

Northside Seed Grant

Evaluation of HIRED Vocational Programming at Broadway High School, Minneapolis

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HIRED

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EVALUATION REPORT

**CURA/HIRED EVALUATION OF HIRED VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMING
AT BROADWAY HIGH SCHOOL, MINNEAPOLIS**

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes an evaluation of HIRED and Broadway High School's vocational training partnership program for pregnant and parenting teens, conducted in Fall of 2007. The primary aim of this evaluation was to describe the experiences of former students and determine the effects of this program on their lives after school. Methods for collecting data included document reviews, interviews, focus groups, and a survey. Of 79 former students on the mailing list, 15 participated in either in-depth interviews or a focus group. Qualitative data was collected and analyzed to uncover and illuminate similarities of experience and significant patterns. Although there were no clear patterns in job, education, or MFIP cash grant status, a few significant themes emerged from the qualitative data, including: participant knowledge of and distinction between HIRED and Minneapolis Public School offerings, a connection between HIRED involvement and goal specificity, highly positive views of HIRED caseworkers, identification of a connection between HIRED coursework and "real life", and an overwhelming interest in helping professions.

Evaluation Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this evaluation study was to better understand the experiences and outcomes of pregnant and parenting teens who attended HIRED's programming at Broadway High School. The school is located on Broadway Avenue in the heart of North Minneapolis and provides traditional high school courses as well as parenting classes, childcare, mentoring and counseling support, and intensive case management by on-site social workers. HIRED and Broadway staff have worked together to develop courses for students focusing on different careers. The focus of these electives is to expose students to various career choices, provide basic vocational training, and trigger participants to plan for their occupational futures.

The population of interest is pregnant and parenting teens formerly served by the HIRED/Broadway program. In drawing our sample, we targeted individuals who participated with HIRED programming at Broadway High School in the last three years (2006, 2005, and 2004). These parameters were chosen because the program has only been in existence for 5 years—we wanted to target participants who started in the program once it was well-established, yet have been out of school long enough to comment on their lives since Broadway. The final mail/phone list of 79 potential evaluation participants included only those whose address or phone number could be identified with school files or MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program) data.

The evaluation questions identified were:

- 1) What are the life experiences of former participants in a teen pregnancy/parenting intervention program in the years since attending?
- 2) To what extent did the vocational education aspect of this program affect participants' experiences in the years since attending the program?

- 3) What effects, if any, did program attendance have on participants' long-term outcomes?

Methodology: Data Collection

Using Broadway High School's records, we identified those who participated in the program in 2004, 2005, and 2006 with a last-known address or phone number. The 79 individuals on this original contact list were invited by letter or phone call to participate in either a focus group or interview. The University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board designated this evaluation as exempt from documentation of written consent for both interviews and focus groups, because all participants are over 18 and questions are not sufficiently invasive. Great care was taken, however, in the invitation letter and phone interview/focus group protocols to inform participants of risks and benefits, explain and ensure confidentiality, fully describe the study, and check for understanding. As an incentive, potential participants were offered a \$5 Target gift card for agreeing to participate and an additional \$20 gift card once they completed an interview or focus group. Incentives were delivered to participants via mail immediately after completion of the required step in the process.

One focus group was held at Broadway High School on November 29th, with an evening meal and child care provided. Four participants RSVP'd for the focus group, but only 2 attended. I led the focus group with participants while a fellow researcher observed the focus group session and took detailed notes. Immediately after the session, I debriefed with my fellow researcher, reviewed her notes, and wrote my own notes of the experience. The first phone interview was conducted on November 21st, with the final interview scheduled for December 17th. A semi-structured, open-response format was utilized in both the focus groups and

interviews; questions aimed to elicit participants' experience, recent life history, opinions and feelings. For phone interviews, I took detailed notes during the conversation and noted overall impressions after the interview. Thirteen participants were interviewed via phone.

Finally, a brief online survey was sent to employment caseworkers who work with former Broadway students. The employment counselors were asked to comment on their experience with Broadway students, sharing their perspective on attitude, people skills, and preparation for work and adult life. The counselors were also asked to compare the Broadway students in their caseload with clients who did not attend this program. Of the five counselors who were identified and sent the survey, four responded.

Methodology: Data Analysis

Data analysis methods focused on capturing common experiences and presenting a picture of former Broadway students that “rings true” given the program’s theory of action and relevant prior research. I analyzed the qualitative data from focus groups, interviews, survey responses, and observations during and after data collection to produce a rich, detailed description of the program and outcomes. Data was read several times, coded, and categorized based on emergent themes—the interpretation of links between categories was continuously checked against the literature, conceptual framework, and the program managers’ experiences with the program and expectations of the study.

I started by reading and re-reading all interview transcripts immediately after the interviews, completing relevant memos, and noting any emerging, overarching pattern codes or “meta-codes.” This process became more important as I collected more interview data, as large patterns began to emerge. Using these pattern codes, I went back through transcripts and noted

all individual chunks of text that seemed to fit that theme. Once all fifteen interviews were complete, I went back through the transcripts and noted the major pattern codes which were occurring most often, and analyzed these chunks of data and their codes for possible categories, subcategories, and connections.

Figure 1, below, is an example of a cross-case matrix, which I used in my analysis to explore patterns and themes. In this example, I have assigned levels to HIRED programming involvement and caseworker involvement, and also noted the number of HIRED courses taken for ten of the interviewed former students. A quote or piece of descriptive information from each participant is included in the cell to illustrate why a level was chosen (note—names have been changed). I then added current job and education information to the matrix, detailing each participant's current situation and assigning a level of job satisfaction for each. Finally, I ordered the participants according to their level of involvement and courses taken, from high to low. I constructed this matrix to help me understand whether there was a relationship between involvement in the program and outcomes in later life.

Although the matrix does not show clear-cut or obvious, fail-safe correlations (for example, some highly involved students have great jobs and have pursued higher education, but not all), I do see a pattern in the level of work shown and specific planning for “a better life,” whether it be for school or for a high-paying or satisfying job. These patterns, along with other significant findings are discussed in the Findings and Discussion section to follow.

Finally, an online survey was distributed using Survey Monkey to HIRED and Eastside Neighborhood Services employment counselors who were identified as having former Broadway students in their caseloads. The data collected was analyzed using Survey Monkey’s basic analysis tools, which calculate and graph survey responses. Responses to open-ended questions were collected and analyzed using qualitative data analysis procedures described above.

Findings and Discussion

In interviewing former students 1-3 years out of school, we were interested in some specific outcomes, including job status, education status, additional children since attending Broadway, and MFIP cash grant status. For each outcome, there was no definite pattern and the participants were split. The following table shows the breakdown of participants by these factors:

Job status:	9—employed 6—unemployed
Education status:	4—attended post-secondary 4—currently applying 2—working on GED 5—no
Additional Children:	8—yes 7—no
MFIP cash grant:	7—yes 8—no

The remainder of findings from this evaluation are major themes and categories of responses based on qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and the caseworker survey.

1) Participants drew clear distinctions between HIRED and “regular” curriculum

The majority of former students interviewed mentioned field trips led by HIRED staff to fill out job applications or visit schools. These experiences seemed to stick in the minds of participants, and they not only found them useful and fun, but attributed them to the HIRED program. I discovered that some students drew a sharp distinction between HIRED programming and their regular, Minneapolis Public Schools curriculum. In cases where participants added value to these distinctions, HIRED programming was rated much higher in terms of quality, applicability, and memorable, positive experiences. For example, Brittany spoke very highly of HIRED programming and what she learned from guest speakers and field trips. When asked what could be improved, she said HIRED didn’t need to improve anything, but that,

Broadway should pay more attention to some of those girls. The girls don’t really pay attention in the regular classes. They drop their kids off at daycare and don’t go to class, and nobody even notices. They should pay more attention...They should emphasize more that you got to show your child more than that.

Likewise, Tyra noted:

Broadway needs to help students with class work more, or they won’t want to come. Some teachers don’t want to help... it’s just paperwork, paperwork, paperwork, and they won’t help you with it... That’s about Broadway, though, not HIRED. HIRED’s the best. If I could go back to HIRED now I would. I miss school, though, I really do.

Brittany's and Tyra's comments illustrate a line drawn by participants between HIRED and Minneapolis Public Schools' programming at Broadway. This is a significant finding, first, because it was unexpected—I expected students to lump all programming into the overall Broadway curriculum. The evaluation team took great care in creating interview questions and protocols to build in explanations and prompts to distinguish HIRED courses and caseworkers. I found, early on, that this explaining and prompting was rarely necessary, and that former students were eager to point out and discuss the differences between HIRED and their “regular” curriculum, teachers, and school experiences. This tells us that students have a greater awareness of who is delivering what services than we may have realized. Stakeholders in this evaluation are interested in demonstrating the value of HIRED programming in the schools to funders and policy-makers; the fact that students recognize and can speak to HIRED's role and value in their education may help make the case that these programs are valuable to the students. They certainly would notice if they “went away,” and see the benefits of the program separate from and above those of the typical high school curriculum.

2) A high level of involvement in HIRED may affect specificity of goals 1-3 years out of school

Another important finding, which needs to be further explored, is the connection between involvement in HIRED's programming and outcomes 1-3 years out of school. Although the level of involvement in HIRED programming does not correlate to clear-cut differences in employability or post-secondary educational attainment, there seems to be a pattern in job and educational outlooks and plans. Take, for example, the difference between Hillary, who had Medium-Low involvement in HIRED programming, and Audrey, who described High involvement across the board. At first glance, we see that Hillary has a job, while Audrey does not, and neither are

currently in school. One could jump to the conclusion that Hillary's outcomes are slightly better than Audrey's, and that level of involvement did not make a difference. Looking more closely at their situations, however, we see the following:

Hillary—is starting a temporary full time job at a packaging factory in the next week, but does not know the name of the company or what her job responsibilities/tasks will be. She has no plans for school and does not have a diploma or GED. Not sure what she wants to do, but will maybe go back for training in cosmetology or nursing assistant someday.

Audrey—is not currently working, because she is having a hard time finding employment and child care on her Indian Reservation (she moved back there 6 months ago to be closer to family). Previously had a contract-type (project-by-project) job doing computer and communications work for a pharmaceutical company. She has her high school diploma and plans to enter school (community college) in the next year for early childhood development/education. She hopes to use this degree to work in education for Indian charter/reservation schools in the future.

Though Hillary has a job and Audrey does not, there is clearly a difference in their level of job skills and job potential, specificity of current and future goals, and the level of education acquired and desired. Furthermore, Audrey could speak to specific barriers to success which prevented her from having the job she wanted at the moment as well as her plan for overcoming them. This pattern—of involvement with HIRED programming correlating positively with greater detail and level of planning for work and school—is evident across the 15 former students I interviewed.

3) Participants were highly complimentary of HIRED caseworkers/employment counselors

Participants' comments about and assessments of HIRED caseworkers/employment counselors were overwhelmingly positive, except in the few cases where there was little contact with a HIRED caseworker (in these cases responses were neutral). The participants not only

remembered the names of their counselors, but enthusiastically described the many ways in which their counselors assisted them. The following are quotes from participants which illustrate the value they placed on these counselors:

Becky. Oh, yeah. I still talk to her here and there. That's my buddy. She's my sister's counselor now... She gave me so many resources—jobs, transportation, childcare. There was so much that she did. She talked to me about relationships—what's good for me and not good for me. What's good for my kids and not.

Becky—she was really cool. She helped me to no end, that woman. If she could jump off a bridge she would. She went to no limits for me... You need someone when you're there, you know, going through hard times. And she was there for me.

I had Becky... She wouldn't allow a person to give up and if you did she made it so you felt bad and then you'd say ok let's go. If you were looking for something, she could find it with somebody's help. She knew the resources. She was cool to me.

Chico. I remember when he took me to all the places. I didn't have transportation, daycare, nothing, so I thought that was very helpful... my caseworker, he was great.

I remember Chico a lot. They took me to all the events, even came and got me. Gave us rides. They were offering food left and right, too. Free meals are important, 'cuz most of the time I had no food at home.

I had Becky – she kind of pushed me a little hard to get me to where she thought I should be. She pushed when I wasn't motivated. She'd keep in touch and stay on me. She'd set up meetings for applications and would always come by...There was nothing she could have done better.

Yeah, he was helpful. He helped with everything I needed and finding resources for me...You know how some people, if you ask them something and they don't know they just say they don't know and that's it. Chico, he'd say 'I don't know, but I'll find you a resource to help you.' And he'd find that for you.

4) Participants articulated a connection between HIRED programming and real-life skills

Almost all participants were able to make at least one connection (some made many more) between the HIRED training at Broadway and their current or future job performance and

potential. They recalled specific examples of being taken on field trips to colleges and workplaces, participating in mock interviews, learning how to dress and behave, and practicing applications and resumes. Once one or more of these experiences was/were recalled, every participant could comment on how that experience had or could help them get a job or perform well in a job. For example, Rosa noted, “It’s helped with my typing and phone etiquette, things like that... For a better job it helps ‘cuz I can say I’ve taken this course and I’m familiar with the programs I’ll need to do the job.” Alecia drew an even more specific link from her courses at Broadway to her ability to get a job:

I was in Office Assistant and Beyond High School... For one, I had had jobs before Broadway, but after completing the classes I was able to write a resume and interview. I applied for a job and the boss, she was like, ‘how did you learn to do this? I’ve never seen a 17-year-old with a resume like this!’ You get called back more when you know those skills. Now I help my friends write their resumes.

While we don’t know whether or not all participants can and do apply these learned skills regularly, it is clear that they recall the training and understand how it can and should be applied. Since preparing pregnant and parenting teens for the world of work is the main goal of HIRED/Broadway’s partnership, this finding is significant and warrants attention.

5) Participants expressed interest in the helping professions, particularly healthcare

Finally, I found an overwhelming theme in the current and future professions chosen by former students. Participants’ overwhelmingly exhibited interest in the helping professions. Of the four participants who received training after high school, all four were in a health care-related field. All fifteen participants interviewed indicated a helping profession as at least one of their desired current or future careers. The careers/interests mentioned included: nurse, nursing

assistant, pharmacist, pharmacy technician, doctor, personal care attendant, social worker, early childhood educator, teacher, and foster parent. Given that only one student reported taking the “Exploring Health Careers” course at Broadway, and that the other HIRED courses offered (Culinary, Retail, Office Assistant) do not relate to the helping professions, this finding could indicate a mismatch between courses offered and student interests and future paths. It may also help explain why many participants had low involvement in or memory of HIRED courses, but Medium or High involvement with caseworkers and the program as a whole. As more data emerges from future evaluations, I would suggest further exploration of this pattern and consider recommending a shift to these topics in HIRED course offerings.

6) Caseworker survey responses were mixed, but may be useful in program planning

The main goal of conducting a survey of employment caseworkers who have worked with former Broadway students was to illustrate 1-3 year outcomes from a different perspective. In our initial plans, it was estimated that 15 caseworkers could be identified and respond to a survey, comparing former Broadway students to their other clients; however, only 5 employment caseworkers were identified in the end (4 of whom completed the survey). This number of responses is too small to identify any significant patterns, and further, the responses we did receive were mixed. As a result, I do not think it is wise to draw any conclusions from this survey. Instead, I have included the responses to open-ended questions as an attachment for the program director for use in program planning discussions and program improvement efforts.

Recommendations

First, I feel that participants’ descriptions of the difference between HIRED and “regular” curriculum, programming, and teachers—coupled with improved job and education outlook outcomes—could be used to build a case for program continuance, funding, and possible growth. Though we were unable to collect sufficient data from MFIP files and employment counselors, future evaluations should add these important sources of evidence for the program’s value.

In terms of program improvement recommendations, an emerging pattern shows a potential mismatch between types of courses offered by HIRED and student interests, career goals, and future paths. If this pattern continues to be prevalent after additional evaluations, I would recommend that program leaders revise or rework the HIRED curriculum to include more topics and skills related to education, healthcare, and social services. It may also be useful to examine in which current courses students most often enroll, and how the course selection matches their interests and potential. If a mismatch is evident here as well, additional counseling in course selection or greater access to courses may be prudent recommendations.

Further recommendations may be determined as the evaluation findings are discussed with program managers at HIRED and Broadway High School.

Employment Counselor Survey BHS/HI RED

1. How long have you been an employment counselor?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year		0.0%	0
More than 1 year but less than 3 years		25.0%	1
3 years to 4 years		0.0%	0
More than 4 years		75.0%	3
	<i>answered question</i>		4
	<i>skipped question</i>		0

2. As you think back over your recent clients, to what extent do you remember working with clients who are former Broadway High School students?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
I clearly remember working with Broadway High School clients		100.0%	4
I have a vague memory of working with some Broadway High School clients		0.0%	0
I really cannot remember Broadway High School clients, and/or cannot distinguish them from other clients		0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>		4
	<i>skipped question</i>		0

3. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. When we say "the average parenting teen client" we mean parenting teen clients you have worked with did *not* attend Broadway High School.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
In general, the Broadway group of clients are on time for scheduled appointments with greater frequency than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.00	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients show up for appointments with greater frequency than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	66.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.33	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients have greater compliance with their employment plan than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	66.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.67	3
In general, the Broadway of clients is more difficult to work with than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.33	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients is more likely to take responsibility for their own behavior than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.33	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients have a better attitude than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.00	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients is more likely to take responsibility for their own future than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.33	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients is more likely to have a successful employment future than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.33	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients come to you better prepared for work and life than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.67	3
In general, the Broadway group of							



clients show more evidence of career exploration than the average parenting teen client.	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.33	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients show more evidence of job seeking skills than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.67	3
In general, the Broadway group of clients show more evidence of job preparation activities than the average parenting teen client.	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.00	3
	<i>answered question</i>						3
	<i>skipped question</i>						1

4. Please feel free to comment on any of your ratings given above.	
	Response Count
	2
	<i>answered question</i>
	2
	<i>skipped question</i>
	2

5. Do you believe that (as a group) former students of Broadway High School are/were different from other parenting teen clients? If yes, how were they different?	
	Response Count
	3
	<i>answered question</i>
	3
	<i>skipped question</i>
	1

6. Without using any names, can you comment on a specific instance when a former Broadway High School student exhibited a behavior or attitude that made you think her future would be brighter than that of an average parenting teen client?		Response Count
		2
	<i>answered question</i>	2
	<i>skipped question</i>	2

7. Without using any names, can you comment on a specific instance when a former Broadway High School student exhibited a behavior or attitude that made you think her future would be more challenging than that of an average parenting teen client?		Response Count
		3
	<i>answered question</i>	3
	<i>skipped question</i>	1

8. To what extent was the Broadway counselor helpful to you regarding your work with Broadway students?			Response Percent	Response Count
Very helpful			66.7%	2
Somewhat helpful			0.0%	0
A little helpful			0.0%	0
Not at all helpful			33.3%	1
	<i>answered question</i>			3
	<i>skipped question</i>			1

9. Please comment on your working relationship with one or more HIRED counselors at Broadway.		Response Count
		3
	<i>answered question</i>	3
	<i>skipped question</i>	1

10. Please add any additional comments you have on former Broadway students or HIRED/Broadway programming here.		Response Count
		1
	<i>answered question</i>	1
	<i>skipped question</i>	3