

WORKFORCE READINESS



Sunrise of Philadelphia

Philadelphia, Pa.

700 Average number of students served during the school year

100% Students from low-income families

Main funding sources:

- ▶ 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Providing real-world work experiences that help build students' familiarity with and capabilities in the workforce

The private sector spends more than \$164 billion every year on employee education and training to close workforce skill gaps and more than 1 in 3 workers agree that they do not have the education and training they need to get ahead. These issues beg the question: how do we sufficiently prepare youth to enter the future labor market as adults? Afterschool and summer learning programs are integral partners in this effort, providing students a ladder of supports that offer a step up for future success and help them reach their career aspirations.

Overview

The mission of *Sunrise of Philadelphia (Sunrise)* is to prepare their students in grades K-12 for their future, providing scaffolded workforce development programming. Sunrise develops students' foundational skills that can be transferable across jobs (such as communication and leadership skills), introduces students to the various career fields available to them, and provides job exposure, including career-oriented clubs and paid work experiences.

A typical day for students

When students begin to arrive at Sunrise, the program, located in a school, transforms into a club space where students first receive a snack and catch up with friends. Next, elementary and middle school students receive homework help before breaking into groups for afternoon activities, rotating between STEM, art, drama, and literacy programming. High school students are able to choose from a variety of career-based clubs. All activities work to develop students' foundational skills.

Outcomes

A 2016 external evaluation by Research for Action found that all Sunrise middle schoolers at Southwark School reported that they learned new skills and information from participating in the program and all Sunrise students at the South Philadelphia High School site reported enjoying the program, in particular recognizing that the credit recovery program was an integral component to their graduation. Based on teacher surveys, among students who needed to improve in the respective areas, more than 3 in 4 improved their behavior and more than 7 in 10 improved their motivation to learn.

Challenges

Employees are missing critical foundational skills that employers desire.

The ability to work in teams, problem solve, and communicate effectively are among the principal skills that employers consistently report desiring in their future hires, yet employers report difficulties finding potential and current employees possessing these set of skills.

Employers find it challenging to hire a workforce with the technical skills needed for open positions.

In a 2017 survey of 500 leadership and human resource staff, 3 in 5 agreed that it was “common for job applicants to lack the technology skills important for success in their career.” Additionally, although more than half of the current U.S. labor market is comprised of middle-skills jobs, only 43 percent of workers are trained for these jobs.

Employers struggle to find candidates with job experience when looking to fill open positions.

A survey of 400 employers found that candidate’s lack of experience was one of the top reasons reported by employers when asked why it was hard to fill positions and that 9 in 10 employers were more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate if they had an internship or apprenticeship with the company.

Read [Building Workforce Skills in Afterschool](#) to learn more.



Program characteristics

Sunrise emphasizes workforce development for their students, starting in kindergarten where students receive support to build their self-confidence and teamwork skills, while older students are given the tools to plan and prepare for their futures. Elementary and middle schoolers’ programming centers on building students’ foundational skills—such as self-awareness and collaboration—that will help them do well in any career path they choose; and exposing students to the broad workforce possibilities available, including hosting career panels and field trips to local businesses. For instance, at Sunrise’s college and career exploration fair, students research a college or career they are interested in and play the role of someone from that field, dressing professionally, developing materials to share (including creating their own business card), and presenting to visitors on the selected topic.

Programming for older students is more focused. High schoolers create five-year road maps for themselves, participate in mock interviews, and work to improve their resumes. Paid internships with local businesses are also available, where high schoolers gain hands-on work experience. Past internships have included jobs in social media marketing, childcare, and the restaurant industry.

Program history

Sunrise was founded in 1999 as a part of Edward W. Bok Technical High School to provide career training to adults and high school students in fields such as carpentry and cosmetology. Over the past 18 years, Sunrise has shifted from an emphasis on career specific supports for older youth and adults to a broader workforce development approach, helping their K-12 grade students in six Philadelphia schools develop skills that will be transferable across a variety of careers.

Recommendations

for incorporating workforce readiness:

- ▶ Start small. Providing comprehensive workforce development training for 30 students will have a greater impact than a one-time experience for 200 students.
- ▶ The careers that will be available to our students may not even exist yet. Teach students the foundational skills that are transferable to many fields and will benefit them regardless of which career path they pursue.



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