



**House Democratic Policy Committee**  
**Testimony by Kevin Appnel, Executive Director, York County Alliance for Learning**  
**January 31, 2019**

My name is Kevin Appnel and I'm the Executive Director of the York County Alliance for Learning (YCAL).

YCAL is an intermediary organization that connects educators and employers to engage students in career education and development. YCAL's roots can be traced back nearly 30 years ago when, in September of 1989, the top executives of Pfaltzgraff (William Simpson) and The Wolf Organization (Tom Wolf) incorporated "The York County Business Education Partnership." The mission of this organization was "to increase support for and improve the quality of education within York County, Pennsylvania and certain adjacent areas." Following the strategic merger with similarly-aligned organizations and programs such as the First Capital Compact and School to Work Program, the organization officially changed its name to the "York County Alliance for Learning" in December of 2000.

Today YCAL offers a variety of programs that directly or indirectly engages students in career education and career development. Indirectly impacting students, YCAL offers various programs for educators to utilize that will empower them to advance career development in their students such as the Innovation Grants program, The Career Education and Work Standards Symposium which is hosted at York County School of Technology, or the Educator in the Workplace Program which is offered in partnership with the LIU and Wilson College.

YCAL also offers programs that directly reach students such as our offering of over 30 different Career Exploration Programs, which are hosted by a business industry partner. These events are held at various dates and times throughout the school year. YCAL also offers the Career Readiness Education Workshop (CREW) which is hosted at HACC's York Campus which allows for Career Education and Essential Business Skills development. As mentioned multiple times in previous testimony from Mr. Palisin from the Manufacturers' Association and Mr. Schreiber from the York County Economic Alliance, YCAL also facilitates Manufacturing Days Tours, which celebrated Manufacturing Week by arranging school groups to tour various facilities in our service area.

With a built-in network of school representatives and the mission of connecting employers and educators, it was a natural fit that YCAL explore the offering of a Pre-Apprenticeship Program. In October of 2015 YCAL began exploring potential program offerings and meeting with various industry representatives to explore how to best serve the needs of the work force, the students, and how to feasibly offer such a program. After several exploratory meetings, and consultation with a group called Penn United in Butler County who was already successfully running a Pre-Apprenticeship program, YCAL was approached by Deb Rohrbaugh who, on behalf of the Kinsley Education Center, offered to be the pilot program host of a Construction Pre-Apprenticeship.



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YCAL worked collaboratively with Deb from Kinsley and several school representatives in developing a curriculum which included 80 hours of online learning modules to teach students basic blueprint reading and basic shop math while allowing them to stay in their home districts. Students also attended a 10-hour OSHA certification course provided by Kinsley and, most importantly, 4 full-day practicum sessions which would culminate with the completed construction of a scaled single-story home standing at just under 6-feet tall, including full roofing and siding. With this curriculum in hand YCAL successfully applied for a \$10,000 grant from the York County Community Foundation to cover the online module access costs for a 2-year pilot program. In addition to this, YCAL applied for and received \$5,500 in expense reimbursement funding from our local Workforce Investment Board, South Central PA Works.



With the funding secured and Kinsley's commitment to provide staffing and instruction to these students, YCAL was able to begin soliciting applications for the launch of the program in the 2017-2018 school year. On September 12, 2017, YCAL and Kinsley welcomed 14 Seniors to the opening session and ribbon-cutting for the Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Program. The students were welcomed by Bob Kinsley and given their own personalized Kinsley hard-hats and a starter tool kit, which was a gift to them from Kinsley Construction.



In April 2018, 13 of the 14 students successfully completed the program. Out of those 13, 9 pursued a career in the trades, the majority of which applied for, and were accepted into, the Kinsley Apprenticeship program. Out of the remaining 4, 3 chose to pursue higher education and 1 stated his intention to enlist in the Air Force, even going so far as to ask Deb if she would consider hiring him after he is finished his service. It should come as no surprise that she gave him a resounding "Absolutely!"



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First-Year Apprentice Students earn \$13.38/hour at Kinsley. It should be noted that this first-year wage is subject to overtime pay when available and offers structured increases as experience is earned. It should also be noted that while students are learning this trade, they are paying \$0 in tuition. The ability to forego the debt typically associated with various levels of post-secondary education coupled with the earnings received as they train, will put these individuals at a great advantage over their peers by age 22 and long thereafter.

With the success of this pilot program in construction, YCAL began to explore additional Pre-Apprenticeship offerings. In this current 2018-2019 school year, in addition to continuing the Construction program with Kinsley, a Manufacturing Pre-Apprenticeship was launched in partnership with the Manufacturer's Association of South Central Pennsylvania. This program currently serves 20 students from 7 different school districts. Plans have already begun to offer both Construction and Manufacturing in 2019-2020 and will add an Electrical Pre-Apprenticeship in partnership with York Electrical Institute, the training arm of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 229. This Electrical program is currently running a pilot program with Red Lion School District.



Pre-Apprenticeship programs offer an array of benefits to those seeking to enter the workforce or, in some cases, seeking reemployment opportunities. As mentioned before, many Apprenticeship programs offer a career pathway with little to no financial outlay on the part of the Apprentice, allowing them to “earn while they learn”. The positive financial impact on the apprentice is multiplied by the way this system is set up.

On the side of the employer, Pre-Apprenticeship programs require a lesser commitment and outlay of resources to engage with potential Apprentices. Data shows that employees completing a Pre-Apprenticeship program are more likely to successfully complete an Apprenticeship program, showing a retention rate of 80%, nearly 25% higher than the national apprenticeship retention rate (Source: <https://www.dli.pa.gov/PreApprenticeship/Pages/default.aspx>).

Both of these benefits set the table for us to engage new members of the workforce and place and retain workers into industries that have a current, and growing, need for additional labor.



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This position has granted me many opportunities to engage with employers and schools. What I hear often from employers in the industries I've mentioned is a plea for schools to stop pushing 4-year college to all students. I can honestly say that I am unaware of a school district that is currently operating under this mentality. What I have observed is that schools, are offering more opportunities for students to explore various opportunities that may not require traditional 4-year schooling. Chapter 339 and Future Ready PA initiatives have certainly helped foster this environment.

Students are also not averse to pursuing the line of work that a Pre-Apprenticeship pathway offers. They enjoy working with their hands and being a part of creating something. In addition, the generational tendencies of impatience make the Apprenticeship model attractive because they can start earning now, and not delaying their earnings for 2, 4, or more years while earning a degree.

With the employers, the schools, and the students not resistant to this type of work, you may be asking "where is the barrier?" The barrier, in my experience, is far too often the parents. The parents likely grew up within a system where higher education was more affordable and jobs such as manufacturing were painted as being dirty, repetitive, and offering little room for advancement. These are stigmas we know to not be true. Still, parents are key influencers in a young adult's career choices and their perception is their reality.

The more work we can do to engage parents and build awareness for the opportunities and benefits that Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships offer will allow us to address the workforce needs of these industries. I truly hope that the funding will continue so that programs such as these will continue to flourish and open up new opportunities for our future workforce. I thank you all for your time and consideration on this matter.



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