

Our Future Workforce

4 out of every 10 young adults (ages 16 to 24) lacking a high school diploma received some type of government assistance in 2001, and a dropout is more than eight times as likely to be in jail or prison as a person with at least a high school diploma.

The Silent Epidemic, Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, March 2006

Overview

The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago have issued this publication for the purpose of providing specific information on the metropolitan Chicago region's¹ future workforce – its youth. Information is examined in the context of today's youth being tomorrow's workforce and issues that impact their acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and experience needed for future high demand occupations. The report provides basic demographic information about our youth, their families, their educational attainment, their current employment, and how the workforce system can assist with their development. Detailed charts reflecting a county breakout of regional data is also provided as a supplement to this report.

The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago (Workforce Boards) are a consortium of seven Workforce Boards that include the Chicago Workforce Board, Cook County Workforce Investment Board, DuPage Workforce Board, Grundy Livingston Kankakee Workforce Board, Lake County Workforce Investment Board, The Workforce Board of Northern Cook County, and Workforce Investment Board of Will County. The Workforce Boards are responsible for workforce preparation and economic development activities in their respective local areas but, collectively as a consortium, work to address workforce issues on a regional basis. This consortium has adopted a regional approach recognizing that cross-geographic issues impact the economic vitality of each area.

Predictors of Success

The focus of this report is analyzing characteristics of our youth that will impact their ability to prepare for, compete for, and secure employment in high demand, high skill occupations that pay high wages. "For many young people the pipeline to educational and economic success is truly broken. In the global information economy, more new jobs in the United States – about 67% of new jobs in 2007– require some education or training beyond high school and the rate is expected to increase."²

Additionally, youth's ability to acquire the education and workforce skills needed for future employment has an economic impact both in terms of the public cost to support them as well as their minimized contribution to the economy. The government

would reap \$45 billion in extra tax revenue and reduced costs if the number of high school dropouts among 20 year olds today were cut in half.³



Based on a review of literature, there is some agreement as to life factors that impact youth's preparedness for future success in the workplace. The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (EPERC) has developed the Chance for Success Index which identifies 13 indicators that span an individual's life from "cradle to career" and based on an analysis of information, ranks a state's performance in comparison to the national average. Based on the following indicators, Illinois's most recent performance received an overall grade of B- and ranked 19 out of the 50 states⁴:

- Family income – children from families with incomes at least 200% of poverty level,
- Parent education – children with at least one parent with a postsecondary degree,
- Parent employment – children with at least one parent working full time, year-round,
- Linguistic integration – children whose parents are fluent English speakers,
- Preschool enrollment – 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in preschool,
- Kindergarten enrollment – eligible children enrolled in kindergarten programs,
- Elementary reading – fourth grade public school students proficient on NAEP,
- Middle school mathematics – eighth grade public school students proficient on NAEP,

¹ The metropolitan Chicago region includes the following areas: City of Chicago and Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, Livingston, McHenry, and Will counties.

² *The Connection Strategy*, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007, page 3.

³ *Fight Poverty: Lower High School Drop Out Rates*, Jon Bridgeland, <http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/news>

⁴ *Quality Counts 2008*, Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, January 2008, page 3.

- High school graduation – public high school students who graduate with a diploma,
- Postsecondary participation – young adults enrolled in postsecondary or with a degree,
- Adult educational attainment – adults with two or four-year postsecondary degree,
- Annual income – adults with incomes at or above national median, and
- Steady employment – adults in labor force working full-time, year-round.

Based on EPERC's evaluation, Illinois seems to be performing in the mid-range in terms of how well it is preparing its youth to prosper as working adults. The remainder of this report will present available data specific to the region and provides a general profile of our youth as compared to State and national data.

Our Youth and Their Families

Demographics

Who are the metropolitan Chicago region's 2,548,216 youth? A breakout by age groups is provided as Figure 1. The metropolitan Chicago region's young represent 70% of the State's total youth. Due to a declining birth rate, both the region and State's population is expected to decrease in coming years. The region's youth currently represent 28.6% of the total region's population (8,903,726) as compared to a representation of 27.6% for the State (12,952,692).

Age	2008 Metropolitan Chicago Region	2013 Metropolitan Chicago Region	2008 Illinois	2013 Illinois
Under 5 yrs.	643,110	641,522	894,521	903,864
5 to 9 yrs.	630,441	626,313	873,407	871,819
10 to 14 yrs.	631,202	619,432	880,430	860,149
15 to 19 yrs.	643,464	617,057	931,768	875,648
Total	2,548,216	2,504,325	3,580,126	3,511,479

Source: Economic Modeling Systems, Inc., Spring 2008

In terms of the region's youth, 1,244,719 (49%) are female and 1,303,496 (51%) are male. The majority of the region's youth are White, Non-Hispanic (45.6%). The White, Hispanic and Asian populations are projected to increase by 2013 whereas all other groups are expected to decrease (Figure 2).

Race/Ethnicity	2008 Population	2013 Population
White, Non-Hispanic	1,162,474	1,099,069
White Hispanic	666,805	708,047
Non-White Hispanic	23,789	20,791
Black or African American	515,968	487,477
American Indian or Alaska Native	3,412	3,265
Asian	123,819	130,645

Source: Economic Modeling Systems, Inc., Spring 2008

Living in Poverty

Figure 3 provides information on the number of individuals and families living at or below the poverty level. While the rates of the region's total population and persons under 18 years living in poverty were slightly lower than the State and national rates, the actual number of people living in poverty is staggering. In the metropolitan Chicago region, there were more than 370,000 individuals under 18 years living in poverty in 2006. In fact, 68% of the State's young people in poverty reside in the metropolitan Chicago region.

	Regional	Illinois	National
Total population	8,561,107	12,516,453	291,531,091
# of total in poverty	1,010,144	1,539,033	38,757,253
Percent below poverty level ⁵	11.8%	12.3%	13.3%
Population under 18 years	2,250,291	3,173,411	72,482,732
# under 18 in poverty	370,214	543,373	13,285,569
Percent below poverty level	16.5%	17.1%	18.3%
All individuals below			
50% poverty level	460,955	668,970	16,752,909
125% poverty level	1,344,754	2,032,518	51,375,624
150% poverty level	1,663,315	2,527,133	64,644,208
185% of poverty level	2,095,859	3,207,481	82,671,368
200% of poverty level	2,315,901	3,543,684	91,091,199

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, PovertyStatus in the Past 12 Months⁶

⁵ According to the 2008 Poverty Guidelines published in the January 23, 2008 Federal Register (Vol. 73, Number 15, pgs. 3971-3972), the poverty level for a family of one living in all states with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii, is \$10,400 and a family of four is \$21,200.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey does not include detail data for Grundy and Livingston counties due to sample size. Therefore, all charts compiled using 2006 American Community Survey data do not include these counties. Additionally, 2007 data was not used for this report due to limited availability of data types as compared to 2006.

In terms of families with children under 18 years in poverty, the regional percentage is slightly lower than the State and national rates (Figure 4). However, there are 146,399 families with children under 18 living in poverty. According to the EPERC, children in families with incomes of 200% or more of the poverty level have a greater likelihood of success than those living in families whose incomes are less.

The percentage of married couples with children under 18 living in poverty is 5.2% as compared to 34.2% for females with children and no husband present. It is worth noting that 92,858 (63.4%) of the region's 146,399 families with children living in poverty have a female head of household.

The EPERC indicates that children in families where at least one parent works full time is more likely to succeed. While data on householders working full-time year round is not specific to families with children, we do know that 55% of the region's families meet this standard, slightly better than the State and national rates of 54% and 52% respectively. Also, the rates of households below the poverty level in which a

member of the household worked full-time were comparable to State and national rates. In the metropolitan region, 34,554 families lived in poverty even though at least one individual in the household worked full-time, year round.

The number of children living in poverty is also significant because it directly impacts their future academic success. In a study conducted of high school dropouts, 32% said their reason for leaving school was financial. Many of these individuals needed to obtain employment to support themselves or provide financial assistance to their family.⁷



Poverty Status of Families Figure 4			
	Region	Illinois	National
Total families	2,068,018	3,146,342	74,564,066
# below poverty level	182,540	286,317	7,307,278
Percent below poverty level	8.8%	9.1%	9.8%
Families with children under 18 yrs.			
All families	1,119,546	1,641,353	38,064,338
# below poverty level	146,399	229,789	5,709,651
Percent below poverty level	13.1%	14.0%	15.0%
Married couples with children	777,638	1,127,595	25,531,513
# below poverty level	40,737	58,635	1,659,548
Percent below poverty level	5.2%	5.2%	6.5%
Female household, no husband present	271,612	403,756	9,606,535
# below poverty level	92,858	149,390	3,544,811
Percent below poverty level	34.2%	37.0%	36.9%
All families			
Householder worked full-time year round in past 12 months	1,135,733	1,687,247	38,857,279
# below poverty level	34,554	52,305	1,243,433
Percent below poverty level	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%
Family received SSI and/or cash public assistance in past 12 months	96,867	140,582	4,299,293
# below poverty level	26,297	39,785	1,483,256
Percent below poverty level	27.1%	28.3%	34.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Poverty Status of Families in the Past 12 Months

⁷ *The Silent Epidemic*, Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, March 2006, page iii.

Annual Income

In terms of the annual income for adults in the metropolitan Chicago region, the average median earnings for individuals exceed the State average median earnings by \$3,468 and the national earnings by \$6,296 (Figure 5). Average median earnings associated with levels of education also exceed the State and national averages.

However, earnings cannot be assessed in isolation of other factors, such as the cost of living. For example, the cost of living in metro Chicago is 32.8% higher than downstate Springfield, Illinois. This means that an individual earning \$34,000 in Springfield would need to earn \$45,167 to maintain the same standard of living in Chicago.⁸

In addition to providing a comparison of average regional median earnings with State and national averages, Figure 5 illustrates that educational attainment is a strong predictor of the earning potential of individuals. “High school dropouts on an average earn \$9,200 less per year than high school graduates and about \$1 million less over a lifetime than college graduates. Additionally, they are twice as likely as high school graduates to slip into poverty from one year to the next.”⁹ In the metropolitan Chicago region, the disparity in annual median earnings for individuals with less than a high school education and individuals with some college or associate’s degree is \$15,333 and \$27,713 respectively as compared to individuals with a bachelor’s degree.

Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months for Population 25 Years and Over With Earnings Figure 5			
	Region	Illinois	National
Average Median Earnings	\$38,382	\$34,914	\$32,086
Less than high school graduate	\$22,271	\$20,019	\$18,641
High school graduate/GED	\$30,686	\$27,048	\$26,123
Some college or associate degree	\$37,604	\$33,383	\$31,936
Bachelor degree	\$49,984	\$47,484	\$45,221
Graduate or professional level	\$60,991	\$60,695	\$59,804

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Educational Attainment

Primary Language in Home

The EPERC identifies linguistic integration – children whose parents are fluent English speakers – as one indicator of their future success in the workplace. As reflected in Figure 6, the proportion of the region’s population that speaks a language other than English as their primary language at home is significantly higher than the State or nation.

The rate of individuals 6 to 17 years living in households whose primary language is other than English is similar to the State and nation as is the poverty rate for individuals in homes where the primary language spoken is not English.

Population Speaking Language Other Than English At Home Figure 6			
	Region	Illinois	National
Percent of total population who speak language other than English at home	30.2%	21.8%	19.7%
Of people speaking language other than English at home, percent 5 to 17 years	20%	19.9%	19.8%
Percent of population 5 yrs & over speaking language other than English at home below poverty level	13.4%	13.9%	17.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Characteristics of People by Language Spoken at Home¹⁰



Education

The Big Picture

How well educated is the regional population? Overall, data indicates that the proportion of the region’s population in all age groups (Figure 7) exceeds or is comparable to the State or national rates. For all age groups, the proportion of individuals attaining at least a bachelor degree is considerably higher than the State or national rates. This would indicate that a larger proportion of our population is preparing for higher skill jobs.

Also, it is interesting to note that when comparing individuals 25 to 34 years to those 35 to 44 years, the proportion of individuals with educational attainment of high school or higher and bachelor’s degrees or higher are similar. Hopefully this trend will continue and the lower rates of educational attainment for the population 18 to 24 is primarily due to the fact that they have not completed, but are actively pursuing, a high school or bachelor degree.

⁸ www.salary.com, Cost of Living Wizard

⁹ *The Silent Epidemic*, Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, March 2006, page 2

¹⁰ Regional data does not include Grundy, Livingston, DeKalb, Kankakee, and Kendall due to sample size.

Educational Attainment Figure 7			
	Region	Illinois	National
Population 18 to 24 years	771,633	1,289,453	26,700,519
Less than high school graduate	152,136	216,628	4,806,093
	19.7%	16.8%	18.0%
High school graduate/GED	265,649	408,757	9,051,476
	34.4%	31.7%	33.9%
Some college or associate degree	323,667	533,834	10,546,705
	41.9%	41.4%	39.5%
Bachelor degree or higher	96,611	130,235	2,296,245
	12.5%	10.1%	8.6%
Population 25 to 34 years	1,226,196	1,771,816	39,905,599
High school graduate or higher	1,056,416	1,545,024	34,278,909
	86.2%	87.2%	85.9%
Bachelor degree or higher	450,713	579,384	11,492,812
	36.8%	32.7%	28.8%
Population 35 to 44 years	1,329,049	1,877,625	43,892,631
High school graduate or higher	1,161,611	1,659,821	38,230,481
	87.4%	88.4%	87.1%
Bachelor degree or higher	496,948	627,127	9,540,222
	37.4%	33.4%	29.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Educational Attainment

Early Education/Preschool and Kindergarten

According to the EPERC, preschool and kindergarten are necessary in providing a foundation for a child's future success. Research has demonstrated that participation in intensive, high quality early childhood education can improve school readiness and close the gap in early language development, and that poor and minority children benefit most academically from attending high quality early childhood programs.¹¹ Figure 8 provides an estimate of the proportion of our young who are enrolled in public and private nursery/preschool and kindergarten based on available data. The proportion of children in preschool is lower than the State rate but slightly higher than the national rate. Enrollment in kindergarten is slightly higher than the national rate and comparable to the State rate.

School Performance

One of the indicators of our young people's future success as identified by the EPERC is performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). However, Illinois does not use the NAEP as a test to measure student performance. Rather, Illinois schools administer the Illinois Standards

¹¹ *The Connection Strategy*, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007, page 7.

¹² The interactive report card is available at <http://iirc.niu.edu/>.

Preschool and Kindergarten Enrollment Figure 8			
	Region	Illinois	National
Population enrolled in nursery school/preschool (3 & 4 years)	171,549	245,063	4,901,007
Estimated percentage of children 3 & 4 years enrolled in nursery school/preschool	47.6%	51.1%	46.1%
Population enrolled in kindergarten	126,438	176,037	4,012,680
Estimated percentage of children 5 and 6 enrolled in kindergarten	95.3%	95.1%	94.8%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, School Enrollment

Achievement Test (ISAT) which measures individual student achievement relative to the Illinois Learning Standards for grades 3 through 8. Illinois uses the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) to measure the achievement of grade 11 students relative to the Illinois Learning Standards. Data for these tests are available by school at Illinois State Board of Education's interactive report card.¹²

Understanding how well we are educating our future workforce is particularly relevant to the region and its ability to attract and retain businesses requiring a highly skilled workforce. Without development of strong foundational skills, it is unlikely that our youth will develop the high level of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics skills needed for future jobs and the innovation required for our nation to remain globally competitive.



Earning a High School Diploma

It has been labeled “a silent epidemic” – almost one third of all public high school students will fail to graduate from high school with their class. And the rate is even higher – nearly 50% - for Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. Many of these students will abandon school with less than two years remaining for completion.¹³ This means that 59,600 of Illinois’s 180,641 9th grade students who entered high school in 2006 will either not earn a diploma or will take longer than 4 years to do so.¹⁴ Additionally, statistics indicate that people who do not complete high school are more likely to be unemployed, live in poverty, receive public assistance, serve jail time, be divorced, and be single parents who have children who drop out of high school themselves.¹⁵

Since a high school diploma or its equivalency is a requisite for most employment and post secondary career preparation, how are our youth doing in obtaining their high school certification? Data for the 2006-2007 school year for the metropolitan Chicago region is reflected in Figures 9 and 10. In terms of the reported graduation and drop out rates, students living in the metropolitan Chicago area, with the exception of Chicago, are doing much better overall than the balance of the State’s or the nation’s high school students. However, it is acknowledged that the drop out rate probably under-reports the problem since many who are “lost” between eighth and ninth grade or who are reported as moving are not reflected in the drop out count.

Graduation Rates Figure 9									
County	Total Rate	Gender		Race/Ethnicity					
		Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Multi Racial
Chicago	67%	59%	74%	77%	65%	65%	83%	36%	72%
Cook, Balance of	90%	88%	91%	94%	86%	78%	96%	81%	93%
DeKalb	92%	90%	95%	93%	89%	87%	82%	100%	100%
DuPage	96%	94%	97%	97%	92%	89%	97%	91%	88%
Grundey	93%	88%	98%	94%	100%	86%	83%	100%	75%
Kane	90%	88%	93%	95%	79%	80%	95%	85%	95%
Kankakee	87%	86%	89%	90%	80%	85%	93%	100%	38%
Kendall	95%	94%	96%	95%	94%	94%	100%	100%	71%
Lake	90%	88%	92%	94%	74%	78%	98%	75%	94%
Livingston	93%	97%	90%	93%	100%	86%	100%		100%
McHenry	93%	92%	95%	95%	91%	78%	98%	56%	100%
Will	89%	85%	92%	92%	80%	81%	94%	65%	95%
State of Illinois	86%	83%	89%	92%	74%	73%	94%	73%	83%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, Data Analysis and Program Reporting, School Year 2006 – 2007

It is somewhat puzzling why a nation such as ours has so much difficulty in addressing a problem that seems so predictable and instituting intervention strategies. Researchers have identified social and family background indicators, education experience factors such as academic performance and educational engagement, and school characteristics that impact the number of students a school “loses” each year. However, research also indicates that the ability to predict behavior (e.g., dropping out), is a complex process and unique to each school and its student population.¹⁶ In focus groups and surveys conducted with high school dropouts, the top five reasons for dropping out were:

- Classes were not interesting (47%),
- Missed too many days and could not catch up (43%),
- Spent time with people who were not interested in school (42%),

- Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life (38%), and
- Was failing in school (35%).¹⁷



¹³ *The Silent Epidemic*, Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, March 2006, page 1.

¹⁴ Enrollment Report, Illinois State Board of Education, January 22, 2008, <http://www.isbe.net/reports/annual07/students.pdf>.

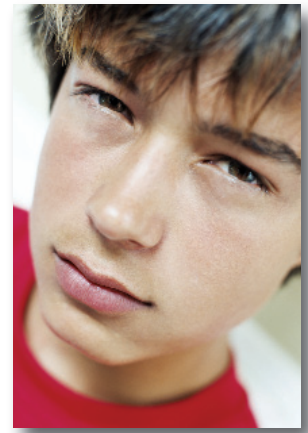
¹⁵ *Fight Poverty: Lower High School Drop Out Rates*, Jon Bridgeland, <http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/news>.

¹⁶ *Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System*, Achieve, Inc., June 2006, pages 4 – 7.

¹⁷ *The Silent Epidemic*, Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, March 2006, page 3

With almost half of the drop out survey respondents saying that the reason they dropped out was because school was not interesting, service learning is being viewed as a viable tool to address the drop out problem and keep more young people motivated and engaged. An overwhelming majority (81%) of respondents said that more opportunities for “real-world” learning would have helped them stay in school. Of students that have had an opportunity to participate in service-learning classes, 75% said that service-learning classes were more interesting than other classes and 83% of all students said they would definitely or probably enroll in service-learning classes if offered. Unfortunately, only 16% of students said their school offered such classes.¹⁸

According to national estimates, 1 million American teenagers walk away from high school each year before they graduate.¹⁹ Illinois contributed 21,712 to that count for the 2006 – 2007 school year. As reflected in Figure 10, although the dropout rates in most regional counties is much lower than the State rate of 3.5, even these lower rates translate to a large number of youth with narrowed employment prospects.



Dropout, Truancy, Attendance and Low Income Rates ²⁰					
Figure 10					
County	# Dropouts	Dropout Rate	Chronic Truant Rate	Attendance Rate	Low Income Rate
Chicago	9,932	9.1%	4.4%	91.3%	85.0%
Cook, Balance of	2,399	2.0%	1.8%	94.1%	32.9%
DeKalb	96	1.8%	1.2%	94.8%	20.9%
DuPage	722	1.4%	0.5%	95.0%	12.9%
Grundyl	55	1.4%	2.4%	94.9%	13.6%
Kane	1,010	3.1%	1.7%	94.6%	31.7%
Kankakee	165	2.9%	3.2%	93.5%	40.1%
Kendall	102	1.9%	0.8%	95.1%	10.5%
Lake	817	2.0%	2.1%	94.3%	22.3%
Livingston	50	2.1%	0.8%	94.4%	30.7%
McHenry	228	1.4%	0.8%	94.9%	12.0%
Will	594	1.9%	1.6%	94.1%	21.8%
State of Illinois	21,712	3.5%	2.5%	93.7%	41.0%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, Data Analysis and Program Reporting, School Year 2006 - 2007

Beyond High School

In today’s world, a high school diploma is viewed as a “stepping stone” in the process of preparing for and obtaining a high skill, high wage job. But, unfortunately, it is not a guarantee students will be successful in post secondary programs. Statistics indicate that 30% of incoming first-year college students are required to enroll in remedial courses, and only a minority of those students end up earning a degree.”²¹

In the metropolitan Chicago region, we don’t seem to be doing as well as one would hope in communicating the need for post secondary education. The percent of individuals ages 18 to 24 enrolled in college or graduate school is only slightly more than the national average and less than the State rate.

Post Secondary Education Enrollment			
Figure 11			
	Regional	Illinois	National
Total population 18 years and over	6,429,312	9,615,583	225,633,342
Enrolled in college or graduate school	611,085 9.5%	732,712 9.7%	20,299,001 9.0%
Total population 18 to 24 years	836,055	1,289,453	29,700,518
Enrolled in college or graduate school	338,561 40.5%	544,149 42.2%	11,791,105 39.7%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, School Enrollment

¹⁸ Engaged for Success: Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention, Jjon Bridgeland, <http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/news>.

¹⁹ The Dropout Epidemic, The University of Richmond Pew Partnership for Civic Change, 2006, page 4.

²⁰ Low income students come from families receiving public aid; live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; are supported in foster homes with public funds; or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Chronic truants are students who are absent from school without valid causes for 18 or more of the last 180 school days.

²¹ The Connection Strategy, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007, page 3.

Employment

Work Ready

Education attainment is no guarantee that our workers possess the skills that employers are expecting or needing. According to employers, new job entrants that are recent graduates of high school, community colleges, and four year colleges simply lack the most important skills needed to succeed in the workplace. What are the most important skills? Employers indicate that the following applied skills rather than basic skills, although still fundamental to any workforce entrant's ability to perform, are most important:²²

- Professionalism/Work Ethic,
- Oral and Written Communication,
- Teamwork/Collaboration, and
- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving.

In fact, employer assessments of new workforce entrant's work readiness, based on skills identified as very important by a majority of participating employers, indicated that high school graduates were deficient in ten skill areas and excellent in none. Community college graduates were deficient in seven skills determined to be very important and excellent in only one area – information technology application. Four year college graduates fared much better, rated as deficient in three areas but excellent in nine.²³

The EPERC further supports the need for our educational system to focus on work readiness skills. As a start, they advocate that states should actually define work readiness and assess state progress in this regard through the development of courses, skills, standards and/or tests. To date, 26 states have completed definitions of work readiness. Illinois is not one of those states.²⁴

To succeed in today's work place, young people need more than basic reading and math skills. They need substantial content knowledge and information technology skills; advanced thinking skills, flexibility to adapt to changes; and interpersonal skills to succeed in multi-cultural, cross-functional teams.

J. Willard Marriot, Jr., chairman and CEO, Marriott International Inc, Are They Really Ready to Work, The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and Society for Human Resource Management.



Working Youth

In the metropolitan Chicago region, the proportion of individuals ages 16 to 19 years in the labor force is lower than the State or national employment rate for this age group. The unemployment rate is higher, indicating that the region's youth ages 16 to 19 years are having a harder time finding employment than in other areas of the State or nation.

The proportion of individuals 20 to 24 years in the region who are in the labor force, employed and unemployed is similar to the State and national rates. While the unemployed rate for this age group is lower than those 16 to 19 years, it is almost twice the region's unemployment rate for all ages (16 years and over).

Employment Status Figure 12			
	Regional	Illinois	National
Population 16 to 19 years	499,578	750,891	17,355,603
In labor force	221,942 44.4%	351,417 46.8%	7,879,444 45.4%
Employed	75,103 33.8%	124,050 35.3%	2,765,685 35.1%
Unemployed	56,546 25.5%	83,637 23.8%	1,709,839 21.7%
Population 20 to 24 years	589,798	905,237	20,955,536
In labor force	450,248 76.3%	689,791 76.2%	15,842,385 75.6%
Employed	298,136 66.2%	456,642 66.2%	10,424,289 65.8%
Unemployed	57,934 12.9%	84,844 12.3%	1,774,347 11.2%
Unemployment rate for all ages 16 and over	6.3%	7.2%	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Employment Status

²² Ibid, page 9

²³ Ibid, page 41

²⁴ *Diplomas Count, Illinois – State Highlights 2008*, Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, June 2008, page 9.

Figure 13 reflects the industries that employ the largest number of young workers and the average monthly wage earned by each age group. It comes as no surprise that their employment is primarily in Retail Trade and the Accommodations and Food industries – offering a large number of part-time and entry level employment opportunities. As the population ages, there is a shift in sectoral employment – an increased proportion of workers in the Healthcare and Social Services sector, a decreased

proportion of workers in the Accommodations and Food sector, and Transportation, Warehousing, and Distribution replacing Arts and Entertainment as one of the top five industries of employment for individuals 19–21 years. Several of the wages also reflect significant increases which may be the result of increased hours worked or wages commensurate with increased levels of education or training.

Employment of Youth in the Metropolitan Chicago Region Top Five Sectors Figure 13			
Ages 14 to 18			
Sector	Total Employed in Sector	% of Total 14-18 Employment	Average Monthly Wage
Retail Trade	34,960	30.2%	\$638.55
Accommodations & Food	33,754	26.8%	\$633.67
Administration & Support	11,326	9.0%	\$1,162.56
Arts & Entertainment	7,368	5.6%	\$437.22
Healthcare & Social Services	6,176	4.9%	\$882.33
Ages 19 to 21			
Sector	Total Employed in Sector	% of Total 19-21 Employment	Average Monthly Wage
Retail Trade	54,191	28.0%	\$1,038.89
Accommodations & Food	33,687	17.4%	\$908.11
Administration & Support	19,536	10.1%	\$1,296.78
Healthcare & Social Services	14,084	7.3%	\$1,184.44
Transportation, Warehousing & Distribution	12,584	6.5%	\$1,613.39

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Local Employment Dynamics Program, 2007 2nd Quarter Data

Our Regional Workforce System

Workforce Boards are charged with insuring that employers have access to a skilled workforce. As skill requirements for future, high demand jobs increase, so too will the training and educational requirements. The time to insure that our future workers have the foundational education needed to enroll and succeed in post secondary educational and training programs is now. Functioning as a subgroup of the Workforce Board, Youth Councils are charged with providing assistance to Workforce Boards with respect to:

- Developing and recommending local youth employment and training policy and practice;
- Broadening the youth employment and training focus in the community to incorporate a youth development perspective;
- Establishing linkages with other organizations serving youth in the local area; and
- Taking into account a range issues that can have an impact on the success of youth in the labor market.²⁵

As indicated in this report, a broad range of social and economic

issues impact the development of youth and their future success in the workforce. Locally, each Workforce Board's Youth Council can fulfill the need for a formal network that fosters collaboration and cooperation among organizations contributing to the well-being of our youth and their future success.

Best Practices

DuPage Workforce Board in cooperation with representatives of its educational and business communities undertook a study of how well DuPage youth are prepared for college and work and issued policy consideration to improve outcomes.

Workforce investment Board of Will County's Career Seekers program helps youth develop sound work habits and improved decision-making skills. Additionally, a work experience component provides youth with a connection to the workplace and the opportunity to acquire job specific skills.

The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago offers an online directory of a broad range of services supporting development of our youth (www.youthfuturesmetro.com). Search options allow youth, parents, and counselors to identify youth providers and programs that address their unique needs.

²⁵ Workforce Investment Act, Final Rules, Federal Register, August 11, 2000, Section 664.100.

Supplementary Charts

Poverty Status of Individuals						
	Cook	DeKalb	DuPage	Kane	Kankakee	Kendall
Total population	5,202,550	92,000	916,441	487,749	105,585	88,043
# of total in poverty	796,648	13,033	44,494	40,498	15,232	4,759
Percent below poverty level	15.3%	14.2%	4.9%	8.3%	14.4%	5.9%
Population under 18 years	1,340,482	21,024	236,111	141,785	27,464	22,891
# under 18 in poverty	296,617	1,901	13,673	17,341	5,356	2,201
Percent below poverty level	22.3%	9.0%	5.8%	12.2%	19.5%	9.6%
All individuals below						
50% poverty level	361,712	7,358	17,956	19,867	5,775	1,642
125 % poverty level	1,052,675	16,793	63,959	55,682	18,918	6,149
150% poverty level	1,277,289	19,256	85,839	74,287	24,769	7,126
185% of poverty level	1,577,622	25,125	115,634	96,896	30,993	10,074
200% of poverty level	1,726,837	27,028	133,884	110,680	33,723	10,348
	Lake	McHenry	Will	Region	Illinois	National
Total population	696,487	310,673	661,579	8,561,107	12,516,453	291,531,091
# of total in poverty	38,752	18,034	38,694	1,010,144	1,539,033	38,757,253
Percent below poverty level	5.6%	5.8%	5.8%	11.8%	12.3%	13.3%
Population under 18 years	196,312	82,971	181,251	2,250,291	3,173,411	72,482,732
# under 18 in poverty	14,319	5,970	12,836	370,214	543,373	13,285,569
Percent below poverty level	7.3%	7.2%	7.1%	16.5%	17.1%	18.3%
All individuals below						
50% poverty level	19,568	8,613	18,464	460,955	668,970	16,752,909
125 % poverty level	54,687	24,530	51,361	1,344,754	2,032,518	51,375,624
150% poverty level	73,884	31,870	68,995	1,663,315	2,527,133	64,644,208
185% of poverty level	105,187	39,279	95,049	2,095,859	3,207,481	82,671,368
200% of poverty level	118,536	47,867	106,998	2,315,901	3,543,684	91,091,199

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

Poverty Status of Families						
	Cook	DeKalb	DuPage	Kane	Kankakee	Kendall
Total families	1,217,733	21,086	239,031	122,732	27,982	24,619
# below poverty level	143,692	1,286	8,605	8,591	2,630	985
Percent below poverty level	11.8%	6.1%	3.6%	7.0%	9.4%	4.0%
Families with children under 18 yrs.						
All families	642,850	11,237	126,469	70,623	15,599	15,145
# below poverty level	113,784	1,034	6,955	7,204	2,293	788
Percent below poverty level	17.7%	9.2%	5.5%	10.2%	14.7%	5.2%
Married couples with children	403,166	8,601	103,000	53,450	10,100	12,707
# below poverty level	31,447	275	2,266	2,085	212	292
Percent below poverty level	7.8%	3.2%	2.2%	3.9%	2.1%	2.3%
Female household, no husband present	193,736	2,127	19,288	12,843	4,286	1,443
# below poverty level	71,876	623	4,494	4,842	1,616	245
Percent below poverty level	37.1%	29.3%	23.3%	37.7%	37.7%	17.0%
All Families						
Householder worked full-time year round in past 12 months	630,824	12,455	143,669	74,220	13,656	14,912
# below poverty level	28,387	374	1,293	1,336	123	89
Percent below poverty level	4.5%	3.0%	0.9%	1.8%	0.9%	0.6%
Family received SSI and/or cash public assistance in past 12 months	74,419	517	5,095	3,858	1,360	783
# below poverty level	22,921	40	627	853	175	0
Percent below poverty level	30.8%	7.7%	12.3%	22.1%	12.9%	0.0%
	Lake	McHenry	Will	Region	Illinois	National
Total families	172,928	79,765	162,142	2,068,018	3,146,342	74,564,066
# below poverty level	6,917	3,510	6,324	182,540	286,317	7,307,278
Percent below poverty level	4.0%	4.4%	3.9%	8.8%	9.1%	9.8%
Families with children under 18 yrs.						
All families	98,028	45,084	94,511	1,119,546	1,641,353	38,064,338
# below poverty level	5,991	3,246	5,104	146,399	229,789	5,709,651
Percent below poverty level	6.1%	7.2%	5.4%	13.1%	14.0%	15.0%
Married couples with children	76,708	35,680	74,226	777,638	1,127,595	25,531,513
# below poverty level	1,994	607	1,559	40,737	58,635	1,659,548
Percent below poverty level	2.6%	1.7%	2.1%	5.2%	5.2%	6.5%
Female household, no husband present	15,939	6,508	15,442	271,612	403,756	9,606,535
# below poverty level	3,618	2,317	3,227	92,858	149,390	3,544,811
Percent below poverty level	22.7%	35.6%	20.9%	34.2%	37.0%	36.9%
All Families						
Householder worked full-time year round in past 12 months	104,085	46,319	95,593	1,135,733	1,687,247	38,857,279
# below poverty level	1,353	834	765	34,554	52,305	1,243,433
Percent below poverty level	1.3%	1.8%	0.8%	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%
Family received SSI and/or cash public assistance in past 12 months	4,108	1,189	5,538	96,867	140,582	4,299,293
# below poverty level	739	156	786	26,297	39,785	1,483,256
Percent below poverty level	18.0%	13.1%	14.2%	27.1%	28.3%	34.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Poverty Status of Families in the Past 12 Months

Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months for Population 25 Years and Over With Earnings

	Cook	DeKalb	DuPage	Kane	Kankakee	Kendall
Average Median Earnings	\$35,466	\$32,148	\$44,248	\$36,334	\$32,445	\$41,222
Less than high school graduate	\$19,756	\$20,904	\$25,253	\$20,216	\$12,340	\$32,436
High school graduate/GED	\$26,892	\$29,282	\$32,017	\$30,244	\$27,319	\$37,646
Some college or associate degree	\$34,215	\$32,497	\$38,002	\$38,862	\$34,880	\$38,570
Bachelor degree	\$49,586	\$40,239	\$52,588	\$54,303	\$46,900	\$46,970
Graduate or professional level	\$61,367	\$42,815	\$71,615	\$62,024	\$50,210	\$53,867
	Lake	McHenry	Will	Region	Illinois	National
Average Median Earnings	\$41,664	\$40,864	\$41,047	\$38,382	\$34,914	\$32,086
Less than high school graduate	\$22,061	\$22,571	\$24,898	\$22,271	\$20,019	\$18,641
High school graduate/GED	\$31,467	\$29,877	\$31,430	\$30,686	\$27,048	\$26,123
Some college or associate degree	\$39,261	\$42,048	\$40,099	\$37,604	\$33,383	\$31,936
Bachelor degree	\$55,413	\$52,585	\$51,275	\$49,984	\$47,484	\$45,221
Graduate or professional level	\$76,978	\$65,054	\$64,985	\$60,991	\$60,695	\$59,804

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Educational Attainment

Nursery/Preschool and Kindergarten Enrollment

	Cook	DeKalb	DuPage	Kane	Kankakee	Kendall
Population enrolled in nursery school/preschool (3 and 4 years)	102,031	1,170	18,723	8,959	2,162	1,409
Estimated percentage of children 3 and 4 years enrolled	51.6%	36.3%	54.8%	39.4%	47.9%	36.4%
Population enrolled in kindergarten	73,301	1,602	13,839	9,392	1,861	1,808
Estimated percentage of children 5 and 6 enrolled in kindergarten	95.4%	96.9%	96.2%	94.2%	98.0%	94.8%
	Lake	McHenry	Will	Region	Illinois	National
Population enrolled in nursery school/preschool (3 and 4 years)	14,785	6,909	15,401	171,549	245,063	4,901,007
Estimated percentage of children 3 and 4 years enrolled	50.8%	53.3%	58.2%	47.6%	51.1%	46.1%
Population enrolled in kindergarten	11,068	4,432	9,135	126,438	176,037	4,012,680
Estimated percentage of children 5 and 6 enrolled in kindergarten	94.1%	94.0%	94.4%	95.3%	95.1%	94.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, School Enrollment

Post Secondary Education Enrollment

	Cook	DeKalb	DuPage	Kane	Kankakee	Kendall
Total population 18 years and over	3,930,707	78,675	695,181	350,200	81,100	65,152
Enrolled in college or graduate school	365,556 9.3%	22,422 28.5%	71,604 10.3%	28,016 8.0%	6,407 7.9%	5,994 9.2%
Total population 18 to 24 years	498,715	21,940	83,348	46,227	11,437	9,259
Enrolled in college or graduate school	193,003 38.7%	17,859 81.4%	41,424 49.7%	17,057 36.9%	3,820 33.4%	3,102 33.5%
	Lake	McHenry	Will	Region	Illinois	National
Total population 18 years and over	515,016	228,266	485,015	6,429,312	9,615,583	225,633,342
Enrolled in college or graduate school	45,836 8.9%	19,174 8.4%	46,076 9.5%	611,085 9.5%	732,712 9.7%	20,299,001 9.0%
Total population 18 to 24 years	69,734	28,904	66,491	836,055	1,289,453	29,700,518
Enrolled in college or graduate school	24,546 35.2%	11,619 40.2%	26,131 39.3%	338,561 40.5%	544,149 42.2%	11,791,105 39.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, School Enrollment

Educational Attainment

	Cook	DeKalb	DuPage	Kane	Kankakee	Kendall
Population 18 to 24 years	498,718	21,940	83,348	48,227	11,437	9,259
Less than high school graduate	100,741	461	10,919	10,224	2,299	1,926
	20.2%	2.1%	13.1%	21.2%	20.1%	20.8%
High school graduate/GED	155,101	4,169	23,337	17,362	4,209	2,213
	31.1%	19.0%	28.0	36.0%	36.8%	23.9%
Some college or associate degree	181,533	14,678	38,340	16,976	3,969	4,046
	36.4%	66.9%	46.0%	35.2%	34.7%	43.7%
Bachelor degree or higher	61,342	2,633	10,752	3,665	961	1,074
	12.3%	12.0%	12.9%	7.6%	8.4%	11.6%
Population 25 to 34 years	745,769	15,177	111,704	76,249	15,529	17,245
High school graduate or higher	631,666	14,297	104,108	60,237	14,240	15,676
	84.7%	94.2%	93.2%	79.0%	91.7%	90.9%
Bachelor degree or higher	272,206	14,297	50,825	22,265	2,826	6,036
	36.5%	29.5%	45.5%	29.2%	18.2%	35.0%
Population 35 to 44 years	791,133	12,628	147,694	76,412	14,409	14,519
High school graduate or higher	671,672	11,239	140,900	64,415	12,766	13,140
	84.9%	89.0%	95.4%	84.3%	88.6%	90.5%
Bachelor degree or higher	281,643	3,271	71,336	27,432	3,357	4,806
	35.6%	25.9%	48.3%	35.9%	23.3%	33.1%
	Lake	McHenry	Will	Regional	Illinois	National
Population 18 to 24 years	69,734	28,904	66,491	771,633	1,289,453	26,700,519
Less than high school graduate	12,343	2,717	10,506	152,136	216,628	4,806,093
	17.7%	9.4%	15.8%	19.7%	16.8%	18.0%
High school graduate/GED	24,477	11,908	22,873	265,649	408,757	9,051,476
	35.1%	41.2%	34.4%	34.4%	31.7%	33.9%
Some college or associate degree	26,499	10,897	26,729	323,667	533,834	10,546,705
	38.0%	37.7%	40.2%	41.9%	41.4%	39.5%
Bachelor degree or higher	6,485	3,382	6,317	96,611	130,235	2,296,245
	9.3%	11.7%	9.5%	12.5%	10.1%	8.6%
Population 25 to 34 years	94,833	42,212	107,478	1,226,196	1,771,816	39,905,599
High school graduate or higher	79,944	39,088	97,160	1,056,416	1,545,024	34,278,909
	84.3%	92.6%	90.4%	86.2%	87.2%	85.9%
Bachelor degree or higher	33,666	14,521	34,071	450,713	579,384	11,492,812
	35.5%	34.4%	31.7%	36.8%	32.7%	28.8%
Population 35 to 44 years	110,294	52,930	109,030	1,329,049	1,877,625	43,892,631
High school graduate or higher	98,713	49,331	99,435	1,161,611	1,659,821	38,230,481
	89.5%	93.2%	91.2%	87.4%	88.4%	87.1%
Bachelor degree or higher	48,530	18,631	37,942	496,948	627,127	9,540,222
	44.0%	35.2%	34.8%	37.4%	33.4%	29.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Educational Attainment