



City of Cambridge
Department of Human Service Programs
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert W. Healy
FROM: Jill Herold
DATE: June 20, 1991
RE: Council Order #4, dated 5/6/91

In response to Council Order #4, dated 5/6/91 regarding a study conducted at the High School of students interest in career training and employment opportunities, attached is a preliminary draft of the survey results. A more inclusive and detailed report with accompanying pie charts, graphs, and policy recommendations is forthcoming.

JH/cg
Attachment

DIVISIONS:

Childcare
349-6200

Community Learning Center
349-6363

Community & Youth
349-6231

Council on Aging/Elderly Services
349-6220

Low Income Fuel Assistance
349-6247

Planning & Development
349-6200

Recreation
349-6230

MultiService Center/Homeless Services
349-6340

The Employment Future of Cambridge Youth

Preliminary results of a collaborative survey conducted and analyzed by the Citywide Youth Employment Office, the Community Development Department of the City of Cambridge, and Cambridge Rindge and Latin School

June 1991

A recent survey conducted at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School provides a more detailed understanding of the obstacles and challenges young people face in trying to find entry into the world of employment. The findings suggest a number of possible directions for youth employment programs in the high school and at local agencies, as the city develops new ways to advance the career opportunities of Cambridge youth.

The Cambridge Youth Employment Survey was designed and implemented by the Planning Committee of the Citywide Youth Employment Office (CYEO), the Community Development Department, and the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS). The survey was conducted in the home rooms of all students -- grades 9 thru 12 -- at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School in February of 1991 and, due to the large sample of 970 students, provides a good representation of the entire school population.

Students Want to Work

In large numbers, young people are asking for help finding work and receiving the training necessary to enter and secure part-time and summer jobs in today's job market. Eighty-five percent of the students interested in finding a job expected to need help. Deficits in communication skills, confidence, general job application etiquette, and other "work survival" skills were among the most frequently cited obstacles to finding a job among Cambridge's high school teens.

Students of all income levels, ages, and ethnic backgrounds expressed an eagerness to work, with particular interest in part-time jobs during the school year. Eighty-three percent of the respondents stated that they would like a job -- 41 percent interested in summer employment, and 75 percent of that group seeking after-school work. We can estimate that of the 2,100 students at CRLS, there are approximately 860 youth at the high school seeking summer employment, and 1,575 students desiring year-round employment. Approximately 15 percent of these students are seeking both.

The Truly Needy Seek Employment and Experience

Of students who seek work, those who appear to confront the greatest obstacles are students with limited-English speaking abilities. In the CRLS population as a whole, 38 percent stated that English was not their first language. The most common native

language(s) spoken are Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish (24 percent each), and French (14 percent). Twenty-seven to thirty-two percent of linguistic minorities stated that they do not speak English fluently, thus providing another obstacle to gainful employment. Compared to the general CRLS population, of which 71 percent had held at least one job before, only 56 percent of limited-English speaking students had worked before.

In striking contrast to the overall population, almost all of students for whom English is not a first language expect to need help finding work (for example, 96 percent of Haitians and 95 percent of Hispanics). Their number one obstacle to finding a job was *not* the poor economy, but a self-reported lack of preparation and understanding of how to access and navigate the working world. In addition, fully 16 percent fault insufficient skills and experience as a major obstacle, and thirteen percent of linguistic minorities said that not having a green card was a principal obstacle to finding work. Among certain ethnic groups, this number was higher. For example, 28 percent of Asian students said that not having a green card was their #1 obstacle to finding work.

Reasons for Working

A large percentage of high school students count on their part-time and summer earnings as a means of supporting their families. Over 36 percent of high school students over age 16 see working as a means of economic support. For students living in families with incomes of under \$13,000, 56 percent count on their pay as contributing to the family livelihood. For the general population over 16, when asked why they worked, 59 percent answered that it was to earn spending money, and 39 percent to gain work experience. Among younger students, ages 14-15, a higher percentage worked to earn spending money (79 percent) with 23 percent using the money to help support their families.

By far the most sought-after work environment for part-time and summer jobs is a "store" (57 percent) with "business office" a second choice at 36 percent. Next on the list was "restaurant" (18 percent), "outdoors" (10%); "laboratory" (10%) and "non-profit office", "garage/shop", and "factory" at 5 percent. Almost all students who had held a job before had worked in Cambridge (80 percent) and expected to continue working in the community. Sixty-four percent of students interested in finding work expected to earn a wage between \$5 - \$7.50 per hour.

Making the Work Connection

When asked about how they found work in the past, students provided a range of responses including working with local youth employment agencies and high school job programs (25 percent), making connections through friends or relatives (37 percent), and looking on their own (35 percent).

As might be expected, the data indicates that students from middle to high-income backgrounds are more apt to find jobs through friends and relatives than students from low-

income families. For example, only 26 percent of students from families with incomes below \$13,000 got their last job through family contacts, whereas 38 percent of students from families making over \$34,000 found their jobs through friends or relatives. The use of family networks varied among ethnic groups as well. For example, 47 percent of Asian students tapped family connections compared to 24 percent of Haitian students, 41 percent of white students, and 30 percent of Black students.

The CRLS students who use the services of local youth employment programs located at the high school and in the community are primarily from low-income families. Of students from families with incomes of less than \$20,000, 38 percent stated that they found their last job through a local youth employment agency or a CRLS employment program.

Minority groups were also more likely to use the services of youth employment programs. Among ethnic groups, 33 percent of Haitian students surveyed found their last job through an employment program, 30 percent of Black students, 26 percent of Hispanic students, 25 percent of Asian students, and 21 percent of White students. Usage varied considerably among the eight programs included in the survey.

Of the relatively small group of CRLS students over age 16 who had never held a job before (21 percent), 46 percent had tried unsuccessfully to find a job, 22 percent said they couldn't work because they did not have a green card, and 19 percent said they were not interested in finding employment. Among younger CRLS students -- ages 14-15 -- a much larger group (41 percent) had not held any job before. At least 43 percent of this younger group had tried to find one.

Work and Achievement

Contrary to recent national studies indicating that work has a debilitating influence on academic achievement, there was no clear evidence that this is the case for CRLS students, particularly those with an average to good GPA. Students who stated that their GPA was between C- and B-, spanned several working patterns -- 25 percent worked 12 hours and under, 42 percent worked 13 to 20 hours, and 25 percent worked 21 to 30 hours per week.

Those students with a higher GPA, however -- between A- and B- -- did tend to work under 20 hours per week. Forty-four percent worked less than 12 hours, 44 percent worked 13 to 20 hours, yet only 9 percent worked 21 to 30 hours per week. This particular question involved a small sample size, so it is less conclusive than the rest of the survey. However, it may be useful to note that, of those students who identified themselves as having a relatively high GPA (B- to A-) and working 12 or less hours per week, 86 percent came from families with reported incomes of over \$34,000.

On the whole, most students at CRLS have held jobs that take up a large proportion of their after-school time. The majority of students working part-time during the school year work from 13-20 hours a week (42 percent), with 34 percent working 12 and under, and 18 percent working 21 - 30 hours a week.

In general, working more hours per week did not appear to increase students' understanding about careers and their place in the working world. While students over age 16 who worked 13 to 20 hours per week claimed to have a slightly higher understanding of their future career options than their colleagues (52 percent vs. 49 percent), only 47 percent of the students who work either less than 12 hours or more than 20 hours per week feel knowledgeable about their future career paths.

Making the Transition From School to Work

For those students who will enter the work force directly after high school, almost two-thirds (63 percent) say they have little or no knowledge about the range of career opportunities available to them, compared to 55 percent of the general CRLS population, ages 14 and over. While most of Cambridge Rindge and Latin (CRLS) students expect to graduate (91 percent) and attend college (76 percent), the following data refer to a relatively small percentage (15 percent) who state that they plan to work immediately afterwards.

For these self-identified "non-college bound", they will find upon graduation, a poor fit between their own skills and a promising career path available to them in Cambridge. In larger numbers than their college-bound counterparts, this group is less inclined to rate themselves high on academic and work-related skills. Just under half rate themselves good in academics. Forty-one percent of this group state that they have fair or poor reading and literacy skills, 55 percent rate themselves fair or poor in math. Fully 70 percent state they have poor or fair computer skills at a time when the need for these skills -- even for entry-level workers -- is on the rise.

The "non-college bound" are disproportionately low-income, composed of equal numbers of young men and women, and span all ethnic groups. A striking 33 percent live in families with incomes of under \$20,000 a year (compared to 18 percent of the total school population) and 73 percent expect to live and work in Cambridge after high school, compared to 61 percent of the general school population.

Young Peoples' Skills and Expectations

On the whole, CRLS students rated themselves high in the "soft skills" needed to succeed in the work place, but were less generous in their self-assessment of academic preparation in math and computer skills. Fully 82 percent felt they had a good work attitude, 71 percent rated themselves high on communication skills, and 77 percent stated that they had good teamwork and cooperation skills. Yet less than 63 percent thought that they were good in "academics"; only 55 percent claimed to have good math skills, and 33

percent said their computer skills were good.

The survey data reveals that students' self-expectations are not reflective of actual educational trends in Cambridge. For example, while 91 percent of CRLS students said they expected to graduate, according to 1990 Cambridge Public Schools data, only 79 percent will ended up receiving their diploma last year. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents stated that they expected to attend college, but last year 61 percent of past CRLS students were accepted at two and four-year universities (it is unclear how many attended and remained in post-secondary institutions). This suggests that students set high expectations for themselves, but, for various reasons, are not always successful at meeting their goals.

Who are the students surveyed?

The students surveyed at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School spanned all ethnic backgrounds, incomes, and ages. The following data provides a glimpse at the diversity of the population surveyed:

- ◆ Respondents' ethnic background:

White (34 percent)	Asian (6.8 percent)
Black (18.8 percent)	West Indian (2.8 percent)
Hispanic (12.9 percent)	Cape Verdean (1.6 percent)
Haitian (9.7 percent)	Other (13.5 percent)

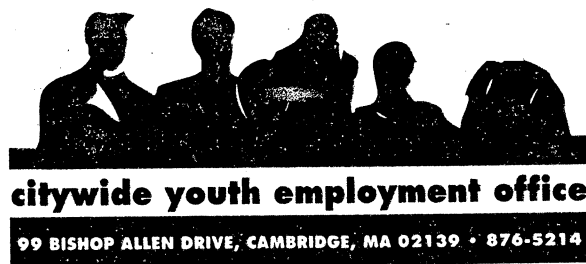
 - ◆ Although 56 percent of students did not know their family income, 44 percent reported their income as follows:

Less than \$13,000 (11 percent)
\$13,001 - \$20,000 (7 percent)
\$20,001 - \$34,000 (11 percent)
\$34,001 - \$48,000 (7 percent)
\$48,001 - \$62,000 (4 percent)
\$62,001 + (4 percent)

 - ◆ Geographically, students lived in the following zip code areas, in order of frequency:

02139 (42 percent)
02141 (21 percent)
02140 (20 percent)
02138 (16 percent)
-

For more information, contact: Saphira Baker, Citywide Youth Employment Office, 876-5214.



PLANNING COMMITTEE

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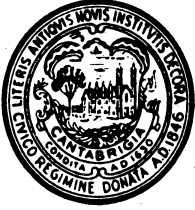
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6/10/91





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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

June 24, 1991

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 21, regarding a study of High School students with regard to their interests in career training and employment opportunities, received from Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

26.

S-793

CONSENT AGENDA

Awaiting Report Item No. 21 regarding
study of High School students with
regard to their interests in career
training and employment opportunities.

In City Council,

June 24, 1991

Placed on file