

CAPITAL AREA WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD YOUTH COUNCIL

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP REPORT

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Five youth focus groups were convened that involved a total of 32 youth representing both in school younger youth and older out of school youth. While the opinions and perceptions of such a small sample of youth out of the region's youth may not be a significant sample from which to draw conclusions, the findings and observations gleaned from these five sessions do present valuable insights. Seven themes emerged as indicative of how well youth are prepared to be valued workforce participants and what youth value and need in order to be better prepared.

The Influence of Caring Adults—Every group expressed the need for having access to a positive adult influence. The youth either expressed their appreciation for or desire to have an adult mentor, an adult other than a parent with whom they could share their concerns and who could empathize with their circumstances. Increased access to one-on-one tutoring and guidance was also identified.

The Need for Increased Emphasis on Career Development in Schools—Schools were identified as needing to do more to prepare youth for careers and going to work. Specific strategies such as special programs related to career planning, access to tutoring, and teaching that emphasizes the relevance between what is being taught to participation in the workforce were all identified as services youth would value.

The Value of Education Including Post-Secondary Education—Almost without exception all the youth understood the need to continue their education beyond attaining a high school diploma or GED in order to achieve their career goals. Also, the younger in-school youth clearly understood the need to perform well in school in order to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Depth of Knowledge About Workforce Services—While there were isolated exceptions, no group or majority of youth in a group exhibited any real depth of knowledge about the use of workforce information sources, career requirements or how to go about meeting those requirements.

Program Structure—The youth who were involved in structured programs that provided regularly scheduled group activities expressed a strong appreciation for the experience and for the opportunities those programs offered.

Specific Service Needs—The need for reliable transportation and financial assistance in particular tuition assistance were frequently cited. There was a stronger than anticipated interest among the youth in owning and operating their own business indicating a potential need for increased emphasis on entrepreneurial training.

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Focus groups were convened to obtain information about youth perceptions related to their participation in the workforce, their ability to be or become valued workforce participants, their access to resources and the value they place on those resources. The information obtained through the focus groups should serve to enrich quantitative data sources and provide the Youth Council with a better understanding of the impact workforce development programs have on the youth they are intended to serve.

A series of youth focus group sessions were conducted covering a range of subjects including:

- how they access workforce services;
- how they assess the quality of the services;
- what services are not available that would help them develop better pathways to careers;
- what information they have about careers in the region;
- what career development strategies they employ; and
- where they think they can get resources to help implement those strategies.

Focus groups included youth from a variety of ages and stages of development. Youth groups were selected to reflect the target population of concern to the Youth Council; that target population being youth ages 14 to 21 who generally meet the definition of WIA eligibility but are not necessarily served by WIA funds. A total of 32 youth participated which is a very small sample of the total target group population. While the focus groups provide a degree of insight to how youth feel about workforce issues they should not be seen as a definitive source of information about the area's system of youth services. The information gathered should be viewed as supplemental to the data presented in the broader report and used accordingly in terms of policy or decision making.

III. METHODOLOGY

Focus group sessions were structured to represent three primary segments of the target population; youth who are no longer in high school, youth currently in high school, and youth enrolled as WIA program participants. Focus group questions were developed to be cross cutting one group to the other as well as pertinent to the age and educational status of each group. The structure and questions were reviewed by the project's Steering Committee prior to convening and conducting focus group sessions.

A total of five focus group sessions were convened at the following locations.

- Two sessions at the Middle College at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Downtown Campus—November 15, 2004; 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- One session at Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond, Falling Creek Middle School, Chesterfield County—November 22, 2004; 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- One session at the Capital Area Training Consortium, Whitepine One-Stop Center—December 10, 2004; 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- One session, Charles City County—December 14, 2004, 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Each session was facilitated as an informal discussion among participants with questions posed by the facilitator along with follow-up or probing questions designed to more fully explore each major discussion topic. Permission was requested and granted by each group to tape record the

session and to record responses in the form of note taking. Following is a description of the sessions, the participants, and variations among the sessions.

Composition of Each Group

Two sessions were held with youth enrolled in Middle College at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College as representative of youth who are no longer in high school. Middle College is a college recovery program designed for youth ages 18 to 24 who did not graduate from high school. Middle College provides accelerated GED preparatory training with an emphasis on continuing their post-secondary education upon GED attainment.

A total of 15 youth participated; 10 in the 10:00 to noon session and 5 in the 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. session. The composition of both groups included:

- 10 residents of Richmond; 4 from Henrico County; and 2 from Chesterfield County;
- 1 age 18; 5 age 19 to 21; and 9 age 22 to 24 (6-age 22, 1-age 23, 2-age 24); and
- 5 male; and 10 female.

None had completed high school with the exception of a participant who had completed high school in another country and needed a U.S. high school diploma/GED to pursue post-secondary education. While 9 participants fell outside the targeted 14 to 21 age group, 6 or two-thirds were age 22 and this deviation did not seem to be too far out of the target to not be representative. A key deciding factor for using the Middle College students was the likelihood that they would generally meet the WIA definition of being disadvantaged.

A session was also held for out of school, older youth, who are enrollees in WIA at the Capital Area Training Consortium. A total of six youth participated and the composition of the group included:

- 4 residents of Henrico County; and 2 from Chesterfield County;
- 2 age 18; 3 age 19; and 1 age 21;
- 3 male; and 3 female.

Two in the group were employed and both were pursuing continuing education to further their career goals. The other four were at varying stages related to conducting a job search, plans for post secondary education or making career decisions. Two in the group had completed high school and one had obtained a GED.

An in-school youth group of freshmen and sophomores were composed from members of the Falling Creek Boys and Girls Club on November 22, 2004. Boys and Girls Clubs serve youth ages 7 to 18 especially those from disadvantaged circumstances and provide a variety of services including Education and Career Development.

A total of 6 youth participated in the session and the composition of the group included:

- 6 residents of Chesterfield County;
- 3 age 14; 2 age 15; and 1 age 16;
- 3 male; and 3 female.

There were five freshmen and one sophomore and all attended Matoaca High School. No one in the group had significant work experience or experience in looking for work. Two members

were Boys and Girls Club Counselors in Training and preparing to be Junior Staff. The majority of the group seemed to comfortably share experiences and opinions and stayed engaged throughout the one hour session.

A second in-school group session was convened composed of youth from Charles City County. The Charles City County Youth Coordinator recruited participants for the session which included five youth ages 14 and 16. The composition of the group included:

- 5 residents of Charles City County;
- 3 age 14; and 2 age 16;
- 3 male; and 2 female.

Charles City County is one of several very rural counties within the CAWIB region. The youth were not engaged in a particular club or group and there are few if any youth related activities in the county. Other than living in a rural environment the youth did not appear to represent any other specific target group. As with the Boys and Girls Club youth, no one in the Charles City group had significant work experience or experience in looking for work.

IV. KEY FINDINGS

Middle College Sessions:

- Generally all appreciated the opportunity to complete their high school education and regarded continuing education as important to their future.
- Almost all seemed motivated to improve their current situation (not surprising in they had all taken the step to enter Middle College).
- The reasons for dropping out of high school were what might have been expected. Some left because they had had a child, others because of behavior issues, and a couple stated they had to leave in order to take care of their families (parent and siblings).
- All faced significant barriers primarily having reliable transportation as a means of getting to work or to school to continue education.
- A key ingredient to getting a job was expressed as previous work history. Specific job skills, education, or other non-work experience based qualifications were not emphasized as critical.
- Responses demonstrated a good understanding of work ethic and its importance to employers.
- Access to financial assistance was critical to continuing education. The majority was working but not necessarily in the jobs or careers they hoped to have in the future. They expressed the need to work in order to continue school especially to meet family financial needs.
- Strong sentiment was expressed regarding the need for one-on-one adult support (a caring adult). Someone to help guide and push them to move forward. Even giving help in completing financial aid forms.

- There was not a strong expression of knowledge about where or how to access workforce related information or services. Family, friends, and word of mouth, all seemed to dominate sources of information and support.

Boys and Girls Club Session:

- The group had little to no direct experience with work or looking for work; however, they demonstrated an informed knowledge of work ethic, attributes employers want in employees, and where to go for information about job opportunities.
- All had some idea of what they wanted to pursue as a career with the majority being very definitive about their choices. Boys and Girls Club staff and teachers were credited with helping them to make career plans.
- The group seemed to clearly relate their education to their future success and no one in the group expressed any reason or circumstance that would lead to dropping out of high school.
- Those who were most definitive about career plans were also most definitive about pursuing post secondary education.
- There were overall positive opinions about current school experiences and a desire to do well. Not surprising there were some negative comments about specific teachers but these negative comments did not seem to be reflective of opinions about school in general.
- There was a relatively strong sentiment expressed that one-on-one help such as tutoring was important and valued when needed.
- There was also sentiment expressed that schools should do more to help youth prepare for their careers such as special programs to help with career goals and to push youth toward their goals.
- Parents were not the adult most would go to if in trouble. Parents were criticized as being judgmental and unsympathetic. While access to mentors was not specifically identified as a need, they did credit Boys and Girls Club staff as helpful and understanding.

CATC Session:

- Those in the group who were currently working were also pursuing post secondary education to achieve a specific career goal. Those who were not working did not express definitive plans for employment or education.
- While not universally true of all in the group, the majority in the group were reticent and did not easily engage in the discussion. They did not present themselves as invested in their future or circumstance.
- Like other focus groups, the key ingredient to getting a job was expressed as previous work history. Specific job skills, education, or other non-work experience based qualifications were not emphasized as critical.
- Transportation was identified as a key barrier to employment.

- The group presented a basic understanding of the attributes employers value in workers as well as a basic understanding about where to get information about job opportunities.
- The group lacked significant knowledge about public resources.
- The service identified as most valued by the group was funding for school/tuition assistance. Other valued services included transportation-a van service, improved training facilities and more one-on-one job search assistance.

Charles City Session:

- All in the group expressed fairly specific career goals/aspirations all of which would require college undergraduate and graduate degrees. They did not express any depth of knowledge of what it would take to achieve their educational goals either in terms of where they would go to college or how they would handle financing.
- Even though they had little to no experience with working or looking for work, they did possess basic knowledge about employer expectations and where to go to find information about job opportunities.
- They were all interested in seeking part time and/or summer employment as a means of earning money and being less dependent on their parents. Several had just reached age 14 and therefore were just old enough to consider employment.
- All had no reason to believe they would not complete high school and clearly understood the relevance of doing well in school to their future success.
- There were serious concerns expressed relative to educational resources. They felt their text books were extremely out of date, they lacked access to computers and internet resources for research, and felt their teachers were not as informed as they should be.
- They believed they would benefit from having access to tutors, however, their description of tutors could be interpreted more in line with a mentoring relationship. They talked about having someone to talk with who had been through similar circumstances and would be empathetic to what they were experiencing.
- There was strong sentiment expressed relative to the lack of after school activities. They would value having someplace to congregate, talk with peers without a lot of interference from adults though they would accept adult supervision and guidance.
- They also expressed a desire to participate in group activities including volunteer work or fund raising. They seemed interested in the opportunity to assume responsibilities beyond what was currently available to them.

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The youth focus groups were structured to cover youth perceptions and knowledge around six major topics:

- how they access workforce services;
- how they assess the quality of the services;
- what services are not available that would help them develop better pathways to careers;
- what information they have about careers in the region;
- what career development strategies they employ; and
- where they think they can get resources to help implement those strategies.

Following is a summary of findings as they relate to these six areas.

How do youth access workforce services?

Three of the five groups were composed of youth actively involved in a workforce preparation program; the Middle College groups and the CATC WIA enrolled youth. The Boys & Girls Club places emphasis on workforce development as a part of their programmed activities and the Charles City group was not involved in any type of organized group or activity.

Even though a significant proportion of the youth who participated in a focus group were involved in some form of workforce development program, no group expressed a broad knowledge of how or where to access services. For example, there was little to no knowledge of the Virginia Employment Commission or any other public workforce service entity other than the one in which they were participating. Most relied on information from families, friends or direct contact with employers.

How do youth assess the quality of the services?

Those youth participating in programs especially the Middle College groups and the Boys and Girls Club group thought very highly of program staff and the services and support they were receiving. The staff were viewed as genuinely interested in the youth, helpful in meeting their needs, and for providing valuable guidance.

All groups identified deficiencies in how well high school was preparing or had prepared them to go to work. While the youth believed there were things schools should or could be doing better it was only the Charles City group that felt the quality of school needed improvement and that was in the area of needing up-to-date text books and access to computers. There were complaints about specific teachers but not an overall complaint about the quality of the education they were receiving.

What services are not available that would help youth develop better pathways to careers?

The service that emerged from every group that the youth indicated would be of greatest value was mentoring and/or tutoring. The role of having access to a caring adult other than parents was evident whether they were talking about what they appreciated about the services they were receiving or within the context of what they needed most.

Schools were also identified as needing to do more to prepare youth for careers and going to work. The out of school youth did not assess their experiences in school as being particularly relevant which for several was an ingredient that led to them dropping out of school. The in-

school youth identified specific strategies that they would find helpful such as special programs related to career planning, access to tutoring, and teaching that emphasizes the relevance between what is being taught and future participation in the workforce.

The Charles City group was the only focus group with youth who live in a rural setting. There was strong sentiment around the need for basic types of services such as access to computers and the internet, after school activities such as having a Boys & Girls Club, and having someplace for youth to congregate for peer related activities as well as adult guidance.

What information do youth have about careers in the region?

Most of the youth from all groups were able to articulate a career goal. Only a few seemed to have little to no idea about what they wanted to pursue or who had what may be viewed as an unrealistic goal such as professional sports.

The majority of the career goals identified were in professional occupations requiring licensure such as teaching, law, medicine and engineering. Technology or computer related occupations were also identified in every group. There was a noted absence of interest in manufacturing, building trades or other "blue collar" types of occupations. There were several who saw self employment as a viable option.

What career development strategies do youth employ?

Almost without exception all the youth understood the need to continue their education beyond attaining a high school diploma or GED in order to achieve their career goals. No one was at a point of having completed their education and being ready to go to work in their chosen occupational area.

Conversely when they discussed attributes employers value in workers almost all felt they currently possessed those attributes. The attributes that youth described as most valued by employers were in the context of work ethic; i.e., being committed, reliable, proper dress and attitude, working well with others and good customer service.

The youth believed their greatest barrier to employment was a lack of a work history, however, they did not articulate how they might overcome this barrier or what strategies they might employ to get the job they desired other than continuing their education. Employers expressed the need for youth to have good communication skills, the ability to translate non work related experience to job skills and qualifications, properly prepared applications and interviewing techniques as critical to their hiring decisions. The youth, however, did not identify these types of skills as necessarily important or areas where they needed improvement.

Where do youth think they can get resources to help implement those strategies?

Financial assistance was expressed as a critical need in order to attain educational goals related to career goals especially among the out of school youth. Middle College participants in particular expressed their appreciation for having someone assist them in completing financial aid forms and for providing information on where and how to get assistance.

The younger in school youth seemed less concerned about the need for financial assistance and most often mentioned being able to work and go to school as a strategy for supporting themselves while they went to college or post secondary training. The ability to work while going to college or other types of post secondary education was also seen as critical to the out of school youth especially for those who had family obligations.

Family members, friends, and directly contacting employers were most often cited as sources used for finding job opportunities. Even though the internet, newspapers, and temporary staffing agencies were identified as sources for information for conducting a job search there was not an indication that these sources were used to any great extent for developing or implementing career goals. For those youth involved in a program in particular the Middle College and Boys & Girls Club, program staff were highly valued sources for information and support.

Observations

As a result of facilitating these five focus groups a number of observations about the youth who participated; what they revealed about themselves and their knowledge and understanding of the topic are worth noting.

One of the most striking observations is an apparent mismatch between what employers are saying about what youth need to be qualified job candidates and what youth perceive as their greatest barrier to employment. Employers describe youth who apply for jobs as needing excellent communication skills, advanced computer skills, an ability to translate school and extra curricular activities into job skills and qualifications, presenting themselves appropriately and competently during job interviews, and adequately preparing job applications and resumes. In other words as stated by one employer "the ability to make a good first impression."

Youth on the other hand identify the lack of a good work history as a primary barrier to obtaining employment. They are also keenly aware of the need for some level of post secondary education in order to have the hard skills and certifications needed to reach their career goals. The youth did not ascribe relative importance to the areas employers noted as deficiencies and for the most part seemed to believe they already possessed those types of attributes. A lack of good communication skills, however, was observed during the sessions.

While there were isolated exceptions, no group or majority of youth in a group exhibited any real depth of knowledge about the use of workforce information sources, career requirements or how to go about meeting those requirements. They did not present themselves as having well thought out plans or strategies for attaining career objectives such as where they planned to continue their education, how it would be financed or how to seek employment that would enhance their career portfolio.

The youth who were involved in programs that provided structured and regularly scheduled group activities expressed a strong appreciation for the experience and opportunity those programs offered. Conversely, the Charles City group who were not engaged in some type of program that provided similar opportunities strongly identified the desire for just those types of services.

Several themes emerged around services that would be valued and/or that were needed. First and foremost was having access to a positive adult influence. The youth either expressed their appreciation for or desire to have an adult mentor, an adult other than a parent with whom they could share their concerns and who could empathize with their circumstances, and one-on-one tutoring and guidance. The younger youth were especially interested in having access to an adult who would be more objective than they perceived their parents were capable of being.

Two other predominate needs identified by the youth were transportation and financial assistance in particular tuition assistance. Interestingly, the one group who expressed the least concern about a lack of transportation was the group from Charles City, the only group from a rural jurisdiction.

Finally, there was a stronger than anticipated interest among the youth in owning and operating their own business and that increased emphasis on entrepreneurial training would be valuable.

**YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS
SESSION NOTES**

**J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MIDDLE COLLEGE
10:00 A.M.-12:00 NOON
NOVEMBER 15, 2004**

Number in Group: 10

Residences of Group:

City of Richmond 6
Henrico 3
Chesterfield 1
Hanover
Goochland
Powhatan
New Kent
Charles City

Ages of Group

17-18
19-21 4
21-25 6 (4 age 22, 1 age 23, 1 age 24)

Demographics

Male 4
Female 6

What kind of experience have you had working or looking for work?

Probing Questions

1. How many of you are currently working? Is this the job you were hoping to get or are you looking for something new or different?

8 of the 10 were currently working.

Jobs included: Bartending, IRS Clerk, Dollar General, Nursing Home CNA, Hispanic Voice, Buying used cars for Aunt's used car business, Standard Parking, and Owner of a Financial Management business.

Two of the eight were happy with the jobs they currently had. The IRS Clerk had just gotten the Civil Service job and the owner of the financial management business was happy pursuing his entrepreneurial venture.

The others who were working considered their jobs as temporary as they work toward furthering their education and moving toward careers. The two who were not working were actively engaged in a job search.

2. If you are not working, why not?

The two in the group who were not working were conducting an active job search but had not been successful. One of the two expressed definitive job seeking efforts; the other was not as focused.

3. What kind of experience have you had looking for a job? Where do you go for information about work and jobs?

Responses related to experiences looking for jobs included:

- Putting in applications and getting no response;
- Lack of work experience as one of the criteria that prevented them from getting jobs for which they had applied;
- Knowing they had the skills for a job but still not getting it;
- Doing everything they were supposed to do i.e., dressing appropriately and having the skills required and someone else getting the job.

Responses to where they get information about work or jobs included:

Internet, Sunday newspaper, VEC, Temporary Agencies, Job Fairs, Richmond Career Advancement Center and the Urban League, and word of mouth.

The one group member who expressed using the VEC indicated that even after repeated follow-up calls she was told that there were no job matches based on her application.

One from the group indicated having gotten job referrals from RCAC and the Urban League which was also particularly helpful in that the Urban League had van transportation.

4. What are the things that keep you from applying for some jobs that might interest you – like too far to go, no way to get there, hours, don't have the experience?

Responses included: Lack of qualifications, needing a GED or advanced degree of some sort, lack of a car/transportation.

5. What kinds of barriers have you encountered related to looking for or going to work? What kind of transportation do you have? How do you access transportation?

The discussion centered around transportation as a barrier. One response mentioned lacking a proper I.D. when they applied.

The transportation comments included: No car, no bus to Wal Mart and had to walk to and from work, trying to keep an old car running, taxis cost too much, lots of young workers get fired because they do not have reliable transportation, and most jobs are not easy to get to and are not on the bus line.

6. How many jobs have you had what are the reasons you have left previous jobs?

One of the participants had worked at the same job since 1998. The others had left jobs and identified the following reasons for leaving those jobs.

Lack of money, lack of benefits, needed better hours, had given birth to a child, needed a GED, the people they encountered were hard to get along with.

7. What are the characteristics of a job that would make you want to stay in that job?

Several expressed interest in being their own boss.

Other comments included:

Having a nice team to work with, flexible hours, nice hours, nice working environment.

Agreement on a nice working environment included being in a comfortable environment like an office setting. One commenter stated that "you have a good environment if you like what you are doing. Another characterized a good environment as being a busy environment with lots of people.

8. What do you think are the most important attributes an employer is looking for in a new worker?

Being responsible was the predominate response with responsible characterized as being on time and doing what you have to do.

Other comments included being trust worthy, having experience and being a quick learner.

One commenter indicated that individuals who are doing hiring are looking for someone like themselves i.e., having the same qualities and aspects.

Another commented that it was all about who you know. They indicated that they knew someone with no degree and who could not read was a supervisor. They further believed that those situations would not be likely to continue meaning getting a job with no degree or ability to read. Jobs are requiring higher skills.

9. How do you think employers assess qualifications for a job opening?

Responses included: Evaluating previous work history, reviewing applications for education and extra education, checking previous job references and asking would they hire the person again, asking if the applicant had ever been fired from a job.

10. What do think are the most important qualifications to have to get a job that will have advancement potential?

Did not question the group on this item.

11. How important do you believe your dress and attitude are to employers? Why?

Several in the group indicated that dress and attitude were very important with attitude being the most important.

12. How about a good work ethic? What is your definition of a good work ethic?

A good work ethic was described as: Being consistent, having values, being on time, how you speak and act with people, dedication and appreciation, going beyond what is expected.

13. Do you think you currently have the kinds of attributes employers are looking for in new employees? If not what do you think you need to develop further prior to looking for or going to work?

Only a couple of responses were generated. One was that they did not have all of the attributes needed. Another responded that they were good at getting jobs but had trouble keeping them.

Let's talk some about career planning and what you did or are planning to do to better prepare yourself for employment. Where do you see yourselves 3 years from now, five years, 10 years? What are your aspirations? What kinds of goals have you set for yourself?

1. What are some of the reasons you were not able to complete high school and what brought you to the Middle College?

This question generated a lot of discussion. The following are paraphrased responses.

I couldn't handle being a mom and going to school and when I tried to go back they wanted me to start over.

I moved here from another country where I had finished high school but my degree would not transfer. When I went to school they wanted me to start in the 10th grade to learn English. It took me a long time to finish high school and I did not want to do it over.

I was a bad kid. The school I went to (another state) had metal detectors, you were searched and I just got tired of it. I got banned from the school.

I had to provide for myself and mother since age 15 and had to go to work.

My family moved every year. I took on a motherhood role early in life (taking care of mother and siblings).

I ran away from juvenile detention and jail.

I was always in alternative schools. I did not fit in, they could not tolerate my behavior. I was excited when I got to high school and could go to regular school but I was soon sent back to alternative school. I got tired of teachers always wanting to change me. The school was just passing me along and just wanted me out of the school.

When asked whether or not being able to get a GED was a consideration related to dropping out of school, no one saw it as a contributing factor.

Where do you see yourselves 3 years from now, five years, 10 years? What are your aspirations? What kinds of goals have you set for yourself?

Want to go to VCU for a four year degree. In airforce or working as an EMT. Interested in nursing and being a physical therapists. Working at MCV in nursing. Study mechanical engineering for air planes.

2. What do you plan to do/or what would you like to do to earn a living? Have you thought about your career choices? How have you prepared or how are you preparing?

Nursing

Fashion Design—Transfer to VCU

Want to be a writer—publish a book, have kids and write. Get away from the city and away from people.

3. Who has been responsible for helping you plan for a career or a job?

Parents

4. Do you expect to stay in the Richmond area? If not, where do you expect to live? Why?

Some responded they plan to leave Richmond and others plan to stay. No significant or responses indicative of any trend.

5. Do you plan to pursue further training/education? If so where do you plan to get further training/education? What kind of training/education curriculum do you plan to pursue and why?

Responses included getting a nursing degree, joining the Air Force and be an EMT. Those pursuing further training planned to complete their GED, continue at J. Sargeant Reynolds and go onto VCU for four year degrees. Several who planned to go onto VCU stated they would prefer to attend Virginia State University but transportation was the barrier.

Reasons for pursuing more education included:

Stuck in current job and need more qualifications.

Motivated by children, wants to provide for her own children what she had wanted from her parents, wants to proud of herself and for her children to feel they can depend on "mommy."

6. If you do not plan to further your training or education, what reasons do you have for not attending post high school training or education? How much does money affect your decision? Are there other obstacles? Would you consider pursuing further training if there were financial assistance? What type of training?

Lack of financial assistance was expressed as a major obstacle to continuing their education. All of those in the group indicated that they needed to work full-time to support themselves and their families. Lack of financial assistance was not only a problem with paying tuition and the direct costs but also the need for maintaining a livelihood to support themselves and families.

7. What resources do you use to inform yourself about skill requirements and training available?

Not asked.

8. How do you feel about the relevance of education you have gotten so far to your life and career aspirations?

Not asked.

9. Do you believe that your education prepared you adequately for your future as an adult? Why? Why not?

Not asked.

10. What do you believe has been missing from your education that would be of practical value to you?

This question was really posed as what services would be or would have been of value to you which generated considerable response.

Immediate responses included one-on-one support, mentors, tutors, counselors. Someone who cares enough to keep pushing. Someone to paint the picture of where to go. Someone to help them get into programs. Have people that support you.

Lacked motivation and got it from mentors outside of the family. Someone to support you, tell you to keep moving, not feel alone, to not fear doing something if your not sure you can do it.

Members in the group talked about how the Middle College staff have helped them in these ways. An example was offered of there being someone on staff who helped them complete financial aid documents and get registered for community college classes. Had they been left on their own they would have likely given up or not completed everything needed to get the aid or get enrolled.

In response to what has been mission from your education some expressed that teachers simply did not care. They articulated that the Middle College teachers did care.

11. Is self employment an option you would or have considered? What kinds of self employment options do you think you might consider?

Self employment came up several times during the session. One in the group was already self employed and others indicated their ideal job would include being their own boss.

12. What kinds of things might happen in your life that would interfere with your future plans? Who do you go to if you get in trouble? Are there adults you turn to and if so who are they?

Adults identified included parents, teaching staff at middle college, myself. One participant spoke about having a close friendship with parents and speculated that her parents were more lax than their parents had been.

**J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MIDDLE COLLEGE
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
NOVEMBER 15, 2004**

Number in Group: 5

Residences of Group:

City of Richmond 4

Henrico 1

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Ages of Group

17-18 1

19-21 1

21-25 3 (2 age 22, 1 age 24)

Demographics

Male 1

Female 4

What kind of experience have you had working or looking for work?

Probing Questions

1. How many of you are currently working? Is this the job you were hoping to get or are you looking for something new or different?

3 of the 5 were currently working. Jobs included: McDonalds, beauty salon and construction (supervises a crew for family owned business)

All three who were working considered their jobs as temporary as they work toward furthering their education and moving toward careers. The two who were not working were minimally engaged in a job search if at all.

2. If you are not working, why not?

The two in the group who were not working had previous employment. One had done some modeling work and was between jobs. The other had worked at Hardees, Popeyes and had done some receptionist work as a temporary employee. Both seemed fairly ambivalent about seeking new employment.

3. What kind of experience have you had looking for a job? Where do you go for information about work and jobs?

Responses to where they get information about work or jobs included: Internet, newspaper, VEC, Temporary Agencies, and Richmond Career Advancement Center.

Even though the interaction with VEC and RCAC were actually accompanying someone else, they characterized both organizations as helpful. The internet and newspaper were characterized as kind of helpful. Some discussion was around job ads that are misleading. For example an ad for a receptionists that was really for selling perfume on the street.

There was very little discussion around personal experiences looking for jobs.

4. What are the things that keep you from applying for some jobs that might interest you – like too far to go, no way to get there, hours, don't have the experience?

One comment related to having an arrest record as a barrier. The other limited comments were that if they were interested they would apply regardless of whether or not they had the required qualifications.

5. What kinds of barriers have you encountered related to looking for or going to work? What kind of transportation do you have? How do you access transportation?

Lack of transportation, child care and job experience were the only barriers identified. One commenter indicated that they try to find a dependable ride but that it was not always available.

6. How many jobs have you had what are the reasons you have left previous jobs?

The reasons for leaving jobs included: lack of transportation, having a child, the job was not challenging and the assignment ended.

7. What are the characteristics of a job that would make you want to stay in that job?

Comments included: Make \$100,000 a year, in-door work setting, work with people and work with kids (interested in working as a physician's assistance in a pediatric Doctor's office.) When questioned the group generally agreed that they would prefer to work Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 5:00 especially if they had families.

8. What do you think are the most important attributes an employer is looking for in a new worker?

Comments included: capable of performing the job to company standards, being reliable and responsible (coming to work everyday), being on time, working with and without supervision (most important to be able to work without supervision).

9. How do you think employers assess qualifications for a job opening?

Comments included past work history, appearance at an interview, speaking well, quality of resume and job application.

10. What do think are the most important qualifications to have to get a job that will have advancement potential?

Qualifications included: having a high school diploma or GED, work experience, skills demonstrated on the job. One commenter talked about being willing to go to work on days off and being flexible (going to work when called even if not scheduled to work).

11. How important do you believe your dress and attitude are to employers? Why?

Attitude was identified as important.

12. How about a good work ethic? What is your definition of a good work ethic?

Comments included: morals, do my job, does not look good to be late. The group had little to say and required substantial prompting to illicit any responses.

13. Do you think you currently have the kinds of attributes employers are looking for in new employees? If not what do you think you need to develop further prior to looking for or going to work?

Attributes members of the group indicated they currently possess were: capable of learning but not a lot of experience in a regular job; some job experience and basic skills; presenting skills and selling self; presenting having the ability to do the job.

Let's talk some about career planning and what you did or are planning to do to better prepare yourself for employment. Where do you see yourselves 3 years from now, five years, 10 years? What are your aspirations? What kinds of goals have you set for yourself?

1. What are some of the reasons you were not able to complete high school and what brought you to the Middle College?

This question generated more discussion than other topics. The following are paraphrased responses.

Did not plan to go to college so did not think a high school diploma was important.

Left due to having a child and had no one to care for the child—always wanted to stay in school and when the child was old enough entered middle college

Did not like school—it was nothing but a big fashion show—lost interest.

Got in trouble a lot.

Got put out of high school.

Went to Adult Career Development Center for adult education but never took the GED exam.

Want to pursue a career in interior design, therefore, decided to come back to school.

2. What do you plan to do/or what would you like to do to earn a living? Have you thought about your career choices? How have you prepared or how are you preparing?

Generally the group viewed middle college as a first step to preparing for future careers. Career interests included: Forensic Science/Bio. Technology, Engineering, Interior Design, Health Care/Physician's Assistant and Acting.

3. Who has been responsible for helping you plan for a career or a job?

Family and friends were the only identified individuals helping plan for a career or job. There was sentiment expressed that it would be valuable to have someone who could help. It was also expressed that a lot of young people would like to go back to school but do not know where to go or how to get help.

4. Do you expect to stay in the Richmond area? If not, where do you expect to live? Why?

No strong indication of plans to stay in Richmond area.

5. Do you plan to pursue further training/education? If so where do you plan to get further training/education? What kind of training/education curriculum do you plan to pursue and why?

No one seemed to have definitive plans for continuing education but several expressed desires to continue. Comments included: Getting and associates degree at VCU, stay at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and then attending an out-of-state 4-year college, going for a nursing degree/physician's assistant.

6. If you do not plan to further your training or education, what reasons do you have for not attending post high school training or education? How much does money affect your decision? Are there other obstacles? Would you consider pursuing further training if there were financial assistance? What type of training?

All had some sort of plan to continue based on the previous question.

7. What resources do you use to inform yourself about skill requirements and training available?

No responses to the question.

8. How do you feel about the relevance of education you have gotten so far to your life and career aspirations?

No responses to the question.

9. Do you believe that your education prepared you adequately for your future as an adult? Why? Why not?

Not asked.

10. What do you believe has been missing from your education that would be of practical value to you?

The only response was that nothing was missing other than obtaining a GED.

The question posed during the morning session related to what services would be or would have been of value was asked during this evening session however it did not generate any response.

11. Is self employment an option you would or have considered? What kinds of self employment options do you think you might consider?

Not asked.

12. What kinds of things might happen in your life that would interfere with your future plans? Who do you go to if you get in trouble? Are there adults you turn to and if so who are they?

Family and friends were identified as sources for help, however, there was next to no discussion.

**Boys and Girls Club
Freshmen – Sophomores
4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
NOVEMBER 22, 2004**

Number in Group: 6

Residences of Group:

City of Richmond

Henrico

Chesterfield 6

Hanover

Goochland

Powhatan

New Kent

Charles City

Ages of Group

14-16 6 (3 age 14, 2 age 15, 1 age 16)

17-18

19-21

21-25

Demographics

Male 3

Female 3

What kind of experience have you had working or looking for work?

Probing Questions

1. How many of you have ever looked for a job? What have been your experiences looking for a job?

Two members were Counselors in Training for Boys & Girls Club as a progression toward becoming Junior Staff.

There were no other indications of experience with working or looking for work.

2. How many are currently working? What are your reasons for working?

Even though work experience within the group was limited, there were comments related to reasons to work including needing to learn more skills, keeping occupied, and having something to do.

3. Where do you go for information about work and jobs? What has been your experience good or bad with the sources you have used for information?

Sources for information about work and jobs included newspaper want ads, the internet, the phone book and calling employers to ask about jobs. None had had experience using any of the listed sources of information.

4. What kinds of barriers have you encountered related to looking for or going to work? What kind of transportation do you have? How do you access transportation?

None had experience related to looking for or going to work.

What do you think employers are looking for when they are hiring someone?

1. What do you think are the most important attributes an employer is looking for in a new worker?

Responses included being well mannered, being accountable/responsible, respecting others-how you respond to others, trustworthy and having a positive attitude.

2. What do think are the most important qualifications to have to get a job?

See responses to previous question.

3. How important do you believe your dress and attitude are to employers? Why?

Dress and attitude were identified as "very important."

4. How about a good work ethic? What is your definition of a good work ethic?

Youth in the group defined a good work ethic as doing work on time, meeting deadlines, doing what you are supposed to do, doing it right and when asked.

5. Do you think you currently have the kinds of attributes employers are looking for in new employees? If not what do you think you need to develop further prior to looking for or going to work?

Very few comments were generated. One felt they currently had necessary attributes to be a new employee. Another felt they needed to improve on being responsible and be better at doing what they were told to do when they were told to do it.

Let's talk about where you are in terms of career planning and what kinds of plans you have after you graduate from high school?

1. Are you thinking about your career choices? What kind of career or job do you think you would like?

Responses from four of the six were expressed more definitively than the other two and included computer science/technical engineer, fashion design, singer/actress, teacher-high school math, and lawyer. The other two were less definite but were considering electrical technician and technology.

2. What are some of the things you need to do to prepare for going to work or to pursue your career choice? How are you preparing?

Responses from the group related to what they need to do educationally. Comments included figuring out what classes they need such as science classes and trying to go to college. Most expressed the need to go on to school after high school.

3. Have you thought about your aspirations? What kinds of goals have you set for yourself? Where do you see yourselves 10 years from now?

Aspirations and goals included, going to college, getting hands on experience, starting a business, being on ones own, owning a home, having a family, and going to work.

4. Is self employment an option you might consider? What kinds of self employment options have you thought about?

As noted above, several expressed interest in owning their own business. One respondent expressed that they definitely wanted to work for someone else.

5. Do you plan to pursue further training/education after graduation from high-school? If so where do you plan to get further training/education?

As noted previously, several in the group expressed plans to go onto college, however, they had not made definite plans as to where they might go.

6. What kind of training/education curriculum do you plan to pursue? What are your reasons for choosing your training/education plans?

Even though no one had a specific post secondary education plan, several talked about the their career interests and reasons for selecting them. Specific comments included: everyone one in my family are nurses, I would like to be the 1st lawyer in the family; technology classes in school; how much money actors get paid; my grandmother taught me to make clothes which created interest in fashion design.

7. If you do not plan to further your training or education, what reasons do you have for not attending post high school training or education? How much does money affect your decision? Are there other obstacles?

No one indicated they would not go onto to post secondary education of some sort.

8. Who has helped you the most to plan for a career or a job?

Parents and Boys and Girls Club staff were most credited with helping to plan careers. Other comments included specific teachers who have challenged them to do well in particular classes.

9. Do you expect to live and work in the Richmond area? If not, where do you expect to live? What are some reasons you might have for staying in the Richmond area or moving someplace new?

Only one indicated plans to stay in Richmond. Most were interested in experiencing new places.

Now that we have talked about the kind of job or career you would like to have, lets talk about how your education and how it is preparing you to go to work.

1. How do you feel about the relevance of your education to your life and career aspirations?

While all in the group agreed that school was important and relevant to their life and career, there was considerable discussion around specifics. Comments included:

School is helpful and all subjects have to do with life and careers; history is not relevant countered by the past helps you with the future; most high school years are a waste—just do the same thing over and over; there should be special programs to help with careers and goals—school is not pushing me forward toward my goals; math is important to almost everything like cashiering or being an accountant; English, math and science are important; gym is not important countered by yes it is, it teaches you to keep fit and healthy.

2. Do you believe that your education is preparing you adequately for your future as an adult? In what ways is your education preparing you or not preparing you?

The responses seemed to relate to this question and the following question # 3. There was discussion around the need for tutors and comments included: we need more tutors; tutoring would give me one-on-one time with the teacher and that helps me understand the teacher and helps the teacher understand me; they select people to go to tutoring; if I need help I will go to the teacher and ask for help; school goes so fast, sometimes I need to slow down; I did not have good study habits and I was not skilled at taking tests until I got help; I will get on game and step up when I need to.

3. What do you believe is missing from your education that would be of practical value to you and your future?

See responses to question # 2.

4. Do any of you have reason to believe that you may not graduate from high school? If not, what are some reasons you might not graduate? Are there any kinds of services or assistance that might help you to graduate or alter your decision to not graduate?

No one in the group envisioned any reason to not complete high school.

What kinds of additional supports or services do you need?

1. What other types of services are or would be helpful to you to complete school, pursue additional education or go to work?

Due to time constraints this question was not explored.

2. Who do you go to if you get in trouble or need help? Are there adults you turn to and if so who are they?

This question also generated considerable discussion with the prevailing response being that they do not go to their parents with problems. Comments included: parents shut me out; even when I do something good she will find something bad; parents won't believe a child over an adult; parents always assume the teacher is right; parents are always looking for the worst; parents do not understand our point of view. One commenter indicated he goes to no one and keeps everything inside—not the kind of person who asks for help.

Several in the group stated they do go to Boys and Girls Club staff who are helpful and understanding.

CAPITAL AREA TRAINING CONSORTIUM
1:30 -3:00 P.M.
DECEMBER 10, 2004

Number in Group: 6

Residences of Group:

City of Richmond

Henrico 4

Chesterfield 2

Hanover

Goochland

Powhatan

New Kent

Charles City

Ages of Group

17-18 2 age 18

19-21 3 age 19, 1 age 21

21-25

Demographics

Male 3

Female 3

What kind of experience have you had working or looking for work?

Probing Questions

1. How many of you are currently working? Is this the job you were hoping to get or are you looking for something new or different?

Two in the group were working. One at John Randolph as a security guard and one at Westminster Canterbury in food service. Both were pursuing additional training in police science and in nursing.

2. If you are not working, why not?

Responses included: Hard to find employment that meets need to work week days and no nights. Trying to get experience as an electrician. Need to go to school and work.

Not really looking for work—going to school. I can get interviews but no experience keeps me from getting the job.

3. What kind of experience have you had looking for a job? Where do you go for information about work and jobs?

See responses to number 2 above.

Responses to where to find information included: Newspaper, internet, going to a job site, CATC employment center, temporary staffing agencies. The VEC was only mentioned as having used the VEC internet site.

4. What are the things that keep you from applying for some jobs that might interest you – like too far to go, no way to get there, hours, don't have the experience?

One participant responded they apply for everything they see. Another response was that long hours keeps them from applying for some jobs.

5. What kinds of barriers have you encountered related to looking for or going to work? What kind of transportation do you have? How do you access transportation?

Barriers included health issues; lack of transportation; currently working and do not have enough time to look for another job; people do not want to hire; and lack of work history.

6. How many jobs have you had what are the reasons you have left previous jobs?

Responses included: a disorganized work place, management was ignorant; the job was ok at first and then I found a racist attitude. Other reasons included overworked, low pay, not enough hours, became sick.

7. What are the characteristics of a job that would make you want to stay in that job?

Characteristics of a good job were expressed as having a good boss and good fellow employees; having reasonable hours; having benefits including health insurance, retirement benefits and providing tuition assistance.

8. What do you think are the most important attributes an employer is looking for in a new worker?

Responses included: Experience, good work history, being on time, doing my job, commitment (if sick go to work anyway).

9. How do you think employers assess qualifications for a job opening?

10. What do think are the most important qualifications to have to get a job that will have advancement potential?

11. How important do you believe your dress and attitude are to employers? Why?

12. How about a good work ethic? What is your definition of a good work ethic?

A good work ethic was described as: Give the job my best effort; positive attitude; teamwork and cooperation.

13. Do you think you currently have the kinds of attributes employers are looking for in new employees? If not what do you think you need to develop further prior to looking for or going to work?

All who answered, answered yes they have the right attributes.

Let's talk some about career planning and what you did or are planning to do to better prepare yourself for employment. Where do you see yourselves 3 years from now, five years, 10 years? What are your aspirations? What kinds of goals have you set for yourself?

Responses to where they saw themselves 3 to 5 years from now included: Working for the Chesterfield Police Department; Not living in Virginia; Have my own business, barber shop with several locations;

1. What are some of the reasons you were not able to complete high school?

Reasons for dropping out of high school included: playing around so left in 12th grade; left when 16, took the GED and went to work; school was too slow—going over the same stuff over and over.

2. What do you plan to do/or what would you like to do to earn a living? Have you thought about your career choices? How have you prepared or how are you preparing?

Those who were pursuing career choices included going to school for an associates in police science, going to school for an RN, going to CNA. One was interested in barbering but had quit going to barber school. The remainder of the group did not express career interests.

3. Who has been responsible for helping you plan for a career or a job?

Only responses were: my mother, myself, coaches and people I know.

4. Do you expect to stay in the Richmond area? If not, where do you expect to live? Why?

One definitely planned to stay and work for Chesterfield police. Other expressed desires to leave due to lack opportunities.

5. Do you plan to pursue further training/education? If so where do you plan to get further training/education? What kind of training/education curriculum do you plan to pursue and why?

A couple in the group were going to John Tyler Community college one in RN training and one in police science. One was at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College starting CNA training. One was looking for someplace to get trained in holistic healing (massage therapy). One had been in barber school and quit and one was playing basketball and trying to go to school.

6. If you do not plan to further your training or education, what reasons do you have for not attending post high school training or education? How much does money affect your decision? Are there other obstacles? Would you consider pursuing further training if there were financial assistance? What type of training?

7. What resources do you use to inform yourself about skill requirements and training available?

Go to the job site itself, talked with police officers, have a mentor in massage therapy.

8. How do you feel about the relevance of education you have gotten so far to your life and career aspirations?
9. Do you believe that your education prepared you adequately for your future as an adult? Why? Why not?

No—everybody has a high school diploma or GED; high school doesn't have anything; I prepared for communications in high school and then found I would have to go to college to get a job. Guidance counselors can't help if your goal is to make money because they don't.

10. What do you believe has been missing from your education that would be of practical value to you?

When the question was posed in terms of what kinds of services would be of value the responses included: more job opportunities; jobs for people who have been held back due to a disability; programs like at CATC.

11. Is self employment an option you would or have considered? What kinds of self employment options do you think you might consider?

Two in the group expressed an interest in having their own business.

12. What kinds of things might happen in your life that would interfere with your future plans? Who do you go to if you get in trouble? Are there adults you turn to and if so who are they?

I life trauma like the death of a family member; something crazy; develop a disability; get pregnant. When in trouble responses to who they turn to included: friends, mentor, whoever can help depending on the problem; my best friend; I find a way out myself.

13. A closing question was asked relative to what types of services the youth would value.

Responses included: A place to go where they can help if you have a disability; funding for school/tuition assistance; help with licensing and certification fees; transportation/vans; one on one assistance with conducting a specific job search.

**Charles City
Freshmen – Sophomores
3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
December 14, 2004**

Number in Group: 5

Residences of Group:

City of Richmond

Henrico

Chesterfield

Hanover

Goochland

Powhatan

New Kent

Charles City 5

Ages of Group

14-16 5 (3 age 14, 2 age 16)

17-18

19-21

21-25

Demographics

Male 3

Female 2

What kind of experience have you had working or looking for work?

Probing Questions

1. How many of you have ever looked for a job? What have been your experiences looking for a job?

Only one in the group had any experience with working or looking for work and had worked summers at the school. All indicated they planned to look for summer employment.

2. How many are currently working? What are your reasons for working?

No one in the group was currently working. Three of the five were age 14 and only recently eligible for work. All planned to seek some form of summer employment.

3. Where do you go for information about work and jobs? What has been your experience good or bad with the sources you have used for information?

Even though most in the group had never looked for a job they did indicate they would use the following resources for seeking employment: internet, talking with someone at places of employment, talking with family members.

4. What kinds of barriers have you encountered related to looking for or going to work? What kind of transportation do you have? How do you access transportation?

Even though no one was working, we did discuss how they would handle transportation if they got summer jobs. The responses included: work someplace close enough I could ride my bike; get rides with family members or friends; get a license and drive myself; get a job at the school.

What do you think employers are looking for when they are hiring someone?

1. What do you think are the most important attributes an employer is looking for in a new worker?

Responses included: honesty, talent, being dependable, responsible, get stuff done on time, do not have to be told 5 or 6 times to do something, can be trusted, don't steal.

2. What do think are the most important qualifications to have to get a job?

Responses included: speaking another language like Spanish; typing; answering phones-customer service; willing to learn anything; being smart/intelligent.

3. How important do you believe your dress and attitude are to employers? Why?

The group agreed dress was very important. Comments included you should dress appropriately for the job. If you dress strange people will likely think you have an attitude.

4. How about a good work ethic? What is your definition of a good work ethic?

Responses included: being on time; don't be lazy; don't sleep on the job; be devoted to the work.

5. Do you think you currently have the kinds of attributes employers are looking for in new employees? If not what do you think you need to develop further prior to looking for or going to work?

At first all indicated they had the right attributes for employers. Upon further probing some indicated they could be more responsible; may need to learn to control their temper; could improve on keyboarding skills and improve second language skills.

Let's talk about where you are in terms of career planning and what kinds of plans you have after you graduate from high school?

1. Are you thinking about your career choices? What kind of career or job do you think you would like?

All in the group had given thought to their career choice. Choices included; math teacher, pediatrician, lawyer, automotive engineer (work on vehicles), business owner (computer information systems manager), may join the army or go into computer programming.

2. What are some of the things you need to do to prepare for going to work or to pursue your career choice? How are you preparing?

See responses to the following question on goals.

3. Have you thought about your aspirations? What kinds of goals have you set for yourself? Where do you see yourselves 10 years from now?

All indicated they planned to go to college or continue their education. Goals statements included: make good grades to get into college and do my best there. Go to a technical school like ITT Tech and then go onto college.

4. Is self employment an option you might consider? What kinds of self employment options have you thought about?

One in the group expressed an interest in owning a computer information systems business.

5. Do you plan to pursue further training/education after graduation from high-school? If so where do you plan to get further training/education?

See the response to number three above on goals.

6. What kind of training/education curriculum do you plan to pursue? What are your reasons for choosing your training/education plans?

While the question was not asked directly the participants did talk about their career plans and plans to attend college. All had career goals that would require post-secondary education.

7. If you do not plan to further your training or education, what reasons do you have for not attending post high school training or education? How much does money affect your decision? Are there other obstacles?

All planned to attend post-secondary education. There was a discussion around finances for college and most hoped to work while in high-school to help pay college expenses.

8. Who has helped you the most to plan for a career or a job?

Three responses included: my math teacher, my older sister and T.V. Commercials (lawyers).

9. Do you expect to live and work in the Richmond area? If not, where do you expect to live? What are some reasons you might have for staying in the Richmond area or moving someplace new?

Three of the five definitely planned to stay in the area. One expressed the desire to move away to someplace where you weren't related to everyone and where everyone didn't know your business.

Now that we have talked about the kind of job or career you would like to have, lets talk about how your education and how it is preparing you to go to work.

1. How do you feel about the relevance of your education to your life and career aspirations?
2. Do you believe that your education is preparing you adequately for your future as an adult? In what ways is your education preparing you or not preparing you?
3. What do you believe is missing from your education that would be of practical value to you and your future?

The discussion around education generated lots of comments from the group. In general there was considerable dissatisfaction with how they were being taught, equipment and supplies. Comments included: we need new teachers, teachers that know what they are talking about and that do not always have to look up answers to any question you ask; teachers only lecture

all day, they need to teach more and get out in the real world; we need laptops and I-books, everything needs to be updated, books are old and worn out (my nephew is in the 5th grade and has the same book his 21 year old cousin had; teachers assign term papers and kids do not have computers, we need school internet sites that where everything isn't blocked; classes should be 90 minutes long; we should have more freedom, if we had more freedom we would show we can behave.

4. Do any of you have reason to believe that you may not graduate from high school? If not, what are some reasons you might not graduate? Are there any kinds of services or assistance that might help you to graduate or alter your decision to not graduate?

All believed they would graduate from high school.

What kinds of additional supports or services do you need?

1. What other types of services are or would be helpful to you to complete school, pursue additional education or go to work?

In direct response to the question, the group talked about needing tutors described in the following terms. Tutors—not like a teacher; someone who has been through the same thing you are like a college student; someone who understands and can help you understand. Even though they used the term tutor their description could be seen as more like a mentor.

There was a lively discussion when this question was broadened to ask what else do they need? The following comments were recorded.

We need hang-out spots like a dance club. We need a Boys and Girls like in Richmond. With a Boys and Girls Club, underprivileged kids could sign up for sports without having to pay a fee. We need someplace to go where there are activities, time to spend with friends, a study hall, a place for teen discussions without adult interference just adult guidance. We could do fund raising to help kids pay for athletic stuff like shoes.

Our library needs more computers.

Several also indicated when questioned that they would be interested in volunteer activities. It would be something to do to get out of the house.

2. Who do you go to if you get in trouble or need help? Are there adults you turn to and if so who are they?

Responses included: teachers and guidance counselors; my sister; a close friend, someone I trust and who won't run to mom and dad. Nothing against parents but sometimes it's better that they don't know. Parents take things the wrong way and don't understand.