



Chairman Reed, Co-Chairman Knowles and members of the House Majority Policy Committee. My name is Darlene J. Robbins, President of the Northeast Pennsylvania Manufacturers & Employers Association. Thank you for affording me the time to address Student Opportunities in Career & Technical Education and an overview of the YES Northeast Certificate Program.

Since 2006, the YES Program has been helping to prepare students with the skills for not only careers in the technical fields, but for any career path; skills that are transferable to any occupation.

The Y.E.S. (Your Employability Skills) Northeast Certificate Program is a 1-credit, 120-hour, yearlong elective course targeted at high school seniors. The program is designed to bridge the worlds of education and work by developing and enhancing students' basic job skills that managers in all businesses and industries require. The course curriculum consists of 38 modules that are meant to give students the "real life" knowledge they can apply both on and off the job. The Quality and Technology topics contain assessment components conducted at a plant or business tour, which are EITC (Educational Improvement Tax Credit program) approved. In addition, the Y.E.S. Northeast curriculum meets and exceeds the Chapter 4 Academic Standards for Career Education and Work. Students participate in four (4) plant/business tours throughout the year and business professionals present in the classroom to further discuss the modules and how they are applied in the work environment. Mock interviews are also conducted with Y.E.S. students. In 2011 the Luzerne Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board adopted YES Northeast as a preferred program. In 2011, YES was an adopted program of the Luzerne Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board. Most recently, the YES program was recognized as a best practice under the Talent & Workforce portion of the Governor's Manufacturing Advisory Council's report of recommendations.

In order to receive the program certificate at the end of the year, students must meet the following criteria:

- Reading and math scores are at a 9th grade level (determined by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE))
- Score of 21 out of 50 on the Wonderlic Cognitive Ability Test
- Successfully pass a 6-panel drug screening
- Demonstrate 95% or better attendance rate
- Obtain High School diploma or GED
- Completion of 120 hours of coursework

The program originally began in York County in 1996 as an adult-focused program when York Harley Davidson could not recruit qualified individuals for employment. YES was later adjusted for high school students, with the high school phase of YES beginning in 2001. The Council began administering the YES program in the northeast PA region in 2006. In 2010, MAEC completely revamped and copyrighted the YES Northeast curriculum. YES Northeast is currently offered in Schuylkill, Luzerne, and Erie counties, with 16 high schools offering YES.

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Approximately five hundred thirty (530) businesses in Schuylkill, Luzerne, Erie and York counties endorse the Y.E.S. program and have agreed to offer “preferred interviews” to program graduates.

Program topics within the curriculum, specifically focusing on quality and technology, include quality, continuous improvement, understanding charts and root cause analysis. These skills will provide employers with the certainty that they are hiring a skilled technical workforce and employees with expanded career exploration opportunities. All topics within the YES Northeast curriculum provide students with the foundational skills needed to be successful in today’s world economy. Students are exposed to high-priority occupations continually, in the career exploration focus, within the classroom and on numerous tours. Tours have been a very successful education and business collaboration. They have expanded career and technical education to the work site beyond the classroom. This has also been accomplished through business professionals who volunteer their time as classroom speakers.

Our tours allow for students to see firsthand how industry functions from the inside. Currently, over 35 companies offer students the opportunity to tour, and essentially job shadow positions within their facility. At many of the locations, students are seated prior to the actual tour and are taught different skills from the businesses themselves. For example, some locations guide the students through the process of blue print reading. This knowledge is then taken out to the shop floor, so there is a full understanding of the manufacturing process. Other locations teach students about lean manufacturing, the application process, sales & marketing, and process improvement, just to name a few. To date, 235 tours have been coordinated, boasting over 3,000 students participating.

MAEC also hosts an Annual Career Fair targeting grades 7-12. Manufacturers, educational providers, companies within the high-priority occupation, as well as a variety of other employers participate to discuss their industry, educational requirements, technical requirements, salaries and job tasks with attendees. Over 4,000 students have attended this event, which began in 2009.

Two bills that would propel our programming forward and allow for continued growth are House Bills 1725 and 1816. House Bill 1725 is introducing a seven-school pilot program for high school students called “CareerBound.” The program seeks to encourage collaboration between schools, businesses and the workforce system through a tax credit. This bill would allow for MAEC to apply for funding for our existing programs. With the ability to apply for funding through this bill, we would have the opportunity to sustain YES and grow the program in other interested counties in the state. House Bill 1816 would allow for PA educators to receive necessary continuing education credits by visiting one of the many manufacturing facilities in the state. We already have teachers touring manufacturers through the YES program, and in the past, have held a program called Administrators in the Workplace. This initiative was in partnership with Schuylkill Economic Development Corporation, and it allowed for school district administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers to tour manufacturers and learn about what skills are needed for local jobs, salaries, what skills are lacking, and the hiring process so that

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teachers and administrators are better prepared to answer questions and direct students. This bill would allow for YES teachers to gain credits, and it would invigorate the Administrator in the Workplace program.

If we are to change the image of the CTC's, and ultimately manufacturing in our region, state and country, we need to change how the school profile scores are tallied. If home schools are provided higher scores for students entering college, and are not provided equivalent points for CTC students with industry credentials (i.e. NOCTI), then there is not much incentive for home schools to fill their quota of students at their partnering CTC. There is no uniform formula for home schools to refer high performing students to their CTC. CTCs are not judged based on the scores that they can control; meaning the NOCTI and non-traditional scores; thus, the current points system developed by Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), is not reflective of the performance within the career and technical centers. PDE needs to reevaluate their scoring system for CTCs to incorporate higher points for students earning industry certifications and for high performance within their respective area of study.

Manufacturing fuels our economy and in order for the U.S. to stay competitive in world markets, the manufacturing sector must once again become a productivity leader for U.S. industry. In order to accomplish this we need a strategy with new and renewed cooperation with industry, education, economic development, and the workforce investment system. Our YES program incorporates all of these partners and provides the vehicles necessary to address the common misperceptions about manufacturing in order to increase the number of individuals interested in technical careers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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