



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

SPEAKER'S TASK FORCE ON YOUTH WORKFORCE READINESS

Minority Report | October 31, 2016

Representative Katrina Shankland, Vice-Chair – 71st Assembly District

Representative Cory Mason – 66th Assembly District

Representative Mandela Barnes – 11th Assembly District

Representative Mark Spreitzer – 45th Assembly District

Introduction

On August 4, 2015, Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos announced the creation of the Speaker's Task Force on Youth Workforce Readiness. The directive of the task force was to:

“...explore new ways to encourage Wisconsin youth to pursue careers in the trades, manufacturing industry, and technical fields.”

From 2015-2016, the Task Force on Youth Workforce Readiness held five public hearings across the state, at the following locations:

September 10, 2015 – Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison, WI

September 29, 2015 – Northcentral Technical College in Wausau, WI

November 6, 2015 – Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay, WI

January 28, 2016 – Milwaukee Area Technical College in Oak Creek, WI

March 29, 2016 – Eleva-Strum High School in Strum, WI

Members of the Task Force heard testimony at the public hearings from a wide range of stakeholders and experts, including state agencies, educational institutions, businesses, chambers of commerce, workforce development boards, disability advocates, and industry representatives. Speakers highlighted concerns about low student participation in technical education programs, the importance of private sector participation in youth training programs, a shortage of qualified technical education instructors, the importance of teaching soft skills and STEM skills, and transportation barriers.

On August 30, 2016, Chair Bob Kulp released the Task Force's final report. Members of the minority party were given no input as to the content of the report and were not offered the chance to read the report until two hours prior to its scheduled release. The report itself provided six simplistic policy recommendations with no explanation as to how each would be implemented. At this time, the Speaker's Task Force on Youth Workforce Readiness has not introduced any legislation to accomplish these recommendations.

Given its failure to make comprehensive policy recommendations, its omission of multiple original Task Force objectives, and its exclusion of one-third of the Task Force members, it is clear that the Chair's report did not provide a meaningful summary of the Task Force's findings. The Democratic members of the Task Force are therefore putting forward the following minority report. We hope the governor and legislature will take action on our concrete recommendations.

Promote Career Exploration Opportunities and Skilled Trade and Manufacturing Careers

Many speakers testified about the importance of ensuring that students have good career exploration and counseling opportunities in middle school and high school. In addition, many commented that the skilled trades, manufacturing careers, and agricultural careers should be included in those opportunities. Through proper marketing, parents and students can be exposed to the numerous careers in those fields first-hand. The Task Force heard about proven models for providing strong career exploration opportunities and for exposing students to technical careers.

Wisconsin should take an all-of-the-above approach to supporting career exploration and lifting negative associations with technical career fields. This should include increased funding for more school counselors, including dedicated career advocates. Wisconsin should encourage schools to promote WorkKeys and the National Career Readiness Certificate. Wisconsin should also work toward the statewide deployment of software programs that strengthen relationships between employers and workers.

Wisconsin should support a statewide marketing campaign in October (manufacturing month) to promote manufacturing careers. Wisconsin should encourage schools to offer heavy metal/manufacturing tours to expose students to careers related to manufacturing. This tour model should also be expanded to include careers in health fields, agriculture, IT, and other areas with high workforce needs and the potential for family-supporting careers. All career exploration efforts should look to industry sectors broadly and include a range of career opportunities, rather than directing students toward specific jobs that may or may not exist in the future.

Efforts should also be made to involve students in career exploration efforts when they are younger – in middle school and junior high school – so that they are exposed to new careers earlier and can dispense with pre-conceived ideas about industries like agriculture and manufacturing. Engaging guidance counselors and parents in career exploration efforts for junior high and middle school students will enable them to support their students through decision-making related to internships, Youth Apprenticeships, dual enrollment opportunities, part-time jobs, and more.

Finally, educating parents and encouraging parental involvement is crucial for student success. Wisconsin should support schools in expanding opportunities for parents to become involved in heavy metal manufacturing tours, agricultural tours, technical college visits, and more.

Support Career and Technical Education in Middle School and High School

The Task Force heard substantial testimony about the importance of strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in middle schools and high schools. These educational opportunities are critical because they expose students to careers in manufacturing and skilled trades, provide real-world applications of math and science coursework, and give students hands-on job experience. CTE also allows students to participate in Youth Apprenticeship programs or earn

college credits, which can accelerate a student's progress at a technical college or other higher education institution.

Several schools described their success in modernizing CTE classrooms and equipment, hiring excellent CTE teachers, and supporting Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs). However, it was also clear that funding remains a significant challenge. Most CTE equipment is outdated and irrelevant to the current economy, but very expensive to modernize. CTE teachers are in high demand and require higher salaries than other teachers to attract and retain. While some schools have successfully partnered with industry to help fund and support CTE, these partnerships take resources to coordinate and are not possible in every district.

Wisconsin should invest in CTE to ensure that every student has access to CTE pathways. Wisconsin should assist local schools in purchasing modern CTE equipment, hiring qualified CTE instructors, and supporting teachers to sponsor and mentor CTSOs such as Skills USA, DECA, FFA, etc. Wisconsin should consider a matching grant program to assist with the purchase of CTE equipment while leveraging private money or in-kind support from industry to assist with the required match where possible.

With agriculture and healthcare facing growing workforce needs, and agriculture facing similar teacher shortages, corresponding student organizations such as FFA and Future Health Professionals should be supported along with other CTE programs.

Foster Industry Partnerships for Successful Career and Technical Education

Educational institutions and industry representatives told the Task Force about the importance of forming partnerships with industry to maximize the impact of CTE. These connections help leverage private resources such as equipment donations and funding for teaching or support positions in schools. Private partnerships also ensure CTE is up-to-date and relevant to the modern economy and create opportunities for student apprenticeships, internships, job shadowing, and future careers. However, challenges exist with communication between educational institutions and industry, as well as challenges for industry in creating appropriate opportunities to directly engage youth in their workplaces.

Wisconsin should create a statewide office to coordinate education-industry partnerships that support career and technical education. This office would be responsible for communicating best practices and successful models, and assisting both schools and industry to make these partnerships a success. The office should also:

- Encourage the formation of high school-level industry advisory committees,
- Help employers design internships with required learning components,
- Develop a playbook to help small businesses accept students for work-based learning/internships, and
- Explore tax credits or other business incentives to hire youth or partner with CTE

Expand and Align Youth Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship Programs

The Task Force heard testimony about opportunities to expand upon offerings in the Youth and Registered Apprenticeship programs, better align the two programs, and make apprenticeship opportunities available to more students.

The Wisconsin Legislature should build upon existing efforts by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to create bridges between Youth Apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships. Currently, many Youth Apprenticeship programs have some level of alignment with Registered Apprenticeship occupations. However, steps can be taken to better promote applicable courses to interested students, build relationships between local stakeholders, and incentivize the creation of new bridges through formal credit agreements. The existence of the Youth Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs, and the bridges between them, should be more thoroughly marketed to students, parents, schools and employers.

The state should also consider ways to market apprenticeship opportunities to people who began, but did not complete, a four-year degree. Finally, Wisconsin should expand apprenticeship opportunities in health-related and IT fields to address corresponding workforce shortages.

Broaden Dual Enrollment Opportunities

Multiple speakers testified to the Task Force about the important role of dual enrollment classes in preparing high school students for their future careers. With our nation in the midst of a student loan debt crisis, dual enrollment provides students with an opportunity to earn college credit at a fraction of the cost of college tuition. The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) estimates that in 2015 alone, the dual enrollment program provided students the opportunity to save between \$14.6 million and \$19.7 million toward their college degrees.

Unlike Advanced Placement (AP) courses, dual enrollment courses are not limited to high academic achievers. In fact, many students use dual enrollment to explore areas of academic interest and potential career avenues that they may not otherwise have access to. Studies have shown that students who participate in dual enrollment are more likely to finish high school, enroll in college, and complete a degree.

The Wisconsin Legislature should support the 2017-19 budget request made by the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) for the continuation and expansion of dual enrollment options. This smart investment will enable technical colleges to expand best practices, ensure that teachers meet minimum accreditation requirements, and provide scholarships for students.

Wisconsin should encourage partnerships between high schools and higher education institutions to expand dual enrollment course offerings. All high school freshmen should be made aware of the dual enrollment opportunities at their school. Wisconsin should set a goal that every high school student graduates with at least one college credit. That college credit could be a CTE credit toward technical college study or AP credits toward a two-year or four year college.

Strengthen Credit Transfers between UW System and Technical Colleges

While Wisconsin has made steps toward increasing credit transfer opportunities between technical and four-year colleges, Wisconsin should examine ways to expand credit reciprocity between the Technical College System and the University of Wisconsin System. This would decrease time to degree, lower student loan debt burdens, and allow students to graduate and enter the workforce more quickly.

To address the CTE teacher shortage while maintaining high standards for CTE teacher training, Wisconsin should create direct pathways for students to receive a two-year technical degree that would be directly transferrable into a teacher education program. This would help students efficiently earn a bachelor's degree and teaching certification in CTE after beginning their education in a technical field.

Invest in Special Education Job Developers in High Schools

Representatives from Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) and the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) testified about the growing trend of youth with disabilities who have never been engaged in work or postsecondary education. In 2009, 13% of all students with disabilities had never been employed one year after high school. By 2013, that number had more than doubled to 27%.

Ensuring workforce and college readiness for students with disabilities is essential to Wisconsin's economy and emerging workforce needs. However, youth with disabilities face obstacles to improving their postsecondary outcomes. Most Wisconsin school districts do not have full-time job developers to focus solely on strengthening their transition programs and building connections between local businesses and students, and most do not have the resources to work full-time with the private sector and connect students to job opportunities.

Students with disabilities who have at least one paid job in the community before high school graduation are twice as likely to be employed after high school. Having two work experiences increases their odds of employment five-fold. To help young people with disabilities become tax-paying members of society, Wisconsin should create a pilot program to pay for the employment of specialty job developers within certain school districts or a consortium of districts.

This job development specialist would be responsible for creating job connections for students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Each job opportunity would be required to pay minimum wage or higher. School districts would be responsible for the administration of the program, including continuous improvement, identifying best practices, and adhering to reporting requirements. The data collected from this pilot program would help the state expand on the program across school districts in the future.

This policy recommendation was introduced in 2016 as Assembly Bill 943. It is our hope that the Wisconsin Legislature will advance this legislation in the upcoming session.

Expand Public Transit and Transportation Options

Various speakers testified that transportation is often a barrier to participation in job readiness programs like internships and job shadowing, particularly for high school students. In regions with limited public transit, students without a driver's license or access to a car are not able to take advantage of the same career readiness opportunities as their peers.

The Wisconsin Legislature should prioritize public transit by fully restoring the \$9.3 million cut that was made in the 2011-13 state budget and by making additional investments to return to historic funding levels. Additionally, the state should authorize the creation of Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) to enable better cooperation between municipalities, greater efficiency of service, and more seamless transit options across municipal boundaries.

Fairly Fund our Public Schools

A recurring underlying theme that was highlighted at the Task Force hearings was the difficulties public schools have faced due to lack of resources and state funding. Over the past six years, Wisconsin public schools have lost over \$1 billion in state aid when compared to funding levels in the 2010-2011 school year. This has made it increasingly difficult for school districts to support expensive programs like technical education.

Wisconsin is also facing a historic teacher shortage, due largely to the Act 10 reforms and the legislature's repeated cuts to public education. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) reports that CTE disciplines such as technology education, family and consumer education, business education, agricultural education, automotive, and culinary arts are at critical shortage levels for teachers. The Task Force heard from school administrators who testified that it is difficult for them to attract and retain qualified technical education instructors in particular.

To empower public schools to fully prepare students for the workforce, the Wisconsin Legislature should adopt a 2017-19 biennial budget that implements a fair public school funding formula. The budget should create a path for the state to return to its two-thirds funding commitment, include a poverty factor in the school funding formula, and strengthen rural and negatively aided districts.

Conclusion

While it is clear that we have much work to do as a state to strengthen the workforce pipeline, we feel confident that the stakeholders who participated in the Task Force hearings are contributing immeasurably to Wisconsin's workforce development efforts and share our goals of a skilled workforce with strong opportunities to succeed. We look forward to continuing to advance these goals with workforce development boards, economic development agencies, school districts, technical colleges, universities, students, and parents.