How Virginia Cooperative Extension is Collaborating with High Schools and Youth Programs in Hampton to Prepare Youth for the Workforce

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Introduction

Family Consumer Sciences is committed to providing youth with the opportunity to prepare themselves for the transition from school to work. Providing youth with career related educational programs help them to build on the developmental assets that are needed in the workplace. An extensive study by, Amundson and Borgen, (1995) found that young people left high school unprepared for current career realities and that both the career and personal areas of their lives were in a state of change and uncertainty. Career development today emphasizes importance of continuous development of skills and capabilities.

Major Points

In collaboration with Hampton City High Schools and Fort Monroe Youth Services, Virginia Cooperative Extension is providing educational programs that promote developmental skills that youth need to make the smooth transitions from school to the workplace. Hampton’s Strategic Plan identified workforce preparation as one the primary targeted area of concern for youth. Preparing youth for the workforce is a year around program that targets high school students and youth involved in the Fort Monroe Youth Services Program. The workforce preparation program targets youth from the ages 14 to 17 years of old. It is designed to provide educational programs that support workforce preparation and build developmental skills in the process. The Reality Store simulation helps youth become aware of their need for basic skills in financial planning, goal setting, decision making and career planning. The Virginia’s 4-H Economic and Careers State Committee provide the Workforce Preparation educational materials used in this project. Workforce preparation curriculum includes education, experience and evaluation. The educational materials have participatory activities and projects that are completed by the youth. The curriculum also includes many of the developmental assets for youth identified by the Search Institute. For example, Social Competence, which includes planning and decision-making, interpersonal skills, cultural competence, conflict resolution skills is centered on career development.

Conclusion and Educational Importance

It is critical that the public and private sectors of society design and implement programs that educate youth in the skills that lead to productive and useful lives. Youth need more opportunities, beginning at an early age, to develop attitudes and values that will in fact prepare them for the workforce. By focusing on developmental assets, youth will be better prepared to transition into the workforce and society as an adult. The workforce preparation initiative in the City of Hampton embraces the fact that youth development and Family Consumer Sciences educators can design programs that positively develop the potential in every youth. The Virginia Cooperative Extension offers effective programming for the families in the military worldwide.