

Education/Work Force Development Committee

Purpose

The Educational System of Ben Hill County strives to produce a qualified work force to support the needs of local business and industries. To do so, collaboration must exist between the Ben Hill County School System, Wiregrass, the Economic Development Authority, and the businesses/industry community. We need to ensure that we can promote a qualified workforce to prospective business/industries.

Strategies Identified

- Economic Development Authority (EDA) should communicate needs of current workforce to the Ben Hill County School System (BHCCS) and Wiregrass.
 - BHCCS and Wiregrass will continue to utilize each entities' advisory committees to ensure each program training meets community's needs and industry standards.
 - EDA assist BHCCS and Wiregrass with prospective, active members of the advisory council.
 - Work with Chamber of Commerce and EDA to have a biannual manufacturing meeting/luncheon to update on workforce needs and trends
 - BHCCS, Wiregrass, and Communities in School will continue to host the annual education summit to enhance further communication of workforce needs within the community.

- To address societal issues, develop a Workforce Task Force with long-range goals to focus on the following:
 - Collaboration needs to exist with local and state elected officials, Coastal Plain Area Economic Opportunity Authority, Department of Labor, Division of Family and Children Services, mental health, Department of Juvenile Justice, probation/parole, Monitor Enrichment Program, and so forth.
 - Develop dialog with citizens ages 21-36 of high school non-completers and are unemployed.
 - Develop strategies to get non-completers and unemployed citizens to school to receive training for the workforce of this community.
 - The community needs to continue to proactively work toward being a Certified Literate Community.
 - Develop goals to improve community data such as unemployment rate, low number of high school and college degrees attained, and so forth.

- Explore incentives for additional education for business/industry/community
 - GED tax credit addition. This law revises and expands an existing state program that had been underutilized. Under the previous program, employers would receive a \$150 tax credit for paying for an employee's GED. However, many of the GED programs were significantly more expensive than \$150 so few employers were taking advantage of the program. The Georgia Employer GED Tax Credit Act raises the basic credit to \$400 per employee who passes the basic GED test. It further provides an expanded credit of \$1200 per employee when that employee completes an approved training program while still being employed at his or her normal rate of pay. This expanded program

- allows employers to fully invest in their employees' education without disrupting their normal duties.
 - Wiregrass Prior Learning Assessment credit. PLA is a process through which students identify areas of relevant learning from their past experiences, demonstrate that learning through appropriate documentation, and submit their materials so that they can be assessed and possibly awarded academic credit relative to specific course objectives.
 - Work with the Chamber to develop an employee training or employee pool
 - 2-week pre-employment, 2-week probation/retention (possible loss of job), 2-week promotional training
 - Wiregrass will continue to offer continuing education and contract training for existing business/industry.
- BHCSS and Wiregrass need to communicate with EDA to ensure awareness of training programs offered at each entity and other career development efforts (such as work ethics training, work-based learning, job shadowing, industry speakers) in order for the EDA to communicate with current business/industry as well as for recruitment of future business/industry. If a need arises for a new training program, BHCSS and Wiregrass will work with the EDA and the community to ensure the need is viable and jobs are available for graduates.
 - EDA needs to utilize performance measures to show quality of education (BHCSS—graduation rates, CCRPI scores, career pathway completers, industry credentials earned, climate survey, college-ready students, STEM initiatives, college-credit earned during high school, student attendance, and so forth; Wiregrass—placement rates).
 - Increase work-based learning opportunities and internships.
 - FHS is implementing the Wiregrass work ethics curriculum in all CTAE classes that constitutes 10 percent of overall average. Wiregrass students' work ethics grades appear on each transcript. Employers need to be informed to request transcripts during hiring process.
 - FHS is implementing the CANES (Courteous, Accountable, Noble, Engage, Self-Motivated) program in all classes.
 - BHCSS continues to implement strong career development initiatives from P-12. Ben Hill Middle School has career connections curriculum courses; FHS has career, technical, and AG education career pathways. EDA can assist in securing business/industry guest speakers.
 - Promote Move on When Ready—includes early college, ACCEL, dual-enrollment.
 - Certified Manufacturing Specialist has been implemented at FHS through Wiregrass to train students on work ethics, entry-level skills, and basic mathematics and reading.
- Communities in School will investigate a community-based mentor program to begin in early schooling.
 - BHCSS has a strong, new initiative focusing on promoting early learning for more students prior to entering Kindergarten.