

## 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:

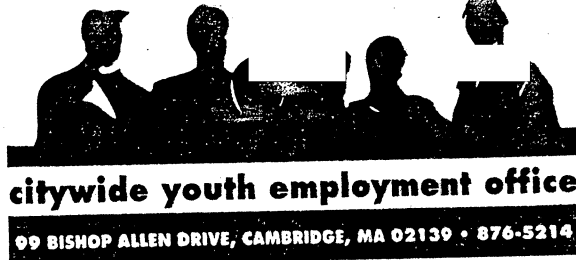
|                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| White (34 percent)      | Asian (6.8 percent)        |
| Black (18.8 percent)    | West Indian (2.8 percent)  |
| Hispanic (12.9 percent) | Cape Verdean (1.6 percent) |
| Haitian (9.7 percent)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

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



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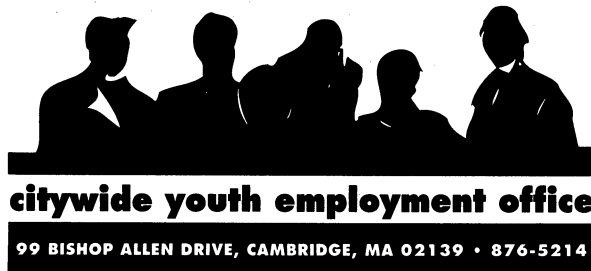
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6/10/91





### Statement of Goals and a General Workplan -- June 19, 1991

The mission of the Citywide Youth Employment Office is to expand career opportunities for young people in Cambridge. Over the last eight months, the Citywide Youth Employment Office has made significant strides toward each of its four goals. In the future months, CYEO plans to:

#### *Expand employment and training opportunities*

- ♦ With the direction of its Business Advisory Committee -- including representatives of major Cambridge employers, the Superintendent of Schools, and city officials -- CYEO will continue to set strategy and implement initiatives focusing on expanding quality work, career, and training opportunities for Cambridge youth;
- ♦ continue outreach to the employer community on behalf of local youth employment agencies to generate jobs and non-profit opportunities for Cambridge youth, not only through the summer jobs campaign, but as part of a year-round effort;
- ♦ continue to pursue the establishment of a coordinated office -- based in the high school -- which all local youth employment programs would use for shared job-readiness workshops, mock interviews, other innovative career education presentations, and the dissemination of youth employment program information to students;
- ♦ research federal funding sources for pilot employment and training projects aimed at the most needy -- such as, limited-English speaking students and out-of-school youth -- and convene local youth employment groups to set strategies and develop funding proposals;
- ♦ identify and recruit a pool of volunteers from the business community to facilitate ongoing trainings in job-readiness skills to high school students and out-of-school youth to supplement the coordinated efforts of youth employment programs;
- ♦ provide educational materials to local employers on successful strategies of employing and training Cambridge youth;
- ♦ continue to play a major role in developing a new career course, "Hire Education", to be taught at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School beginning in Fall 1991, and established through the efforts of CYEO, youth employment providers, and key school administrators;

#### *Foster coordination among service providers*

- ♦ continue to convene the CYEO Planning Committee -- which includes directors of all major youth employment programs, the Executive Director of Occupational Education, the CRLS Assistant Principal of Policy and Students, the Executive Director of the Cambridge Partnership for Public Education, and the Director of the Division of Youth and Families -- on a regular basis to set policy for the office and work together to respond to unmet community needs around youth employment.



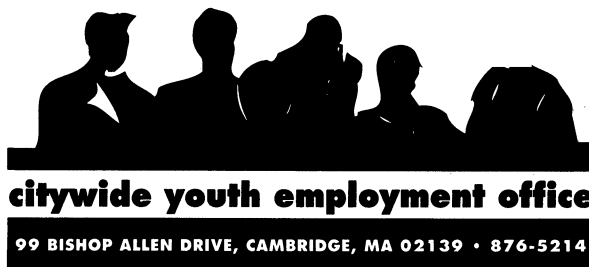
- ♦ continue to meet regularly with the CYEO Direct Service Committee -- which includes the youth employment staff working with in-school and out-of-school youth at all major youth employment programs in Cambridge -- to strengthen the connections, sponsor coordinated workshops, and otherwise work to insure that youth are not falling through the cracks.
- ♦ revise and enhance the common application process for youth employment agencies in Cambridge which has helped over 450 Cambridge youth make connections to youth employment programs this summer;
- ♦ sponsor and coordinate a series of job-readiness workshops -- including mock interviews, job search skills, and other "work-survival" skills -- at the high school, in conjunction with local youth employment programs, and at other community locations;

*Serve as an information and referral center*

- ♦ Coordinate outreach and recruitment efforts of all youth employment providers in Cambridge through joint school assemblies, presentations at Teen Centers, a coordinated presence at the high school, community newsletters, and other forms of local outreach;
- ♦ Produce easy-to-read materials for young people, describing the resources available to them through youth employment programs;
- ♦ update the recently-published directory of youth employment programs, Youth At Work, and disseminate it to be used as a handout at all youth programs, teen centers, and the local schools.
- ♦ continue to serve as a resource for young people seeking information about local youth employment services;
- ♦ continue to provide "job search" workshops as a "last resort" resource for youth unable to be served by the existing youth employment programs;

*Respond to unmet needs*

- ♦ set the groundwork for work-based training initiatives -- involving a cluster of Cambridge companies -- to help young people develop work skills and make a transition to the workplace;
- ♦ disseminate and publicize the recently-conducted survey of 970 CRLS students regarding employment needs and aspirations to service providers, city and state officials, and selected employers (forthcoming article in Chamber of Commerce newsletter), and use it as a basis for planning future employment and training initiatives.
- ♦ publish and distribute the newly-completed needs assessment study of youth employment services in Cambridge written by a graduate student at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and develop a strategy to begin to address some of the unmet areas in the community.
- ♦ continue to research national and regional funding sources, convene providers to plan a collaborative response, and work toward the development of new employment and training resources.



## Statement of Goals

The mission of the Citywide Youth Employment Office is to expand career opportunities for young people in Cambridge. To pursue this mission, the Citywide Youth Employment Office works to:

### *Expand employment and training opportunities*

- ◆ work with the business community to expand and create training and career opportunities for Cambridge youth;

### *Foster coordination among service providers*

- ◆ bring current provider agencies, including youth employment agencies and school-based employment programs, together to share resources and expand services;

### *Serve as an information and referral center*

- ◆ provide employment information, assessment, and program referrals for all interested Cambridge youth;

### *Respond to unmet needs*

- ◆ identify unmet youth employment needs through an assessment process and work with youth employment provider agencies to develop collaborative strategies to address them.

*For more information call Saphira Baker, Coordinator, CityWide Youth Employment Office.*



## City of Cambridge

The Human Services and Youth Committee conducted a public hearing on Friday, June 28, 1991 beginning at 12:15 p.m. in the Ackermann Room, City Hall.

Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair of the above referenced Committee, convened the hearing and stated that the purpose of the proceedings was to discuss an update on the goals of the City-wide Youth Employment Office (CYEO). Present at the hearing were: Councillor Francis H. Duehay and Deputy City Clerk John E. Flynn.

To begin the discussion, Councillor Myers introduced Ms. Saphira Baker, Coordinator of the CYEO, for the purpose of updating the Committee on the Summer, 1991 employment opportunities and placement statistics.

Ms. Baker stated that she is presently working with three major employment programs: The Mayor's Summer Job Program, Teenwork, and Employment Resources, Inc. (ERI) this summer. An estimate by Ms. Baker was that collectively these programs will provide employment opportunities to some 600 city youth. Other employment opportunities include some 330 subsidized jobs, some 90 private sector jobs (2/3 of which were generated by the CYEO Advisory Board), 14 jobs in the School Department along with 8 jobs in non-profits funded by the School Committee and 35 Recreation Division jobs (an increase of 5 from the previous fiscal year).

Councillor Myers inquired of the number of City youth still seeking summer employment and the reasons for needs not being met by the City and/or its private sector partners.

Ms. Baker in response stated that the estimated range was between 150-175 City youth and reasons range from the present economic conditions facing both the public and private sectors to programs are filled by mid May to lateness on part of the applicants in the hiring process.

Councillor Myers inquired of Ms. Baker what further steps can or could be taken to meet the needs of this range of City youth.

Ms. Baker stated that she is continuing "to pound the pavement" to raise the consciousness of the City's private sector to provide employment opportunities to City youth but is finding it difficult in light of lay-offs.

Councillor Myers inquired of the workings of the common application presently in place by the CYEO.

Ms. Baker stated that in March, 1991, lists of employers were compiled by a collaborative of City departments. An ad campaign was undertaken along with a direct mailing to employers completed by follow-up telephone calls made by Teenwork, ERI and CYEO to employers.

Councillor Duehay inquired of Ms. Baker for a statistical breakdown by institution of the number of employment opportunities extended to City youth.

Ms. Baker responded to Councillor Duehay's inquiry by prefacing her statistical information on the fact that it was from memory and it's accuracy was subject to verification at a later date. The following data was provided:

|                   |   |    |                  |
|-------------------|---|----|------------------|
| ComEnergy         | - | 4  |                  |
| Polaroid          | - | 4  | (apprenticeship) |
| Lotus             | - | 1  |                  |
| Harvard           | - | 15 |                  |
| MIT               | - | 6  | (Pledged)        |
| Cambridge College | - | 1  | (subsidized)     |

Councillor Duehay further inquired of the placement cost associated with one employee in a non-profit organization.

Ms. Baker estimated the placement cost at \$1,500 for a ten week period.

In the Hotel industry, Councillor Duehay inquired of the number of employment opportunities extended to City residents.

Ms. Baker stated that the statistics do not depict what she hoped for. Ms. Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, followed up by stating that through the CYEO Business Advisory Committee a vehicle does not exist for the City to explore in the future.

Councillor Myers, referencing the Council Order he submitted at the June 24, 1991 City Council meeting, called the present needs critical and that he would soon meet with the City Manager to discuss the situation.

Councillor Duehay stated that he too felt the urgency of the situation but was not willing to vote new monies at this time.

Councillor Duehay inquired if any try was made with leveraging Public/Private monies to secure employment opportunities.

Ms. Herold stated in response that Mayor Wolf has tried it through existing apprenticeship programs and that some jobs were realized. Ms. Baker stated that CYEO did not opt to try this approach in placing City youth with employers.

Councillor Myers, returning to the issue of additional funds being allocated by the City, inquired if the CYEO would be able to provide additional placement to City youth.

Ms. Baker cited administrative complications but would be willing to start the process and work towards carrying it over into the Fall.

Councillor Myers stated that the promise behind the CYEO was to provide employment opportunities to as many City youth who requested it and that the Draft report dated June, 1991 states some 1,575 student surveyed were seeking year-round employment and a response should be formulated by applicable city agencies. (A copy is attached.)

Ms. Baker stated that the draft preliminary results of the collaborative survey is presently being reviewed by the CYEO Planning Committee and will be reorganized and re-edited.

Councillor Myers inquired of the comprehensive approach taken by the School Department in helping students meet their employment objectives.

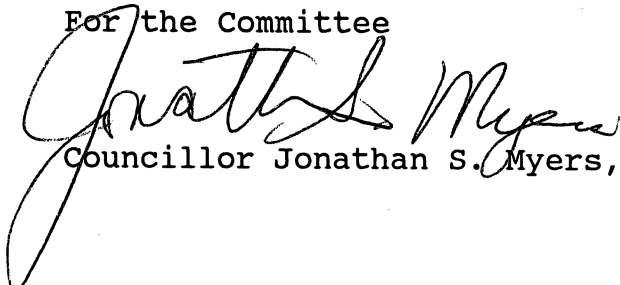
Ms. Baker stated that the CYEO is working with officials of the School Department and the Planning Committee to secure space at Rindge and Latin High School to provide accessibility to all interested school age youth.

At this time, Ms. Herold outlined to the Committee the Statement of Goals and a General Workplan - June 19, 1991 (A copy is attached). Ms. Herold stated that this statement should be considered a "DRAFT" awaiting endorsement by the CYEO Planning Committee.

Councillor Myers thanked those for their comments and participation at this hearing.

The hearing was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

For the Committee

  
Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report from the Human Services & Youth  
Committee for a hearing held on Friday,  
June 28, 1991 relative to a discussion  
on an update on the goals of a city-  
wide Youth Employment Office.

In City Council,

August 7, 1991

*Report accepted  
Placed on file*