

New Partnership Provides Educational Options for High-School Drop Out Students

A new partnership between the Clark County Skills Center and ESD 112 will offer those students who have dropped out of Southwest Washington high schools an opportunity to complete high school graduation requirements. The partnership has created "Project Hope" to provide a combined academic and technical education program for out-of-school youth, although it is not limited to high school dropouts. No other program exists in Southwest Washington that offers an integrated academics/career technical education to serve this at-risk population group. ESD 112 will provide all academic instruction and support services, with the Skills Center providing technical and career education instructors and facilities. With regard to facilities, major remodeling of a Skills Center classroom area is required for this new program's classroom/computer lab. The Clark County Skills Center is respectfully requesting \$23,100 in grant funding to accommodate Project Hope.

Background on Clark County Skill Center

The Clark County Skills Center opened in 1983 as a cooperative educational venture among nine SW Washington school districts. The goal was to create a school, in partnership with business, to prepare students for the work force by offering training in 14 technical career areas too expensive for a single district to fund. The Center currently serves Clark County juniors and seniors from 20 high schools and Clark College. More than 16,000 students have graduated since its opening 20 years ago. In developing Project Hope, ESD 112 was invited to join the school district consortium as the tenth member.

Community Need for Project Hope

Project Hope is based on the model developed at Francis Tuttle, a premier career and technical center, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The model has an enrollment of 194 students, averaging an 85-90 percent rate of completion, with 20 percent of HOPE graduates entering college. The Project Hope partnership anticipates a similar success rate.

This new opportunity bolsters post-high school options for its region's students, while helping support the economic development of Washington State, and providing skilled, job ready high school graduates for employers. In Clark County there are an estimated 1300 youth between the ages of 16 to 19 who have not graduated and who are not currently enrolled in any educational program. The alternative for this group of youth may be a destructive one. The cost to the community, if the result is juvenile incarceration, runs up to \$54,750 per individual per year. The cost of educating one student per year is \$5,165 per FTE student.

Dr. Twyla Barnes, Superintendent, ESD 112, and Skills Center Director Dennis Kampe believe that the new partnership will serve Southwest Washington students well, due to the combined strengths of both educational organizations. The ESD's involvement will help increase educational options for students who access other already successful ESD programs such as Workforce Investment Act and alternative school programs. Importantly, the ESD will help boost offerings, including academics for students on career technical pathways.

Clark County Skills Center and ESD 112 Investment

ESD 112 will provide all academic instruction and support services, including: student recruitment, attendance, counseling, barrier reduction activities, and academic teachers and instruction. The Skills Center will provide all technical education components: technical teachers and instruction and credits/grades, facilities and equipment. Both partners will provide supplies and instructor materials. Planning for the project, which officially begins in February 2006, is underway, with both technical and academic courses being offered to 75 students starting in the 2006 Fall semester. In 2007-2008 it will expand to more than 100 students. Academic instruction will take place Monday through Thursday from 11:00am - 2:00pm. Technical instruction will take place Monday through Thursday from 2:30 - 5:45pm.

Measurement of Successful Outcomes

The key outcomes that will indicate success in Project Hope are:

- ❖ Reintegration of youth into the educational system
- ❖ Student completion of requirements for high school graduation
- ❖ Student graduation from Project Hope with marketable job skills

The track record for Skills Center instructors' capability to engage and motivate students is well documented, as is the track record for Skills Center graduates gaining employment. This consistency over many years indicates that these outcomes are realistic. Skills Center graduates repay the entire cost of their education within two years of employment through payroll taxes, boosting the local economy. Moreover, the unemployment rate for recent Center graduates is 4 percent (a rate that has remained steady for the last 10 years) in a time when the state unemployment rate for 18-20 year olds is 14 percent.

Need for Funding

New door plus insulation	\$11,000
Floor covering	4,000
Framing for walls/doors	2,000
Wall/door materials	2,000
Painting	2,500
<u>VCR, DVD, overhead projectors</u>	<u>1,600</u>
Total:	\$23,100

Project Hope offers a unique value added program for the community educational system to reintegrate high school drop outs, and thus, the Clark County Skills Center Foundation Board seeks your thoughtful deliberation on awarding more than the standard \$15,000 grant amount. On behalf of the Foundation Board of Directors, I appreciate the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington's consideration of this proposal, and if you have questions please contact me at: 360.604.1050 or by email: kfoehl@egreen.wednet.edu.