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COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

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At-Risk Youth Meeting High Standards

Now in its second year of operation, **Another Route to College (ARC)** is helping students pass the required MCAS exams while beginning college coursework and preparing for their futures. ARC builds upon Diploma Plus, a successful alternative high school program managed by the CommCorp's Center for Youth Development and Education. Sixty students are currently enrolled at two ARC locations—Holyoke Community College (HCC), which serves the Springfield and Holyoke school districts, and Northern Essex Community College (NECC), serving the Lawrence Public Schools. The program is poised to expand next year to other communities.

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Teacher Mike Logan (right) from Lawrence Public Schools helps Jose Gonzalez (left) get ready for the math MCAS. Gonzalez has since passed both the English and math portions of the test.

CommCorp's StaffSkills for Youth Workers Sweeps the State

Since it began about a year ago, StaffSkills for Youth Workers has brought together over 100 people from diverse organizations serving youth throughout Massachusetts for a rich learning experience. The three-day series consists of seven modules designed specifically to address the key competencies and knowledge needed by front-line staff and supervisors whose programs provide counseling and case management services for

youth. Instructors utilize music videos, case scenarios, featured speakers, peer coaching and small group work. The sessions are highly interactive and custom tailored to the level of experience and the topic areas most needed by staff. Attending staff come from One Stop Career

Centers, Community-Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, and education programs, all of whom are focused

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StaffSkills
for Youth Workers

BEST for Older Youth Shares Promising Practices

BEST for Older Youth projects in seven Massachusetts workforce investment areas are paving the way for innovative and effective services for youth.

One such project is the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board's BEST for Older Youth "Jobs in Finance" program. They have developed a creative way to help youth participants become comfortable with job interviews. Banking and finance employers are invited to a luncheon, with the youth in attendance. As part of the luncheon activities, youth are encouraged, through a small incentive, to visit with and ask for business cards from as many of the employers as possible. In this safe setting, the youth gain confidence in speaking with adult strangers. Their new network of potential employers will be very helpful when the youth complete their training and begin interviewing for finance jobs.

To Cathryn Lea, Director of BEST, this is definitely "a promising practice that can serve as an example for other youth programs."

StaffSkills for Youth Workers

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on better preparing youth for employability and economic success.

Project Director Gregg McCutcheon says, "Designing and delivering StaffSkills for Youth Workers has been a labor of love from the start. Workforce development staff who serve youth have been eager to see this training created and as soon as word got out, each series has been filled to capacity. Starting with the Pilot Group and continuing with each new series, the attending staff and administrators have been enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and readily share their expertise with colleagues. They are eager to learn new information and give StaffSkills high marks for quality and usefulness in their work. They're very inspiring to work with!"

Response has been overwhelmingly positive. More sessions are planned in the coming year. Several other states have also expressed interest in bringing StaffSkills training to their staff.

At-Risk Youth

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In the program's first year, 20 of the 24 Springfield-Holyoke students and 20 of the 30 Lawrence students passed both sections of the MCAS.

ARC serves high school seniors who have repeatedly failed the MCAS exam. While ARC students are on target to graduate in terms of credits, they will not receive a diploma unless they pass both the math and English language arts sections of the MCAS. Students participating in ARC take all their classes at the local community

college and are taught by both high school and college instructors. To help them pass the MCAS, they attend classes in math, language arts, and test-taking strategies and use instructional software aligned to the state curriculum frameworks. Students also prepare for life after high school by participating in a career-related internship, taking two-three college courses, and completing projects that build their writing and teamwork skills.

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