

The City School Model

Researching the Impact of Employer-Designed Career Access Programs in
Improving Outcomes for Underserved Communities

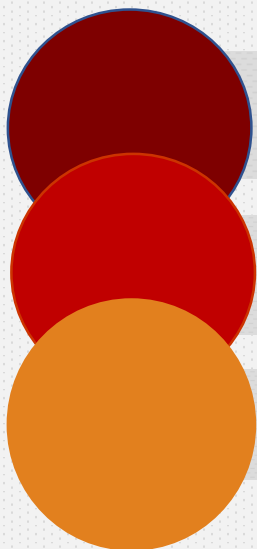
Student Interviews Research Snapshot

by Dr. Alan Bourke and Amanjt Garcha, Spring 2023



Students enrolled in City School employment pathways programming were invited to share their course experience with us in research interviews. Interview questions focused on their perceptions of the classroom experience, their views on course learning outcomes, the challenges they face in searching for employment, and their future educational and/or employment plans.

Employment pathway programming objectives:



Courses raise participant awareness of entry-level career opportunities in local in-demand industry sectors

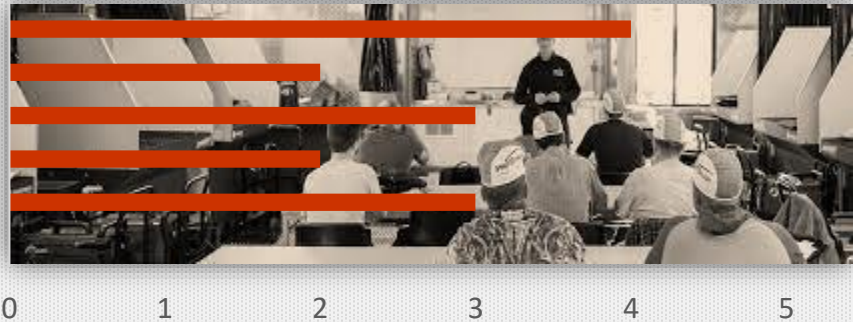
Courses offer an introduction to sector-specific foundational industry skills and employer expectations

Courses boost the career preparation of participants through nurturing their soft skills and overall job-readiness



Student Interview Sample = 13 (9 female, 4 male)

Personal Support Work (4)
Exposure to Construction Trades (WAGE) (2)
Culinary and Environmental Services (3)
Landscape Construction (2)
Food and Beverage Foundations (2)



Barriers to employment

- Family responsibilities/ lack of affordable childcare
- Precarious labour conditions/ un-or-underemployment
- Low-income status/ intergenerational poverty
- Physical and/or mental health concerns
- Impact of COVID-19 (i.e., layoffs)

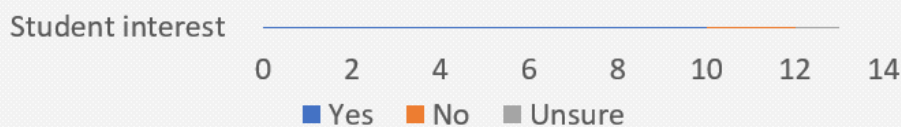
Employer in-demand skills

- General/transferable socio-emotional skills
- Communication/customer service skills
- Work ethic and dependability
- Job specific skills (i.e., technical skills)
- Job-specific licensing/certification

Course perceptions

- Accessible pathways to employment opportunities
- Students valued exposure to sector-specific skills-training
- Opportunities to connect directly with employers
- Hands-on employer involvement (i.e., PSW field)
- Sparked interest in pursuing further training/ education

Pursuing further education



Programming helped bridge the gap between job-seekers and employer expectations. Students were provided with a realistic overview of specific sectors, and of the hard/ soft skills required to be successful.



Student testimonials

Learning about employer expectations:

“I learned that they're (employers) looking for people that have the skills and even if they don't have the experience, but have the skill or are willing to learn, employers are willing to take you on.” (*Student interview # 5*)

On transitioning to a new career pathway:

“I want to say it's amazing. It really is. For someone like me who's doing a career change after 35 years in her industry and not really having the resources or the ability to go back to school full-time or do an apprenticeship or do a full-time program, it's absolutely given me the ability to transition into a new career in a practical, real-world way. It's given me the confidence to try things that I wouldn't even have considered trying as a woman in the trades.” (*Student interview # 10*)

On learning about the importance of soft skills:

“What I took from it is, you can get trained.... you can be trained to do a certain task, but they want you to build a good work ethic, come on time, be prepared, that sort of thing.” (*Student interview # 8*)

Program accessibility

“The sort of having no-cost accessibility to school is a game-changer, and it definitely helped me make my choices. I'm not able to go to school full-time....so if I'm looking to make a career transition (and) if I'm looking at two courses, one of which is a paid course and one of which is a free course, it's very easy to choose the free course” (*Student Interview # 10*)

