

Mahoning Valley Business Advisory Council

Joint Statement

March 1, 2019

Prepared by the Mahoning County Educational Service Center with support from EnvisionEdPlus, LLC. Approved by MVBAC February 27, 2019.

Overview

The Mahoning Valley Business Advisory Council (BAC) represents schools and districts throughout a three-county region. The council is convened and supported by the Mahoning County Educational Service Center, on behalf of 21 schools and school districts under established service agreements. These school districts and schools include: Austintown Local Schools, Boardman Local School District, Brookfield Local School District, Campbell City School District, Canfield Local School District, East Palestine City School District, Jackson Milton Local School District, Lowellville Local School District, Mahoning County Career and Technical Center, Mahoning Unlimited Classroom, Poland Local School District, Rootstown Local School District, Sebring Local School District, South Range Local School District, Southeast Local School District, Springfield Local School District, STEM+ME² Academy, Struthers City School District, Warren City School District, West Branch Local School District, Western Reserve Local Schools, and Windham Exempted Village School District.

The MVBAC approved its mission, vision and a Plan of Action in August 2018. Implementation of the plan is supported by staff at the Mahoning County Educational Service Center and, in particular, by the team of career counselors who serve member school districts. The council has met in September, October, November, January and February to guide implementation of its Plan and now has significant progress to report.

VISION

A well-prepared workforce that contributes to the economic development and improved quality of life throughout the Mahoning Valley region.

MISSION

To advise, support and empower Mahoning Valley educators in delivering the instruction and experiences students need to develop relevant, in-demand employment skills as part of their academic and technical preparation for college, careers and/or military service.

Progress Report for 2018 – 2019

The Mahoning Valley Business Advisory Council advises students, parents and educators about the wide range of career opportunities available, connects them with the resources to pursue a career pathway, and provides support to ensure success. In its Action Plan, the MVBAC selected four high priority strategies and developed preliminary action plans for each. The MVBAC, MCEC and represented schools/districts have secured funding for many of these steps through Ohio’s Expanding Opportunities for Each Child grant. The high-priority strategy areas include:

1. Projecting Job Needs / Anticipating Training Needs;
2. Developing and Delivering a Common Mantra;
3. Building Communications Infrastructure; and
4. Expanding Work-Based Learning.

Progress reports have been presented to the boards of education of each member school district by representatives of the MVBAC. The following accomplishments are aligned to these areas of focus.

I. Projecting Job Needs / Anticipating Training Needs
<p>Description:</p> <p>MVBAC members emphasized the need to access and understand current employment data, trends, and projections so that emerging talent pipelines could be adjusted as needed. The first step is establishing agreement on a tool for understanding current job demand and understanding of what validates that tool’s accuracy and reliability. The MVBAC wishes to use such a tool to develop talent pipeline guidance over time to influence the creation/ expansion/ replication of career pathways, as well as to inform direct instruction to students through career exploration and planning programming. MVBAC members also discussed “applying common sense” and acknowledging changes in workforce demand as they happen.</p>
<p>Progress:</p> <p>Career Counselors have met with OhioMeansJobs Center staff, the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce, and large area employers to gather information about relevant industry sectors, careers, employers and training programs. This information is shared with educators, students and families through multiple strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The All Choices Matter website, launched in February. • Special events including career fairs
<p>Next Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine as a committee what additional labor market data would be beneficial 2. Develop a mechanism to collect information on local need regarding current and emerging careers 3. Deliver message to employers and trades organizations that want to be included in local composite data 4. Establish a process for reviewing current employment data, trends, and projections

5. Identify transitional skills that will help them adapt, and determine the shortest paths to transition to new jobs
6. Work with the MCECSC marketing team to establish a process for branding and informing district personnel, students, and parents about the employment data.

2. Develop and Deliver a Common Mantra

Description:

Consistently since its first meeting, the MVBAC has emphasized the importance of a common, unified message to engage schools and businesses in partnership toward their shared goals. This strategy is meant to shift away from the “college for all” mantra and to a mantra that supports varied pathways to success for all students, in close alignment with the strategies outlined in the state’s draft strategic plan.

Progress:

The MVBAC drew on its needs and assets analysis, completed in Spring 2018, to identify the most pressing messaging points. The MCECSC communications team assisted the MVBAC in drafting, revising and finalizing a messaging document. The document was provided to each member of the MVBAC to be used in formal and informal messaging about the role of the business advisory council and the need for partnership among schools and employers. It also provided guidance in the development of aspects of products and deliverables described below, including the All Choices Matter website and associated video collateral.

The core messaging addresses the role of the MVBAC, which is to educate students, parents and educators about the wide range of career opportunities available, connecting them with the resources to pursue a career pathway and providing support to ensure success. The document also links the initiatives of the MVBAC and partner school districts to two messaging priorities identified by members: 1) Broadening the conversation about postsecondary education to include all education and training opportunities that lead to fulfilling, well-paying careers; and 2) How students can become equipped with the knowledge and skills to be successful in any career pathway.

The **All Choices Matter website** has been developed and launched in February 2019. It includes professionally produced workplace and trades videos; employer, trades and marketing input; tools to digitally connect mentors and students; and information about industry credentials / education, workforce development curriculum, internships, apprenticeships, available openings, future jobs, the training and education requirements, income information, trades etc.

Next Steps:

The core messaging document is meant to be a living document that will be periodically revisited by the MVBAC to ensure that it reflects current initiatives and incorporates feedback from ongoing efforts and interactions with the target audience of students, families and educators. The **All Choices Matter website** will continue to be developed over time to include more information about more industry sectors. Continued efforts are needed to ensure that the information reaches its audience. These steps include:

- I. Implement and deliver the message to the right people (target audiences), including parents, teachers, students and employers.

- a. Explore social media and other marketing strategies promoting awareness and interaction with the communication tools. This will include in participating districts, an awareness campaign to parents, educators and applications.
2. Measure the effectiveness of the message (Is it increasing knowledge about career opportunities and pathways at the district, parent, student, and employer levels).
 - a. Collect student, parent, educator, employer, trades usage data.
 - b. Continue development **My Advancement Path** app, which is scheduled to be launched in Spring 2019.
 - i. Collects students' progress data for three years.
3. Revise/Review quarterly, monitoring that there is a constant drumbeat.

3. Building (Internal, network) Communications Infrastructure

The BAC identified the need to improve communications among organizations and existing formal and informal networks that are engaged in workforce development, training and education. Members identified the Regional Chamber's education and workforce infrastructure, as well as the MCEC's deployment of career counselors, as strengths to be leveraged.

Progress:

The MVBAC with support of the MCEC's career counselors have taken steps to increase knowledge among students, parents and educators of both career pathways opportunities and workforce preparation programs by:

1. Disseminating information to schools through direct service and through the All Choices Matter web portal, which connects registered students to on-demand career information and mentors
 - a. The website launched in February ([see local news coverage here](#)) to about 30% of the target student population
 - b. A professional learning seminar is scheduled for early March to assist educators in using the website and expanding participation
2. Building connections among individual schools and businesses
 - a. Teacher externships at local businesses are planned for June 2019
3. Increasing capacity of educators to support parents, students and community knowledge of career pathways opportunities and workforce preparation programs by providing professional development sessions that incorporate findings of the MVBAC in regard to workforce trends and predictions.

Next Steps:

The MVBAC has not yet identified funding to expand the reach of the Regional Chamber's Community Connector Program by integrating the program with the work of the MCEC's career counselors. This, or similar mentoring and job placement programs for high school youth, remains of interest.

4. Expanding Work-Based Learning

The BAC recognizes that, in addition to increasing students' knowledge of, interest in and access to existing programming, more opportunities must be created. The Mahoning Valley has many strong examples of high-quality career exposure and preparation programs inside and outside of schools, however the percentage of overall students benefiting from these programs is far too small. Hands-on career exposure must begin early, at least by middle school, and must be presented with frequency and consistency across schools.

Progress:

The MVBAC has begun to identify and support work-based learning opportunities and developmentally appropriate activities by industry sector within a continuum, aligned to the Ohio Career Connections framework. Progress has been made on the following activities related to:

I. Career Exploration:

- a. Members of the MVBAC have assisted in identifying participating employers for week-long student and educator **boot camps** that include direct instruction in career opportunities and soft skills, workplace visits and recruitment for existing pathway programs.
- b. A professionally created cache of employer and trade videos that parents, students, and educators can access in real time has been created and unveiled through the All Choices matter website.
- c. A **Teen Leadership Summit** event was held at Youngstown State University in November for 600 participating students.
- d. Planning has commenced for a regional **Trades Career Expo** in collaboration with the BACs from Mahoning, Trumbull and Columbiana counties in October 2019. Regional trades associations are funding and planning the event; the BACs and participating districts are responsible for recruiting and transporting an estimated 1,500 students to attend.

Next Steps:

I. Career Exploration:

- a. Student participants are being recruited for week-long student and educator **boot camps** that include direct instruction in career opportunities and soft skills, workplace visits and recruitment for existing pathway programs.
- b. MVBAC members continue to identify and recruit employers to participate in new videos and content for the All Choices matter website.

2. Career Planning

- a. Employer and trade team mentoring **electronic network** for parents, students and educators
- b. Students select **twice** a year / each year, a particular earning pathway; The selected pathways will be matched with the **(employer / trades / service branch)** for a variety of activities created by identified pathway mentors **(employers / trades / service branch)**
- c. Senior registration for **"My Advancement Path"** app - This will track the pathway progress for 3 years, providing valuable data beyond graduation
- d. Fall **"Signing Day"** celebration event held in each participating district - The signing matches them up with the necessary **mentor and resources** to reach the finish line of their K-12 "Journey to Earning"

3. Career Experience

- a. Ongoing Subcommittee work to establish new Work-Based Learning experiences.
- b. Explore **Work-Based Learning** opportunities that might be held at Mahoning Valley Innovation and Communication Center (MVICC), Eastern Gateway Community College, Trade Union Apprenticeship sites and CTCs.

4. Support dissemination

- a. Create toolkit with materials and instructions for schools
- b. Create toolkit with materials and instructions for employers
- c. Disseminate toolkit while identifying and expanding work-based learning opportunities
- d. Support career counselors and educators in using the toolkit. Identify gaps and work with employers to create new opportunities to complete the continuum and meet demand from students.