strengthen the Capacity of the People of Appalachia to Compete in the Global Economy
   Strategic Objective 2.4: Increase Educational Attainment and Achievement.

Number and description of planned meetings with the community partner

1. Initial meeting between faculty facilitator and The Appalachian Ohio P-20 Council.

2. Students and faculty facilitator meet with AOP-20 representatives/attend an AOP-20 Council meeting.

3. Zane State College students present findings at an AOP-20 Council meeting in the spring of 2016.

4. Zane State College students will provide the results of the findings to area educators.
Overview of the project

Seventh grade level students are typically at a critical point in identifying their interests, personality styles, and future goals. Introduction to career opportunities can help young students stay motivated in school, and later to make college and career choices. Middle school students will have the opportunity to explore various career opportunities by interacting with area businesses that represent a wide variety of skills and interests and hands-on exposures during Zane State College visits. Zane State College students enrolled in a teacher preparation program will also have an opportunity to learn about the value of student-teacher interactions and help students to dream big.

As a result of this project, students of both educational levels, middle school and post-secondary, will better understand the diverse career opportunities available in the region and be able to see the connection between personality traits, interests, and academics in selecting careers. Middle school students will have an opportunity to explore career options and future teachers will better understand how to recreate or address this continued need with their own future students.

Goals and Objectives:

1. Gain a better understanding of the careers available in the Appalachian Region
   - Conduct research pertaining to employment in the Appalachian Region
   - Interact with middle school students to better understand their perspectives

2. Develop tools to help middle school students to better understand career options.
   - Bring area businesses and students together to better understand the connection between education and employment
   - Develop hands-on experiences that are directly related to various career options

3. Develop effective pre-service teachers
   - Collect and assess data that leads to effective planning.
   - Present findings associated with student motivations, career exploration, and business involvement.

ARC Goals Met:

Goal 1: Increase Job Opportunities and Per Capita Income in Appalachia to Reach Parity with the Nation, Strategic Objective 1.1: Develop Leaders and Strengthen Community Capacity.

Goal 1: Increase Job Opportunities and Per Capita Income in Appalachia to Reach Parity with the Nation, Strategic Objective 1.4: Develop and Market Strategic Assets for Local Economies.
Goal 2: Strengthen the Capacity of the People of Appalachia to Compete in the Global Economy, Strategic Objective 2.4: Increase Educational Attainment and Achievement.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- Research Appalachian barriers that impact career choices.
- Plan, research, and implement career exploration opportunities.
- Interact with area middle school students in an attempt to encourage career exploration, academic commitment, high school graduation, and plan for college.
- Write an academic paper that reflects research on the Appalachian region, the importance of career exploration, and the results of the project.
- Develop a presentation highlighting the main points derived from the project experiences.
- Create a poster highlighting main points of the research project.
- Present research data that shows the increased likelihood of high school graduation, college enrollment, and/or employment in Muskingum and surrounding counties to the community partner, The Appalachian Ohio P-20 Council.
- Present research data that shows the increased likelihood of high school graduation, college enrollment, and/or employment in Muskingum and surrounding counties to area educators.
- Present data that shows the increased likelihood of high school graduation, college enrollment, and/or employment in Muskingum and surrounding counties at the Appalachian Regional Commission’s ATP conference in Washington, D.C.