

Apprenticeship as a pathway to employment success for women with complex needs

Women in Trades Dialogue

Session Summary

- Exploring the strategies employed and the resulting successes and challenges associated with a pre-apprenticeship in Early Childhood Education, targeting women with complex needs

Demonstrates Trends and Innovations

- ❑ Pre App in ECE typifies a trend in cross-sectoral collaboration
- ❑ Brings together business, education and the community-based sector
- ❑ Partnership between On-Track for Women, Seneca College two departments - Academic Upgrading & ECE joined forces and employers (Child Care Centers)
- ❑ Collaboration between AU and ECE to integrate workplace essential skills specific to needs of the ECE occupation and the child care centre workplace
- ❑ Development of a new, blended academic upgrading (ACE level) curricula in English, Computers, CSM, Math

Relevance in the community

- Many women experience barriers related to securing employment
- Ambition to pursue further education hampered by their challenging personal and economic circumstances
- Through participation in a pre apprenticeship program, they may be assisted to:
 - reassess their own situations
 - harness their personal strengths and resources
 - realize their potential to change their life prospects
 - Transforming themselves, families, communities

Targeted communities are Toronto's high priority

Neighbourhoods – e.g. Malvern, Lawrence Hts, Jane-Finch

Women with complex needs

□ Participant Profile

- Average age 31
- 56% on Social Assistance
- 4% on EI
- 10% new immigrants

□ Personal Issues

- Sole parents
- Child Care
- Housing insecure
- Family issues – medical, emergencies, pregnancy
- Financial
- Balancing school and life demands

Community Partner – On-Track for Women

- On Track for Women established in 1999 to further the development of employment potential in marginalized women.
- assisted more than 2,000 women, ITIs, single mothers or women whose circumstances have not had a chance to complete their formal education.
- In 2008 On-Track decided to actively promote the skilled trades to women through:
 - Trading Up - career exploration specific to trades
 - assisting them with career counseling and job development through linkages to Community Colleges as well and the Ontario Apprenticeship office.

Focus on Apprenticeship and Trades Training

The project focuses on:

- Women to work in an area of interest and strength
- A meaningful career path through ECE apprenticeship
- Preparing marginalized women who lack the academic credentials for direct entry by:
 - Completion of mandatory Level 1 apprenticeship subject, including:
 - Child Development, Pre-School and School Age learning, Advocacy and Bias-free practice
 - Two blocks of work placements in child care centers in or near their home communities

Stress the Importance of Certification and Accreditation

Goal:

- ❑ Credential attainment - ACE Certificate -Grade 12 equiv
- ❑ ECE Apprenticeship: Level 1
- ❑ positioned as the first step towards a full apprenticeship – improved earning potential
- ❑ key element underscoring participants' academic and employment success
- ❑ Apprenticeship as a pathway to higher education
- ❑ Seneca students may later work towards a degree in Child Development

Outreach and Recruitment

- Information Sessions
- Interagency Outreach – priority neighbourhoods
- Employment Ontario Service Network – 20+ agencies in Scarborough
- Aboriginal Outreach – Aboriginal Student Services – agency network (Wigwamen Waabnong – Aboriginal Housing complex in Scarborough)
- Child Care, Health and Community Centers , Libraries and Family Resource Centers
- Community Partners - Toronto Employment and Social Services - Ontario Works
- Early Years Centers
- Youth Employment Centers
- Political Connections – Offices of 4 MPs, 5 MPPs, 10 City Councillors
- Media – Community and Ethno-cultural community newspapers

Intake and Orientation

- Screening Interviews conducted by OnTrack and Seneca to determine eligibility
- 50% of those screened deemed eligible
- Academic Assessment screened a further 55 % - ECE Apprenticeship requires Grade 12 equivalency
- 23 successful candidates started in January 2009

ACE Curricula – Integrating Essential Skills

- ACE is college prep level
- Curricula modified to incorporate workplace essential skills activities relevant to ECE
- Expectation: complete 4 ACE credits in 14 wks
- Workplace Math Curriculum replaced ACE Apprenticeship Math and blended delivery of Eng/Self Mgmt & Self Direction/Computers
- Remedial tutoring – peer and instructor-led

Challenges

- Short 3-wk turnaround time to recruit
- Acceptance of students at a lower level and academic background in order to achieve enrolment targets
- Academic – emphasize foundational skills in Math
- Women unfamiliar with college academic environment – schedules, study skills, time mgmt
- Elation at beginning replaced by feelings of despair
- Overcoming social and economic handicaps that disadvantage
- Integrating leadership skills building to empower women through self advocacy

Solutions

- Extended training timelines
- Academic assistance -Tutorials in Upgrading and ECE – scheduled sessions
- In-class, 1:1 peer tutoring
- Advocacy with Ontario Works, Children's Services and Social assistance

Outcomes

- 10 students completed Academic Upgrading and received Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) Certificates – Grade 12 equivalency
- 9 students signed as ECE apprentices
- 5 students partially completed academic upgrading and course work for Level 1 ECE

Successes

- Employer contacts – strengthening relationships and establishing long term commitments
- Advocacy – strengthening relationships with TESS especially labour market specialists
- Peer Mentoring – identifying mature and experienced students to be mentors
- Screening Tools – Behavioural based interviewing techniques

Continuous Improvement - Lessons Learned

- Introduced a 6-month recruiting process
- prescreening of applicants **prior to** academic assessment
- higher academic assessment level prerequisite
- panel interview – behavioural based
- orientation activities before program start
- increase in total AU hours – adjust Math curriculum
- reduction of ECE courseload in first semester

Telling the Performance Story of 9 new apprentices

- Completion means overcoming social & economic handicaps that hinder progress for many women
- Pre-apprenticeship is more than a time to get back on track educationally – means change in life style
- For many it is a serious challenge to their way of life and affects their position in their community
- Benefits of a recognized profession, secure future
- Success brings the added responsibility of being a role model – mentor next cohort of ECE learners