

Workforce Readiness Taskforce Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2024

Open Meeting

1. Welcome & Attendance (Education & Industry Consortium Members)
2. Leslie Kristof, Board Chair, Opening Remarks
3. Nomination/Appointment of Chairperson for Workforce Readiness Taskforce - Education and Industry Consortium

Discussion

4. St. Lucie County Public Schools Five-Year Plan Overview and Survey Presentation - Aliesha Seitz/Bridgette Hargadine
5. Discussion of Labor Market by Industry Needs and Educational Offering
6. Status of Existing Talent Pipeline for In-Demand Occupations

Sector Updates: Open to the Floor

7. Career Connect Conference
8. Targeted Boot Camps
9. Local Career and Technical Education Programs
10. School Job Fairs
11. Apprenticeship

Adjournment

Consortium Members Present:

Bill Wilcox Linda Fitzpatrick

Consortium Members Participating by Teleconference:

Lana Barros Karen Giovengo Taylor Hoskins
Kelly Johnson Aliesha Seitz Christi Shields
Bill Solomon Bill Wilcox

Consortium Members Excused:

Kristine Burr Eric Swiechowski

Administrative Staff Present/Teleconference:

Christina Coble Jennifer Eimann Martin Rivera

Call to Order:

Christina Coble, Business Services Manager, called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Agenda Item 2 - Leslie Kristof, Board Chair, Opening Remarks: Christina Coble, Business Services Manager, introduced Leslie Kristof, Board Chair, who thanked the newly appointed consortium members and the existing Workforce Readiness Taskforce members.

Ms. Kristof reiterated that through discussions with the board and executive committee, it was decided to incorporate the newly formed Education and Industry Consortium into the existing Workforce Readiness Taskforce.

Mr. Kristof stated that the Workforce Readiness Taskforce's work over the last five years aligns with the state requirements of the Education and Industry Consortia. The current goal is to identify the needs within the LWDBs industries and educational sectors and be the driver of information and ideas to educate CareerSource Research Coast, thus ensuring we do all we can to provide the services needed for businesses, job seekers, stakeholders, and community partners.

Ms. Kristof explained that the Workforce Development Board and the Board of Directors will be working on a strategic plan by August 2024. The Workforce Readiness Taskforce will play an essential role in helping to develop that strategic plan.

Agenda Item 3 - Nomination/Appointment of Chairperson for Workforce Readiness Taskforce - Education and Industry Consortium:

Christina Coble, Business Services manager, opened the discussion for nominations for a chairperson.

Bill Wilcox moved to nominate William Solomon, Indian River State College, as Chair. Mr. Solomon accepted the nomination, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Ms. Kristof asked the taskforce for feedback regarding the frequency of the meetings. Currently, they take place monthly, but members reported that quarterly meetings would be most effective.

Ms. Coble reiterated that CareerSource Research Coast staff are the taskforce's administrative entity. Mr. Solomon's leadership, along with that of the other consortium members, will initiate the efforts to move forward with topics of conversation relevant to the taskforce's goals and initiatives that impact businesses, job seekers, stakeholders, and community partners.

Agenda Item 4 - St. Lucie County Public Schools Five-Year Plan Overview and Survey Presentation - Aliesha Seitz/Bridgette Hargadine:

Christina Coble, Business Services Manager, introduced Aliesha Seitz and Bridget Hargadine from Port St. Lucie Public Schools.

Ms. Hargadine stated that she is an administrator for St. Lucie public schools. In that role, she has been tasked with working with colleagues in Port St. Lucie (PSL) County to develop a five-year strategic plan. The goal is to have the five-year plan completed by June 2024. Ms. Hargadine will share an overview of the plan, and then a survey will be provided for task force members to complete.

During the 2022-2023 school year, St. Lucie Public Schools were recognized as one of eight school systems out of 1100 by COGNIA, the accreditation system for the quality of school districts. This System of Distinction honor was based on planning, quality of work with stakeholders, and the quality of education provided to students. St. Lucie Public Schools is committed to maintaining this level of distinction in the future.

Ms. Hargadine explained that during the last school year, she and her colleagues met with several different stakeholder groups from PSL County to develop their annual plan, pick a direction, and get feedback as part of our accreditation process. One of the most significant feedback areas was having strong career and technical programs for all students in grades 6-12.

In addition, there was much recognition for the work in the career and technical education programs. Of note was the desire to see more career exploration and communication surrounding the options available to students and ways for students and families to understand how they can navigate all these choices.

As students prepare to graduate from high school and enter the workforce or college, strong community collaborations and connections coming out of the post-COVID era are vital to bringing the community and the schools back together to develop more opportunities for graduates.

These opportunities would assist in building graduates with the skills needed for their future endeavors and make sure that every student be a skilled communicator, good life manager, resilient, confident, able to work well with others, problem solvers, creative and critical thinkers, financially literate, and digital citizen.

Ms. Hargadine emphasized that as they build the five-year plan, seeing how to provide and ensure that these skills are instilled in graduating students leads to strategic aims to develop a K-12 roadmap to success.

The four strategic aims laid out in the five-year plan are as follows:

- Transforming Futures: An individualized K-12 road map to success for every student will culminate in every student having multiple market value assets prior to graduation in the form of college credit, industry certifications, internships, entrepreneurial experiences, client projects, or work experience.
- Elevate the teacher as the designer of learning, creating engaging student-centered lessons where students embrace a more active, collaborative, and direct role in their own learning on a solid foundation of literacy and numeracy.
- Provide critical physical, digital, and social infrastructure in our schools to engage, support, and collaborate with the St. Lucie community.
- Implement innovative future-ready school initiatives to meet 2030 needs.

Ms. Hargadine stated that these strategic aims help form the infrastructure that is so important to our community.

Ms. Coble asked if there were any questions or comments regarding Bridgette Hargadine's presentation of the St. Lucie Public Schools five-year plan overview.

Linda Fitzpatrick, Keiser University, asked what strategies are being implemented to get families more involved in their children's education and career development.

Ms. Hargadine responded that one of the components being developed is a series of conversation starters with conversation stems as resources to help K-12 families have developmentally appropriate conversations about careers, career exploration, and the development of student's interests and goals. In addition, a high-quality curriculum introduced as a resource for families and built into such events as family engagement nights, as well as into such activities as student-led conferences. Also being developed is how to add a component around students explaining and sharing with their families their specific interests, career options, and what is available within the school system to help the student achieve those goals.

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked a second question about the population growth in St. Lucie County and how that is affecting the attendance of in-person vs. virtual students.

Ms. Hargadine stated that St. Lucie County schools have reached their maximum population. She said people understand the quality of education being provided to students. To address the increase in student population, adding new buildings and programs to address the needs of the students is imperative.



Aliesha Seitz, St. Lucie County Public Schools, asked Ms. Hargadine to dive a little deeper regarding career exploration.

Ms. Hargadine stated that they are implementing a program called Xello. Xello is a 6-12 curriculum that allows students to explore interests and strengths, develop an understanding of themselves, and then explore all the different workforce pathways that they could consider in the future. It includes activities for students to think about themselves, their assets, and what they like to do.

Xello also includes a digital portfolio system, so students in grades 9-12 can develop a digital portfolio that can be shared with colleges and future employers to highlight their strengths, skills, and interests.

Claudio Barto, Junior Achievement of the Palm Beaches & Treasure Coast, Inc., asked if St. Lucie County Public Schools were coordinating with any community organizations that work with families.

Ms. Hargadine stated that working with community organizations will be one of the critical initiatives implemented under the five-year plan, which will be fleshed out and detailed more as we move forward with the project.

Ms. Seitz provided information on the St. Lucie County Public Schools Five-Year Plan Survey. She stated that the information gathered via the survey will be highly beneficial because it is tied to some of the funding and initiatives that will be put forward. When the five-year plan is discussed, it is important to ensure that the funding sources for the initiatives being implemented are available and that St. Lucie Public Schools are reaching the needs of our community.

Ms. Seitz reiterated that the members would be able to access the St. Lucie County Public Schools Five-Year Plan Survey in the meeting chat. Ms. Coble stated that she would send out the link to members after the meeting concluded.

Agenda Item 5 - Discussion of Labor Market by Industry Needs and Educational Offering:

Christina Coble, Business Services Manager, opened a discussion on how the local labor market looks right now and how it addresses the needs of the taskforce members from an industry standpoint. In addition, how educational offerings through the school districts, colleges, and universities are pairing with the needs of the sector industries in the region.

Bill Wilcox, Phoenix Metals, Inc., stated that individuals coming out of school (high school, trade schools, or higher education) need to have basic business etiquette. Tardiness, unplanned time off, and the inability to adapt to the work environment are issues he faces when employing individuals.

Mr. Wilcox would like to see these issues addressed within the school curriculums and offered to students as useful transferable skills.

Maddie Willams, Treasure Coast Builders Association (TBA), stated that working with industry partners to expose middle school students to career exploration opportunities, job fairs, and boot camps would start the career conversations earlier than waiting until junior or senior year of high school. As a result, it would increase the pipeline of skilled workers to meet employers' needs.

As an example, Ms. Williams shared that TBA sponsored a Marine Exploration event with the Fort Pierce Yacht Club and the city of Fort Pierce. About a hundred middle school and high school students attended. It was a great way to start exposing them to the Marine industry, how businesses operate, the requirements and expectations of employment, and the education and certifications needed to obtain successful employment.

Ms. Williams suggested that as the school systems develop their five-year plans, they could create some workforce readiness classes or certifications that students can take to prepare them for eventually entering the workforce. Topics could include soft skills, business etiquette, and financial literacy.

Anita Fischer, Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDCSLC), discussed the need for reliable transportation so that individuals entering the workforce are not limited to where they can work based on lack of transportation.

Kelly Johnson, R.V. Johnson Insurance, shared that United Way and Martin County have a grant for Lyft to provide transportation to eligible individuals. This grant is specific to Martin County residents and businesses but suggests it could be a viable option for St. Lucie County to investigate.

Sector Updates (Open to the Floor):

Christina Coble, Business Services Manager, opened the discussion to all participants attending this meeting.

Bill Wilcox, Phoenix Metals, noted that soft skills should be part of any training opportunity offered to job seekers, youth, etc. Mr. Wilcox stated that his most significant issue with employees is their attendance record, whether tardiness or absences.

Anita Fischer, Project Lift/EDC, stated that on April 4, 2024, they will hold a career fair at the Havert L. Fenn Center in Ft. Pierce. Over 70 industry partners and 600 students are registered to attend the event.



Cynthia Sanchez, Boys and Girls Club of St. Lucie County shared that they are gearing up for a trip to Guatemala to do Habitat for Humanity's community service project. Projects include laying concrete floors in homes.

Ms. Sanchez stated that the Boys and Girls Club will be visiting colleges with students during spring break. Embry–Riddle Aeronautical University and Bethune-Cookman University are two of the institutions they will be touring.

Christi Shields, Indian River County Schools, shared that a job fair will be held on Friday, May 3, 2024. Indian River County Schools are partnering with Gifford Youth Achievement Center to hold it at their facility. It will be open to juniors, seniors, and Treasure Coast Technical College students. Busing will be provided for students from the high schools.

Linda Fitzpatrick, Keiser University, announced that it is having an open house on March 23, 2024, at the Port St. Lucie Campus. She stated that it was a great time of year for juniors and seniors to come in and explore career pathways. In addition, they will be offering two workshops: how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and resume writing.

Adjournment:

With no further items to discuss, Christina Coble moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 a.m.

BOARD STAFF CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify these minutes reflect the proceedings by the Workforce Readiness Taskforce.

Christina Coble
Board Staff

Date