Youth development without real work experience is a recipe for failure.

Susan P. Curnan

Employability –

Employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities [youth] possess, the way they present those assets to employers.

Hillage and Pollard, 1998

WHAT IS THE BRANDEIS ACADEMY?
The Brandeis Academy is a capacity-building opportunity that will be delivered on site in our seven-city network and through an online community of practice, training consultancies, investor roundtables, and a resource library. It is designed for leaders, managers, and investors (business, philanthropy, nonprofits, and government) to:

- elevate a shared cross-sector commitment to and investment in youth employability
- effect changes in the way people at all levels think about, plan, and implement employability programs for youth
- build or enhance quality summer youth employment programs as part of a year-round youth employability development system
- integrate work, learning, and youth development by leveraging actions at the intersection of youth development, workforce development, and education
- create sustainable youth employability systems in their communities by leveraging funding and other resources

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THE ACADEMY IDEA?
The Center for Youth and Communities developed a Practitioner’s Academy (PA) in 1986 to establish a national network of professionals dedicated to bringing together youth development, education reform, and workforce preparation. About 4,000 educators and employment professionals took part in professional development seminars and institutes during the next several years. The PA, conducted in more than 75 locations across the country, ranged from one to four days and focused on theoretical and practical subjects related to youth development, education, and workforce preparation. The model consists of activities that translate lessons from personally meaningful contexts: adult learners share their experiences and build vision, technical, and political skills through active, hands-on problem solving addressing real issues they face.

In 2012, the seven cities involved in the Walmart Summer Youth Employment Initiative agreed with the Center team that a similar strategy would not only have short-term positive effects in helping managers and practitioners to serve young people better, but also have longer-term positive effects on our efforts to increase national attention to youth development, education, and work readiness. Now, in 2013, the Center is updating the PA idea and launching it as The Brandeis Academy – Leadership for Action, Innovation and Excellence in Youth Employability.

ACADEMY GOALS
The Brandeis Academy utilizes a combination of methods to foster:

- knowledge and resource development and dissemination
- peer-to-peer learning and exchange
- skill-building, with a focus on the technical, vision, and political skills necessary to implement quality youth employability programs and be a successful change agent and cross-sector system-builder

Emphasis is on knowledge exchange and skill-building around effective practice, leveraged cross-sector action, and sustainability.
Our communities cannot afford another silent decade. We need to talk about the economic consequences, the youth development challenges, violence, other negative impacts if we do nothing. We need to organize further public/private ventures and bring more people to the table. We need to make the case and build the infrastructure – and that includes investing in the leaders, managers and those working directly with our youth.

Next steps for our network should build on the effective practices highlighted in our cities and these convenings:

- Determine employment competencies with employer involvement
- Implement support services that make a difference, e.g., anti-violence intervention strategies, trauma-informed supports and opportunities, effective case management
- Align employability development/workforce development with education system
- Develop or strengthen existing partnerships with post-secondary education institutions for academic credit & credentialing
- Get private sector more involved/Build up unsubsidized employment opportunities for youth
- Create professional

-Voices from the Brandeis Youth Employability Network

ACADEMY SESSIONS

Session 1: Investor Engagement Meeting. Designed as a part of the Investor Roundtable, this session will focus on strengthening employer and investor knowledge regarding the status of youth, making the case for year-round employability systems, and discussing the role of employers in a youth employability system.

Session 2: System-Building and Partnership Meeting: Leveraged Action for Impact. Designed for leaders, administrators, and managers from public, non-profit, philanthropy, and private sectors, this session will engage participants in structured conversations and decision-making processes exploring ways to strengthen current partnerships that lead to more effective local summer and year-round employability system.

Session 3: Tactical Managers’ Meeting: Enhancing and Sustaining Summer Youth Employment Programs and Strengthening Year-Round Connections. This session is designed for leaders and managers most directly involved in planning and implementation of the summer program from both the lead agency and key providers. Session goals will include identifying and generating ideas for 1) enhancing and sustaining current summer youth employment program; 2) creating or fine-tuning a vision of summer that is competency-based with year-round connections; and 3) overcoming obstacles faced when connecting to year-round activities in more deliberate and sustainable ways.

Session 4: Effective Practice: The Nuts and Bolts of Implementing a Quality Summer Youth Employment Program Linked to a Year-Round Employability System. Designed for those whose work impacts young people most directly, including worksite supervisors, youth counselors, mentors, case managers, job coaches, career advisors, as well as year-round practitioners, teachers, managers, and others, whose efforts are or should be connected with the summer program. Multiple sessions will provide opportunities for dialogue, practical advice and training on key aspects of delivering quality summer programs. Menu of topics include: creating quality learning-rich work experiences, structuring work-based learning projects, assessing youths’ competency levels, incorporating reflection opportunities for youth, incorporating positive youth development principles, and understanding the role of case management and research on youth motivation.

OTHER ACADEMY STRATEGIES

1. Maintain Web-based Resources and Connections, including (1) an Online Resource Library featuring policy and practice briefs, a Curriculum Toolkit for Effective Practice and Quality Implementation, a synthesis of findings from the three-year Walmart Foundation investment and other Brandeis knowledge and experience in youth employability development over the past 30 years; resources with embedded links to key publications, organizations, networks, and initiatives; and (2) learning opportunities, discussions, and peer-to-peer sharing through an online Community of Practice and peer-to-peer consultancy opportunities.

2. Disseminate Innovations, Promising Practices, and Resources