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ABSTRACT

This issue features articles on basic skills enrichment for summer job programs and on the recent revisions to the Job Training Partnership Act's (JTPA's) performance standards system. "Basic Skills and Summer Enrichment: An Interview with Gordon Berlin" focuses on the summer enrichment movement in general and the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP) in particular. It looks at key elements of summer enrichment, broader issues that have been addressed through STEP, the role of the schools, and the movement toward a comprehensive system. "Program Standards: A New Chance for Employability" (Lori Strumpf) is a close look at the first major revisions of the JTPA's performance standards system. It considers issues that practitioners and policymakers had raised over the impact of JTPA's standards on the population the system was serving and the services offered. The article details how the revisions address these issues and establish performance standards that encourage higher quality services. Challenges for youth policymakers and practitioners are also discussed. "Notes from the Field" (Andrew Hahn) offers highlights from a series of two-day training institutes on summer enrichment programs for state and local JTPA practitioners. "CHR Notes" (Erik Butler) summarizes recent ventures in which the Center for Human Resources has participated. (YLB)

Basic Skills and Summer Enrichment: An Interview with Gordon Berlin

Gordon Berlin is the Deputy Director of the Urban Poverty Division of The Ford Foundation. Since joining the Foundation in the early 1980's, Berlin has played a major role in developing and supporting new strategies for helping at-risk youth. As an early advocate for the integration of basic skills education into JTPA's summer jobs program, Berlin helped design the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP), a summer enrichment model now being tested in five cities with support from the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor. Berlin and the Ford Foundation have also been major supporters of the Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP), a basic skills curriculum management program designed for use with disadvantaged youth and adults. Most recently, Gordon Berlin has co-authored a book on the basic skills crisis with Andrew Sum: Toward a More Perfect Union: Basic Skills, Poor Families, and Our Economic Future. *(Note: The study is available from the Office of Reports, Ford Foundation, 320 East 43d Street, New York, NY 10017).*

The Summer Enrichment Movement

CHR: Can you give us some background on the summer enrichment movement? How did it get started?

BERLIN: The current emphasis on summer enrichment has really grown out of several lines of research into basic skills and youth employment. First, around the time I started at the Ford Foundation in the early 1980's, there was a growing interest in dropouts. The research was beginning to show that most unemployment among youth was accounted for by a small group of about 15% of all young people, youngsters who were unemployed day after day. Those youth usually turned out to be dropouts and to have very poor basic skills. At the same time, a number of researchers, including Robert Taggart, Andrew Sum, Andrew Hahn, and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, were arguing for "enriched" work experience and were testing a variety of enrichment models. As a result, we concluded that we needed to look at reintroducing education into the employment and training system.

The second influence was a body of research that questioned the effectiveness of the traditional summer jobs program. When you look at the youth employment field, the single largest youth employment program, which touches more kids than any other program in the country, is the summer youth employment program. But when you examine the literature on jobs programs generally, it suggests that these pure work summer programs don't have a long-term payoff for young people. Sure, it takes them off the streets and gives them some work experience. But, if you follow them up two or three years later, they are really no more likely to be employed and have higher earnings than a group that didn't go through that kind of public job experience. So here we are with this huge program serving all disadvantaged kids during the summer – most of them are very far behind in school, many will become teenage parents – but all we have been doing is providing short-term work experience. And we know that isn't what they need.

In This Issue – Spring 1988

Youth Programs **is Published by the Center for Human Resources, The Heller School, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, in Association with the National Youth Practitioners' Network.**

Employability and JTPA

This issue of *Youth Programs* features articles on basic skills enrichment for summer job programs and on the recent revisions to the Job Training Partnership Act's performance standards system.

What's the common theme among these? Well, there are several. The first is that all three articles concern the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). JTPA is only one of many programs that exist to serve at-risk youth. But more often than not, because it provides a critical link to employment, JTPA plays a key role in local programming for disadvantaged young people. As a result, changes in JTPA's policy focus or its performance standards can have a ripple effect on an array of local services. Youth practitioners in community-based organizations, public schools, community colleges and elsewhere need to understand JTPA and the changes that take place in it if they want to make the cross-program connections that kids need.

The second theme is the growing emphasis of JTPA on *employability* (as opposed to *employment*) as a goal in serving youth. As the interview with Gordon Berlin makes clear, the summer enrichment movement has grown directly from the realization that poor basic skills translate into limited life options for youth, and that we have to provide young people with more than just a summer job if we want to improve their long-term employability. The new JTPA performance standards reflect a similar belief that, to use the Department of Labor's words, "more emphasis must be placed on intensive investments in youth within JTPA." In both cases, national policy is moving toward the more comprehensive, sequential programming that practitioners have been advocating for years. And in both cases, changes in JTPA mean that practitioners have to take another look at the young people they serve and the programs they are offering. We hope that the articles in this issue will help.

And now a word from our sponsor. As we announced in our last issue, after nearly a decade of free distribution, *Youth Programs* is moving to a subscription basis. We are taking this step so that we can publish *Youth Programs* on a regular, quarterly basis, offering youth practitioners *more* information (four times a year instead of once in a while), and *more timely* information (like the article on performance standards).

We hope that you will join us as a subscriber to *Youth Programs* by using the return postcard enclosed in this issue. The subscription price is only $25 a year for individuals and $50 for institutions. We also welcome any suggestions you may have for future issues. Let us know by writing *Youth Programs*, Brandeis University, Center for Human Resources, The Heller School, P.O. Box 9110, Waltham, Massachusetts 02254-9110, or by calling the Center's toll-free number: (800) 343-4705.

Basic Skills, continued from page 1

The third influence was the research on summer learning loss, primarily Barbara Heyn's work. She had tested 3,000 Atlanta school children at the beginning and end of the summer and found that advantaged kids did better at the end of the summer on standardized tests, while disadvantaged kids did worse. Her research seemed to suggest that the gap in year-to-year learning between advantaged and disadvantaged young people occurred during the summer. In effect, because the disadvantaged youth didn't practice their math or reading over the summer, or maybe if they were from a family that didn't speak English much in the home, they lost some of the skills that they learned during the school year. Thus, when they got back the next year, the teacher had to spend an extra six to eight weeks re-teaching them things they'd forgotten. And that was a problem. If you think about twelve summers stretched throughout a high school career, and each summer the advantaged kids maintain their skills and the disadvantaged youth don't, you can see how the disadvantaged youngsters just get further and further behind.

CHR: In short, the summer learning research indicates that kids *are* learning in school, but that they are losing some of those skills over the summer?

BERLIN: That's right. In fact, the data suggest that when kids are in school, disadvantaged kids learn at about the same rate as advantaged kids. That seems to suggest that the summer is the critical part of the school dropout and low basic skills problem. Now the data is controversial because standardized tests and measurements of change in standardized test scores are very difficult to interpret. There could be problems with the tests that account for some of these losses. But we now believe as a result of the STEP demonstration that in fact the loss is legitimate and substantial.

CHR: So, the idea of summer enrichment grew directly from the research on youth employment and learning loss?

BERLIN: Yes. As a result of Barbara Heyns' book and having read the literature on work experience programs not paying off, we got the idea that we ought to try to combine the two and use them as the rationale for redesigning the summer youth employment program. In 1983, I wrote a concept paper that made the

case for that and suggested that we use an experimental design to test it. A number of us argued, maybe for the first time, that by improving basic skills, we could not only affect the school dropout problem, but we could also affect the teen pregnancy and youth employment problem. That is, if we could prop youngsters up in school during the summer by providing educational enrichment, that in fact we would improve their life options and they would do better in all phases of life.

CHR: Why do you think the idea of summer enrichment has taken hold so quickly?

BERLIN: It's startling in some ways. I think it's the result of the case being so strong. It is clear that the summer jobs program in and of itself wasn't yielding real payoffs in the long term, and that summer loss was a major issue. The data were so strong that it led you to take the next step, which was educational enrichment.

The Summer Training and Education Program (STEP)

CHR: The STEP demonstration project that Ford and the Department of Labor are funding provides 14 and 15 year olds with basic skills education, a life skills component, and part-time work experience during two summers and with school-based support during the intervening academic year. Would you describe the thinking behind that model?

BERLIN: The Summer Training and Education Program (STEP) grew out of the concept paper we wrote in 1983 and a grant to Public/Private Ventures to design a summer training demonstration. We wanted a program that would do several things. First, we really wanted to design a program that integrated schooling and jobs – half the time at school and half on the job – so that if you didn't come to school, you couldn't get paid on the job. We wanted young people to see that the two were closely interrelated, and to think about their summer school activity as a part of the job.

Second, we wanted a program that involved education, but that taught students in a different way than the regular school. We knew that we had a very short period of time in which to teach, and that we wouldn't have time to do a lot of ability grouping. We also knew that these were young people who had failed in the traditional school setting in which the teacher stood in the front of the room and lectured. So, among other things, we decided to maximize the use of individualized, self-paced approaches which we knew worked in the Job Corps fairly effectively for a similar group of young people. We also wanted to take advantage of computers because we thought they would be exciting, interesting, grab the attention of young people, and because there is some evidence that appropriately integrated in a self-paced, individualized curriculum, computers were effective teaching tools.

Third, we wanted to add a life planning component. By that I mean instruction that helps young people learn about what it costs to raise a family, what kind of job you need to have that kind of income, what kind of education you need to have to get that kind of job. We wanted instruction that would tie all those things together for young people and explain to them that the decisions they make now – decisions that often are driven by peer pressure and involve dropping out of school, drugs, and early sexual activity – those decisions would affect their long-term ability to carve out a world for themselves.

A Partnership with the Schools. Now, the STEP program design also mandated that a close working relationship be built between the schools and the employment and training system. We did that for a number of reasons. First, we wanted to be sure that if young people did good work, if their attendance was high during the summer, and if they made learning gains, that those gains were recognized either officially and formally or even informally by their teachers when they returned. Schools had to be willing to think about offering credit. We wanted to be sure that the STEP youth wouldn't have to sit in a classroom in the fall reviewing the previous year's lessons with their peers when the STEP youth didn't need catching up.

We also thought there was an important need to be careful in identifying the kids and getting as much information from the schools as we could early on. Again, we didn't have time to do a lot of ability grouping, so information from the school was critical. We also were targeting kids who had failed a grade or who were behind in reading or math by one or two grade levels, so we really needed the schools' help.

In addition, we wanted the school to follow up during the school year; to follow up on the life planning instruction and on the peer support that we hoped would emerge from the way we operated the program. So again, we needed the school to understand what was going to happen during the summer.

And, we wanted the schools involved because we were also concerned that 14 and 15 year old young people, who were the target for this demonstration, might not respond well to adult learning methods – methods that are very different from school-related learning. We were concerned that many of these kids wouldn't have reached the stage where they were ready to benefit from traditional self-directed learning – that is, taking responsibility for your own learning, going to a workbook and learning right from reading the workbook and from doing the exercises. These kids, youngsters in middle school or junior high school, are much more likely to have listened to a teacher and then be instructed to do some homework.

So to make this thing work, we felt that schools and employment and training people would have to work together. We wanted a mixture of the kinds of things that the school normally would do and some of the more interesting and different individualized, self-paced approaches. All of this required some really close fitting and integration.

Working with Younger Kids. The final element in the program design was that we wanted to work with 14-15 year olds. We wanted to work with these kids before the problems of dropping out, early sexual activity, and drugs, were a likely conclusion. We also had this idea that moving from middle school to high school was a traumatic and shake-up kind of experience, a moment in which you can influence a young person. We thought that it was important to take advantage of that change, when these young people were going to go from being king of the walk in junior high and the middle school to being the lowest status person on the totem pole in the high school, and to give them a chance to be a different person.

In sum, we saw the STEP treatment as an integrated package: very intensive remediation (individualized, self-paced instruction, using computers, having kids do a lot of reading, maximizing time on task) and a life planning course that was going to deal with a lot of very sensitive and particularly important issues for young people.

Key Elements of Summer Enrichment

CHR: Drawing on your experience with STEP, are there some basic elements you think are essential to any summer enrichment program?

BERLIN: I think that you want to have a sure connection between attendance in the summer school activities and attendance on the job, with the pay being tied to both. It has to be clear that this is an integrated program. That would be the first thing.

Secondly, I think it's absolutely essential that the remediation be intensive. That is, it should be individualized and somewhat self-paced, though it doesn't have to be entirely. The STEP model isn't entirely individualized and self-paced. There's a lot of teacher led activity. Students also should get a minimum of 90 to 100 hours of instruction – you really won't have an impact with anything less than that.

Decide What You Want to Teach. The third thing is that you need to ask what it is you want to teach. In some of the early pilot STEP sites, people decided they wanted to publish a newsletter as part of the activity. At the same time, our criteria for success, in the short run, was an improvement in the Metropolitan Achievement Test [MAT], and doing a newsletter may or may not have improved skills as measured by the MAT. So, you want to think about what you want to teach and how you are going to measure it. For 14 and 15 year olds, I think that means teaching reading and problem-solving and mathematics, because I think you want to lay the foundation for the future learning of those young people.

There really ought to be a close connection between the schools and the employment and training people. I would push for some school year follow-through and school year credit, and I would try to make it a two-summer program because the time in each summer is so short.

To the extent that you can get at younger kids, 14 and 15 year-olds, you ought to work with those kids, because these are such critical transition years.

Finally, I personally believe that a life-planning component is absolutely essential because it helps tie together what the purpose of the summer is; it helps the young person think in terms of longer-term goals. These kids have such short-term visions of their life and their role in the world that it is *absolutely* essential to break through to them, and this is an opportunity to do that. And again, Public/Private Ventures has a model curriculum as does the Center for Population Options.

STEP is not the Only Model. There is one other point I want to make. While the STEP demonstration is going to provide useful data, there are a lot of other locations all across the country that, having heard of the idea, proceeded

to implement their own programs. Virtually every Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) learning center, for example, now includes a summer component in their area. The New York PIC's Summer Work Enhancement Program and the New York Community Trust's Grantmakers Summer Program, which the Center for Human Resources has worked with, are two examples of organizations that have developed their own enrichment programs. So just because you don't have P/PV or Ford behind you, and can't duplicate STEP exactly, doesn't mean that you can't produce a good summer enrichment program. A lot of people are doing it without our help, and of course, the Labor Department is urging people to do more. The summer enrichment movement is large and growing larger every day.

Going Beyond Youth Employment

CHR: What are some of the broader issues that you have tried to address through STEP and your other work on summer enrichment.

BERLIN: Well, in a number of ways, our goals in STEP go well beyond the design of an effective youth employment program. The underlying rationale for STEP, as well as some of the other work that the Ford Foundation has done in the basic skills area, had three parts to it. The first argument was that poor basic skills really are the critical underlying problem behind school dropouts, youth unemployment and teen pregnancy. We have argued that young people who were behind in school and had limited skills really faced restricted life options, and that the restriction in their future life options and opportunity was a major part of the high levels of antisocial behavior that we saw. So, the first sort of philosophical tenet in this effort was that basic skills mattered *a lot* and that they were the underlying issue.

The second principle was that given the right tools and techniques and technology, and the right strategy, a comprehensive program that tried to address the basic skills crisis and that showed its relevance to future life courses could in fact make a difference; that given the right tools, teachers and employment and training officials could make a profound difference in the basic skills capacities of young people. That was a very powerful idea. In this context, the STEP model is simply a set of tools and techniques that ties together and maximizes what we knew about what works.

Enrichment and School Reform

The third tenet or belief that underlies the strategy we have pursued in this field and some others related to basic skills, is only now beginning to bear fruit. It basically says that the people who use these new tools – tools that maximize time on task, that provide integrated and comprehensive service treatments, and that approach young people as important individuals whose ideas can be valued – that the people using those tools would, in fact, become like Trojan horses in a regular school system. That they would continue to use those tools and techniques and to share them with other teachers that they work with, and that they would begin to bring about a kind of slow, systemmatic, quiet, incremental form of institutional change in the way schools operate.

CHR: So, you see STEP and the summer enrichment program as an educational reform effort?

BERLIN: It is, and let me expand on that. One of the things that bothers me a lot as a foundation program officer is this whole question of institutional change and what do we mean by it. I have been very concerned about the programs and strategies and approaches that say that their goal is institutional change, because it's virtually impossible to define with clarity what we mean by institutional change. Most of us won't know it if we step on it. The flip side, though, is that we have run enough experiments and demonstrations to know about models that work, but then failed to replicate them. There has been a real failure to follow through and to implement what we've learned.

So what I wanted to try to think about as a foundation program officer was having something exist after our dollars were finished. I wanted a sense that the STEP model and other models that we've invested in, if they worked, would in fact be picked up. Moreover, in the picking up of this model, I wanted to find a way to have a broader, longer term impact. Remember, all STEP does is intervene during the summer and a little bit of follow up during the school year. You're basically trying to turn around a young person's life in eight weeks, and you know that is not enough. So one way to have that broader impact is by urging teachers to take a different approach with students, which was less lecturing time, more hands-on time, more real activities, because young people learn when they're

actually at work. And to hope that they would take that new approach back into the school.

What is exciting for me is that it is beginning to work. Our sense right now is that, in fact, a lot of the teachers that have taught in the STEP program *are* using the STEP approach to critical thinking and other problem-solving approaches in the school system, and that this is one way of bringing change into the schools.

The Role of the Schools

CHR: That leads to one of the questions many local practitioners are debating: are the schools the best people to be delivering this kind of summer enrichment?

BERLIN: There's a lot of controversy about that. If you believe that for kids to learn in a short time period, you have to motivate them by teaching in a way that is different from their regular school, then you have a difficult problem if you select regular school teachers and a school setting for your summer enrichment. But if you don't select them, you lose your Trojan horse effect.

I think it is essentially a local policy question: do you want to work with the schools or not? If you've got the training capacity to help teachers learn to teach in a little different way, and if the schools really buy in, it is worth going that route. I think there are some longer-term advantages of working with the schools, but it can be a higher risk strategy.

If the schools don't really buy in, then you might find it administratively easier, and you may even have a bigger impact, if the job training people have control of the remediation component, and increasingly, PICs and others are building remediation components into their services by creating in-house programs or by using community-based organizations and other service providers. The key question there is whether the remediation programs that employment and training people have at their disposal can meet the needs of 14 and 15 year-olds who might need a little different approach. My own feeling, based on the results I've seen from summer programs that use CCP [the Comprehensive Competencies Program], is that they can.

Dollars and Jobs

CHR: One of the other issues that practitioners frequently mention in discussions of summer enrichment is the fact that you will serve fewer kids and provide fewer jobs if you create a higher cost, enriched, program. What do you say to a Private Industry Council, or a mayor, or a service provider to convince them to make that trade-off?

BERLIN: This is *the* major political question, a question that plagued us in CETA, and one that we have to resolve. When local officials control public jobs and public dollars for job training, they want to spread them across as many people as they can, so that they touch as many of their constituents as they can.

Now, there are some ways of spreading the resources a little thinner so that you can serve more kids. One is by paying a stipend, based on attendance and performance, for the school part of the program that is less than the minimum wage, and then paying the minimum wage for the work experience. That might help a little, but it does reduce the dollars in the young person's pocket. I also think that a strong case can be made for matching Chapter I dollars and summer school dollars to the job training funds. A PIC ought to approach the schools and try to cut a deal where they combine summer school and summer jobs monies as a way of maximizing resources and giving the schools a stake in the enrichment program.

But, the reality is that short-term treatments, especially short-term jobs programs, don't produce any significant, long-term benefits. You can argue that the summer jobs program is a special case, that you are keeping the streets quiet and giving young people who have very limited resources an income. I don't want to minimize the importance of that. But if you sit down and ask yourself what is the best use of our dollars to produce a long-term impact, to make a difference that will pay off in increased taxes, reduced criminality, reduced school dropout rates, reduced teen pregnancy, and reduced welfare dependency, it seems to me that you cannot spread these resources so thin. I just don't think we're making a long-term commitment to young people when we do that. And my own feeling is that we have to be prepared to make those kinds of choices if we want to make a difference.

Moving Toward a Comprehensive System

CHR: What do you see as the next step in providing summer enrichment?

BERLIN: Even though the final results from STEP and other research are not in, there are enough preliminary indications that enrichment does affect school attainment and sexual

behavior that it makes sense to begin moving forward with implementing summer enrichment programs throughout the summer youth employment program. And, of course, JTPA is doing just that.

I think that every city ought to begin now, on a small scale, to build a high-quality summer STEP-like program that starts by targeting 14 and 15 year olds who are very far behind in school. As they work the bugs out on that model, they should begin to use it as the base for expanding their summer enrichment program.

The key is building an infrastructure. The summer jobs program serves a hell of a lot of people – something like 700,000 – and if you assume that half of them really desperately need educational enrichment, you are going to have to try to put them in this kind of a program. The worse mistake we could make would be to try to put 350,000 young people in a STEP-like model tomorrow without building the programmatic and political base to support it.

CHR: Is your goal to be able to offer enrichment to every youth?

BERLIN: If it were up to me, yes. I'm absolutely convinced that the summer is a critically important opportunity to raise our basic skills. We simply have to look at Europe and Japan, where the average young person spends 240 days a year in school. 240! Compare that to the United States, where we spend 180 days a year in school and there is no question why we're being so outperformed on international tests of ability or achievement. I don't see any way that we can continue to compete effectively in the future as long as that's the case.

Moreover, summer is a particularly remarkable opportunity for the disadvantaged, because while the rest of America is standing still, they can use that time to catch up. I find that very appealing. If I had my way, we'd be using the summer extensively for disadvantaged young people throughout their school careers, and not just for 14 and 15 year olds. We should think about it for elementary school kids as a way to work on their reading and other really basic, basic skills. We should think about it as a valuable opportunity for literature and science and math enrichment for high potential, lower achieving kids in the junior high school years. We should think of it as we have in the past, as a time for Upward Bound or Career Beginnings programs that help launch more young people into college. In short, we need to think about the whole education pipeline, from pre-school straight through to graduate school. We need to ask ourselves all along the way, how can we increase the proportion of people that are moving along to the next stage, and especially how can we increase the fraction of the poor and disadvantaged and minorities who are moving along.

CHR: So, you see summer enrichment as just one part of a broader basic skills strategy?

BERLIN: Yes. In our book, Andy Sum and I have argued that the economy is changing in ways that will require and demand stronger skills. But the traditional solution to stronger skills, school reform, is only a small part of the answer. We need to look at the summer loss phenomenon and at issues like the relationship of parents to children as a vehicle for increasing learning. We need a life-cycle approach to learning, working with mothers and children at key points all along the development continuum. And we need to make an investment in education and training if we are going to really make a difference in the basic skills crisis. And as a society, we all have a stake in a solution to that problem.

Program Standards: A New Chance for Employability

by Lori Strumpf

This March, the Department of Labor released the first major revisions of the Job Training Partnership Act's performance standards system since JTPA went into effect in 1984. Aimed at encouraging longer, more intensive employment and training services, particularly to at-risk youth, the changes in the performance standards system signal a growing recognition of long-term employability as a goal for young people and the need for increased flexibility in serving those most at risk of chronic unemployment. As such, the new standards present an important challenge to states and local JTPA administrators to examine their policies and programs and to expand their services to disadvantaged youth.

The Performance Standards Review

In June of last year, the Department of Labor began the process of revising the performance standards system. The Job Training Partnership Act specifies that performance standards may be revised, if necessary, once every two years.

Responding to Congressional pressure for JTPA programs to serve harder-to-serve populations, and to criticism from within the JTPA system that the existing performance standards created barriers to services for those most at risk, the Department of Labor identified a series of goals to guide the revision process. Designed to provide a framework against which potential revisions could be evaluated, the goals were:

- To increase services to at-risk individuals, particularly youth;
- To encourage the provision of training which is relevant to long term employability;
- To encourage increased provision of basic skills training.

A fourth goal, related primarily to adult programs, was to implement post-program performance standards.

Three Key Issues

The Department's performance standards goals reflected several of the concerns that had been raised by practitioners and policy makers over the impact of JTPA's standards on who the system was serving and the services offered.

Serving Those Most At Risk. The first of these concerns was whether JTPA's performance standards adequately recognized services to at-risk youth and adults. Practitioners argued that, because they did not take into account some of the key factors that make an individual at risk of chronic unemployment, JTPA's performance standards failed to reward or actually discouraged services to those individuals who were most in need. The formula used in calculating performance standards focuses on demographic data (minority, single parent, etc.) as proxies for skill deficiencies. Practitioners have argued, however, that characteristics such as basic skills level or long-term welfare dependency are more accurate indicators of risk and the nature of the services that would be required. As a result, the performance standards for a Service Delivery Area that serves a high proportion of individuals with poor basic skills, for example, frequently fail to reflect the higher cost, more intensive services that the SDA is required to deliver.

Long-Term Employability. A second issue guiding the revision process was the question of whether the JTPA performance standards created a barrier to providing the quality of training that would result in long-term employment for participants. Practitioners argued that to improve training quality, the performance standards had to be adjusted in a way that would support the longer, more intensive training that many JTPA participants need in order to succeed in the labor market.

Basic Skills and Youth Competencies. The third issue was related to the second: how to encourage the provision of quality training, including basic skills education, rather than simple placement services. From the inception of JTPA there has been a programmatic tension between directing youth to job placement and providing youth with competency attainment. Because entered employment for youth was included in all three youth standards, there was a distinct system bias toward job-directed programs for youth, rather than programs which targeted those harder-to-serve youth who might attain some new skills but not be job ready by the program's end. The performance standards,

practitioners argued, did not fully recognize that there are two legitimate outcomes for youth training programs: employment for those youth who are almost job ready and employability enhancement for youth in need of longer interventions to become job ready.

A similar issue was raised for adults. While there is general agreement in the system that an adult positive termination rate performance measure is not warranted, the question remained how to increase the mix of services adults get (including basic skills remediation) as they move toward employment.

New Standards for 1988-1989

The performance standards revisions that emerged from the Department's review process and a public comment period during the winter represent a significant effort to address these issues and to establish performance standards that encourage higher quality services and services to a more at-risk population of youth and adults.[1] Included are:

- the collection of more accurate data on the skill deficiencies and characteristics of JTPA participants,

- the definition of a new, competency-based performance measure for youth,

- increased flexibility for Governor's in determining which performance measures to use in their states,

- a stricter definition of youth competencies. and

- adjustments in the numerical levels for the standards to encourage more intensive services.

In most cases, the changes go into effect with the program year that begins July 1, 1988, though some of the changes in the definition of youth competencies have been delayed one year to allow local practitioners time to make any necessary program adjustments.

Participant Data. Beginning July 1st, the Department of Labor will be collecting system-wide data (through the JTPA Annual Status Report [JASR]) on how many individuals are long-term AFDC recipients and how many are below the seventh grade level. The major change for the system will be that all participants (youth and adults) will have to be given a basic skills assessment which provides an appraisal (not an exact diagnosis) of their reading level.

There are two goals in collecting this data. The first is to make it possible to develop an adjustment method for the performance standards model which gives an SDA credit for serving those most at risk of chronic unemployment. Basic skills deficiencies and long-term welfare dependency are considered better risk indicators than the demographic factors that are currently the basis for the performance standards formula.

The second goal is to directly encourage PICs and SDAs to expand their basic skills services. It is hoped that when SDAs recognize the extent of the basic skills deficiencies among JTPA clients (through the assessment data) more basic skills remediation will be provided.

New Performance Measures. One of the major changes is in the number and definition of JTPA's performance measures. The performance standards system will retain the current seven performance measures (entered employment rates for youth, adults, and welfare recipients; average wage at placement for adults; cost per entered employment for adults; cost per positive termination and positive termination rate for youth). However, four *new* post program standards for adults will be added, as will a new Employability Enhancement standard for youth.[2] Governors will have the discretion to select eight of the twelve measures for use in their state, with the requirement that the eight standards include one of the measures of adult program quality (e.g. placement wage or weekly earnings at follow-up) and one of the following youth measures: entered employment, positive terminations or employability enhancement.

For youth practitioners, the new employment enhancement standard represents one of the most important aspects of the performance standards revision. Employability enhancement is defined as competency attainment or an outcome such as return to full-time school, completion of a major

[1]The biennial performance standards review included recommendations from a series of technical work groups and a Performance Management Task Force, convened by the National Job Training Partnership. All of these groups were comprised of employment and training practitioners from states, SDAs, PICs and CBOs.

[2]The four post-program standards are: Follow-up Employment Rate, Welfare Follow-up Employment Rate, Average Weekly Earnings at Follow-up, and Average Number of Weeks Worked in Follow-up Period. The follow-up period is thirteen weeks.

level of education, etc. The entered employment and positive termination measures, both of which include placement outcomes, have been retained in the system. But the creation of the employability enhancement standard represents an effort to reduce the emphasis on job placement as the only program outcome for youth.

Competencies Definition Revised. While the employability enhancement measure places greater emphasis on competency attainment, the definition of youth employment competencies has been revised to insure greater consistency across programs and to reinforce the use of competencies for harder-to-serve youth. Presently, there are three competency areas – pre-employment/work maturity, basic academic skills, and job specific skills – and youth attaining PIC recognized competencies in any one can be credited (for performance standards purposes) as a positive termination. Under the new definition of youth employment competencies, *which goes into effect July 1, 1989* (a delay of one year), an SDA can only claim credit for competency attainment when a youth is deficient in and attains PIC-recognized competencies in *two* out of those three competency areas.

These tighter requirements for competency attainment speak to all three of the Department of Labor's goals for the performance standards system. First, since a program cannot get "credit" for competencies for youth who have enough skills not to be deficient in two areas, the new definition encourages serving more at-risk youth – those lacking both work skills and basic skills. Second, the new definition also promotes a higher quality of training in that it requires a more intensive service – youth must receive training in more than one set of skills.

Finally, the tighter definition also directly encourages provision of basic skills education. Over the years, the employment and training system has learned that for youth needing basic academic skills the program design principle that works best is to combine work and learning. Under this new definition, youth needing basic skills will have them combined with either pre-employment/work maturity skills or job specific skills, helping to insure not only the provision of basic skills, but basic skills that have a functional application.

Pre-Employment/Work Maturity Competencies. The Department of Labor has also tightened the rules governing credit for attainment of pre-employment/work maturity competencies. (These rules go into effect July 1, 1988.) The Department has developed eleven "core" competencies for pre-employment/work maturity. For an SDA to gain credit for competency attainment, a youth should demonstrate proficiency in all eleven areas and *must have been deficient in at least five of the core competencies* on entering the program.

Here as in the other competency-related changes, the Department of Labor is pursuing several goals. The first is greater consistency in the definition of competency attainment. As competencies were elevated to equal outcome standing with placement, it was perceived that some consistency across SDAs was necessary. The second goal, again, is to promote program quality by requiring that significant gains in skills be demonstrated before credit can be taken for competency attainment.

Adjustments to the Standards. The numerical levels for the JTPA performance standards are being set nationally at the twenty-fifth percentile – which means 75% of the SDAs are expected to exceed them. However, the Department of Labor has set the cost standards at a higher level than past years' actual performance levels would dictate to encourage intensive services to the most at-risk participants.

The Performance Standards Challenge

The new performance standards present a number of challenges for youth policy makers and practitioners. At the state level, JTPA administrators have a number of decisions to make concerning which performance standards to use and what steps, if any, should be taken to assist in the development of new assessment or competency systems. At the local level, Service Delivery Areas face similar challenges – in implementing new systems and in determining their impact on the programs that they run.

Setting a State Policy Direction. The major issue facing state-level policy makers is the development of incentive and sanction policies that reflect the state's goals as well as the Department of Labor's performance standards. In selecting which performance standards form the basis of those policies, states have an opportunity to significantly influence the programming that is offered on the local level. By including the new employability enhancement measure in their system, states can send a clear message to SDAs and PICs that do not have fully developed youth competency systems that they need to develop those systems and design programs that enhance the employability of hard-

to-serve youth. States that exclude the employability enhancement measure reduce the pressure for intensive, employability development programming and allow local systems to continue to provide primarily placement-oriented programming serving more job-ready youth. Finally, by including both employability enhancement *and* one of the measures that includes placement (e.g. entered employment or positive termination), a state can promote both long-term employability and employment as goals for young people. In short, the selection of the eight performance measures to be used in determining sanctions or awarding incentive grants offers states a critical opportunity to push for more intensive services and for services to a harder-to-serve population at the local level.

A Need for Assistance. The increased emphasis on youth competencies and the need to report participant basic skill levels also raises the question of the state role in providing technical assistance and in encouraging some degree of consistency in competency and assessment systems. JTPA clearly places responsibility for the development of youth competency systems with the PIC. However, for those states that adopt the employability enchancement standard, the increased importance of competency attainment as a factor in incentive awards may create a demand for technical assistance from the state on competencies and assessment. Perhaps more important, the fact that competency attainment will be a central factor in apportioning incentive grants *among* SDAs may create an opportunity for states to work with their SDAs and PICs on the development of more uniform, statewide competency and assessment systems.

Implications for Local Practitioners. The new performance standards present a broad programmatic challenge to local systems. In general, the new standards and competency definitions push SDAs toward serving a harder-to-serve youth population. Under the new youth competency definition, for example, an SDA cannot claim credit for competency attainment

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U.S. Department of Labor Performance Standards

National Standards (PY 88-89, PY 87-88) and Average Performance (PY 86)

Measures	National Standards PY 88-89	National Standards PY 87-88	Average Performance PY 86
Adult			
Entered Employment Rate	68%	62%	73%
Cost Per Entered Employment	$4,500	$4,374	$2,959
Average Wage At Placement	$4.95	$4.91	$5.07
Welfare Entered Employment Rate	56%	51%	64%
Youth			
Entered Employment Rate	45%	43%	53%
Employabilty Enhancement Rate	30%	(*)	33%
Positive Termination Rate	75%	75%	81%
Cost Per Positive Termination	$4,900	$4,900	$2,425
Post-Program			
Follow-Up Employment Rate	60%	(*)	66%
Welfare Follow-Up Employment Rate	50%	(*)	55%
Average Weeks Worked In Follow-Up	8	(*)	9
Average Earnings Of All Employed In Follow-Up	$177	(*)	$191

(*) = Not In Effect

Courtesy National Job Training Partnership

Notes from the Field

by Andrew Hahn

The Center for Human Resources at Brandeis University recently completed a series of two-day training institutes on summer enrichment programs for state and local JTPA practitioners. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, and the Department of Labor's Regional Offices, the Summer Enrichment Training Institutes (SETI) took place in eight cities across the country and were attended by over 1100 professionals from Service Delivery Areas, Private Industry Councils, local service providers and state agencies.

Summer Enrichment

The Summer Enrichment Training Institutes were designed to offer an overview of enriched summer programming, providing information on assessment strategies, basic skills instruction, and linking summer and year-round programming. Participants learned about the research base for the call to go beyond "pure" work experience and the evolution of summer programming toward the integration of jobs and education. They also heard about local program models and two national models -- the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP) and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), an employability assessment program that is gaining national recognition. (STEP is also discussed in the interview with Gordon Berlin on page 1.)

A Peer Exchange

But the Institutes also were designed to provide JTPA professionals with an opportunity to exchange information on their own experiences and "best practices" in summer enrichment programming. In 1986, the Job Training Partnership Act was amended to require the addition of basic skills enrichment to summer programs and the assessment of all summer youth employment participants. Few programs then had the lead time to do more than meet the official guidelines. For many practitioners, the peer exchanges at the Institute were the first real opportunity to discuss the problems they had encountered, to share the solutions they had found, and think about how they could make their enrichment and assessment activities more effective. Their creative discussions generated a number of ideas for addressing the thorny issues of planning and administering work and education programs in the summer months.

The Issue is Implementation

For most practitioners, the value of summer enrichment was clear. The major issue was how to make it work: especially how to develop the collaborative arrangements required to assess participants or to provide a mix of work and basic skills instruction. Cooperation between local schools and the JTPA system was a particular concern. Even when the two systems wanted to work together, issues of eligibility, confidentiality of records, and differing mandates could act as roadblocks to joint programming. Cooperation from employers was also an issue for some, primarily because enrichment reduced the number of hours that young people were available to work.

While collaboration was at the top of the list, a number of other implementation challenges were raised by practitioners, including assessment, motivating young people, scheduling work and learning, transportation, and many more.

Start Planning Early

The SETI participants struggled with these and other issues. Nearly everyone agreed, however, on one central strategy: *start the summer program planning process early and have the collaborative arrangements worked out well in advance.* Most practitioners said that discussions with schools and service providers need to begin as early as September to insure that there is time to work out strategies for recruitment, assessment and transportation, and to develop an effective curriculum. While some participants pointed out that summer allocations are not announced until the late spring, the vast majority of the SETI participants indicated that much of the relationship-building and planning could take place earlier. Most agreed that to delay planning pending formal notification of funds would make it impossible to develop an effective program.

The following sections highlight a small sampling of the many practical ideas that practitioners shared with one another at the Institute.

Targeting

The question here is how to make this (sometimes controversial) decision. Local programs are recognizing that they cannot serve all the eligible population, and they have to make decisions about who will benefit *most* from enrichment. The key, participants argued, is to involve as many important institutions as possible in the decision-making process and in setting criteria for participation.

Recruitment

Suggestions included:

- Begin recruitment early ... in February and March.
- Orient school personnel so they understand the program and eligibility guidelines – not only guidance counselors, but English and Math teachers, alternative and special education staff, and administrators.
- Use a variety of outreach techniques: announcements on youth and parent-oriented media and in the schools and school newspapers, flyers in materials (such as welfare checks) sent to disadvantaged adults, etc.
- Locate JTPA recruitment personnel in the schools.
- Link the summer to year-round school programs.

Assessment

The two most common questions were "how can I access school testing records," and "what test should I use." All agreed, there are no easy answers. However, several themes and ideas stood out:

- There is no *one* test that covers all types of assessment. You need to select assessment instruments based on the kind of skills you want to measure and the amount of information you need.
- Formal tests are not the only way to assess skills. Interviews and documents such as application forms and writing samples can provide good initial assessment information.
- To ease access to school records, include a simple release form as part of your program application.
- Make assessment meaningful for the participants. Make sure they know why they are being tested, what their scores are, what they mean, and how they will be used.

The strongest suggestion was for schools and JTPA programs to develop a coordinated, year-round approach to assessment, so that school-year results can be used for the summer and summer results are included in the school records.

Motivating Youth

Comments included:

- Find a name for the education component that conveys a positive image: "Advanced Studies" and Practical Academics" are two that were mentioned. *Don't* call it remediation!
- Make sure the curriculum is different from that in regular school, and that it includes achievable, short-term goals and frequent "wins" so youngsters can see positive results from their efforts.
- Hold classes in attractive, nontraditional locations. Kids will get excited about attending classes at a local college, for example.
- Create a clear connection between what is learned in school and what is needed for work. Also, combine basic skills with life skills education, AIDS education and other issues that have interest for young people.
- Offer prizes (perhaps donated by local firms) and recognition for achievement: T-shirts, gift certificates, movie passes, award dinners, etc.
- Make a clear policy: no school, no work.
- Select teachers who really care about kids and who will build relationships with their students.

Transportation

Transporting young people to summer jobs has always been a problem. But with remediation and other enhancements, the transportation challenge takes on a new complexity. Some of the ideas heard in the SETI forums included:

- Use schools and colleges as combined work and enrichment sites.
- Provide enrichment at the worksite, particularly at larger job-sites.
- In contracting with vendors, give priority to organizations that can arrange transportation.
- Develop agreements with schools to use their buses.
- Consider setting up a mobile classroom van or "circuit rider" teachers and tutors that can travel to worksites.

Making Partnerships Work

The clearest theme of the Institutes was that nearly every "solution" to an enrichment problem involves collaboration. How do you get schools (or colleges or employers, or providers, etc.) to "buy in" to the program? Some of the suggestions included:

- *Start early.* Arrange orientation and planning sessions with the PIC, schools, chamber, service providers, parents, and others as early as September. It takes time to build trust and a sense of "ownership."
- Use your PIC members as ambassadors to the broader community.
- Involve staff at all levels – not just SDA Directors and Superintendents, but also youth staff, teachers, school counselors, etc.
- Spell out roles and responsibilities clearly so there are no misunderstandings later on.
- View collaboration as a long-range process that you can build on as you develop other programs during the year.

CHR Notes

by Erik Butler

The past few months have been a time of intensive work and exciting opportunities here at the Center for Human Resources. While we have spent most of the spring on the road, we have managed to get involved in a few new and interesting ventures ...

Career Beginnings

One of the Center's major projects this year is the expansion of *Career Beginnings* (profiled in the last issue of *Youth Programs*). Career Beginnings is a national network of partnerships between colleges, schools and businesses to provide employment, college and work preparation, and one-on-one mentoring from a business or professional person for disadvantaged high school juniors and seniors. Supported by a consortium of national and local foundations (including the Commonwealth Fund, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Gannett Foundation), as well as Private Industry Councils, colleges and businesses, Career Beginnings currently operates at 25 sites around the country. Over the next two years, the Center will be adding up to 40 new sites and is working with several states to develop statewide replications of the Career Beginnings model. For more information, contact the Career Beginnings office at (800) 343-4705.

Summer Enrichment

The Center has just completed a series of eight regional *Summer Enrichment Training Institutes* for the U.S. Department of Labor. Attended by over 1,100 state and local practitioners, the two-day Institutes offered practitioners an opportunity to exchange ideas; to hear about model programs operating in their regions; and to gain practical information on integrating basic skills education and work, on assessment strategies, and on methods for linking summer enrichment to year-round programs. (See page 13 for a report on the Institutes.)

A New Partnership

The Center's DOL-supported training activities continue in May with a 5-day training institute on *Systems and Program Design: Strategies for Serving At-Risk Youth* for state-level planning, policy, and technical assistance professionals. The May Institute inaugurates an important new initiative for the Center. Developed in partner-ship with the Taconic Foundation and the Smokey House Project in Danby, Vermont, the Institute is the first step toward establishing a national training and professional development center at Smokey House for human service, and particularly youth, practitioners.

Poverty and Community Action

As the result of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Center will also have an opportunity to take part in an exciting research and demonstration project. Over the next few years, the Rockefeller Foundation is funding Community Planning and Action Projects in six cities to document the nature of persistent poverty and to facilitate community responses to the problems of an "underclass." The Center for Human Resources will be assisting the sites to evaluate the implementation of the projects and the institutional changes that take place in each of the six cities.

The Welfare Employment Exchange

Another new Center project is the *Welfare Employment Exchange*. Beginning this summer, the Center will be operating a clearinghouse for information on state welfare-to-work programs. For an annual fee, states and other subscribers will be able to access up-to-date information on what kinds of programs have been developed around the country. The Welfare Employment Exchange grows out of a series of comparative state studies of welfare-to-work programs that the Center conducted for the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare.

Catching Up

Other recent and ongoing Center activities that should be mentioned ... The *California Training Institute* continues to provide workshops on various aspects of youth program design and management to local practitioners under funding from the State of California. The Center is also working with PICs, SDAs and state government in Connecticut and New York on the development of youth competency systems. The W.T. Grant Foundation recently released a report, *Who Will Train and Educate Tomorrow's Workers*, co-authored by Andrew Hahn, Erik Butler and Robert Lerman from the Center and Robert Sheets from Northern Illinois University. Last, but not least, the Center's study of 21 work/education partnerships, *A Guide to Working Partnerships*, is now available.

Three Cities, continued from page 10
for a youth who is deficient in only one skill area (such as pre-employment/work maturity skills) and is adequate or inappropriate for training in the other areas (basic skills or job specific skills). To meet the employability enhancement standard, SDAs will have to enroll youth with more extensive skill deficiencies. They will also have to exclude from the competency track (though not from other JTPA training) some of the more highly skilled youth that had been served in the competency track in the past.

A New Program Focus. In practical terms, this means that SDAs will have to re-orient some of their existing programs or design new services. For example, an SDA that operates an in-school program that had served 11th and 12th graders who are average or above average in basic skills, but who need pre-employment/work maturity skills, will no longer be able to take a positive termination (as of July 1, 1989) for training in this one area alone. Instead, the SDA will have to either change the target population for the program to in-school youth who lack *both* basic skills and pre-employment skills, or it will have to provide the pre-employment skills training to young people for whom job specific competencies or eventual placement are appropriate. In either case, the program will have to provide a more comprehensive set of services and, in at least one case, will serve a higher risk population.

New Local Goals. Finally, the increased emphasis of the new performance standards on employability development and on increased services for at-risk youth, provides Private Industry Councils and Service Delivery Areas with an opportunity to examine their own local goals and policies. PICs, particularly in states that use the employability enhancement standard, may want to increase their emphasis on the development of transferable skills among young people as opposed to placement. PICs may also want to reconsider the ways in which they have defined the target groups they want to serve, focusing more on skill deficiencies (e.g. minimal work experience, poor basic skills, etc.) than on the traditional demographic characteristics. In order to increase basic skills training for employability, PICs may want to work with the schools to develop a common definition of youth at-risk that, again, is based on skill deficiencies and that helps to identify those least likely to succeed in the labor market. Lastly, in reviewing their competency systems, PICs can work closely with employers to establish what basic skills entry-level workers really need and use this information to develop a set of functional basic skills competencies for use with both in-school and out-of-school youth.

An Opportunity for Employability

The entire employment and training system has an opportunity – now more than ever before – to provide longer, more intensive training to participants most at risk of chronic unemployment. While performance standards are only one piece of a quilt of policies and regulations that PICs and SDAs must be responsive to, it is the piece that has suffered the most criticism and that has been seen as the greatest barrier to serving those most in need.

Among policy makers and practitioners, it is hoped that the changes in the performance standards system will provide the flexibility the system needs to identify and serve youth and adults whose multiple skill deficiencies create barriers to further training and employment. But the revisions alone cannot insure quality program designs. Training and education for employability will only happen if policy makers and local practitioners take advantage of the opportunity and expand their services to those most in need.

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