

WORKFORCE READINESS



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

EVOLUTIONS After School Program (Evoking Learning and Understanding Through Investigations in the Natural Sciences) focuses on exposing students—in particular students from low-income families—to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as well as providing high school students with professional development opportunities. Through a collaboration with local schools, students also earn school credit for successful participation in the program.

A typical day for students

During the school year, EVOLUTIONS' students participate in afterschool classes once a week. Ninth and tenth graders engage in science trivia, develop museum exhibitions, learn skills such as Photoshop and video production, review local colleges, and discuss STEM field majors. Older students research and develop a self-driven exhibit project to be displayed in the museum. Sci.CORPS, the Science Career Orientation and Readiness Program for Students, takes place over students' weekends and summers, where older students teach museum visitors about exhibits, such as ancient Egypt and mammals, or intern at Yale's research laboratories.

Outcomes

During the 2016-17 school year, EVOLUTIONS' evaluation found an overwhelming majority of students reported the program increased their knowledge of science related careers (85 percent); understanding of the connection between high school academics, college academics, and careers (87 percent); and teamwork and communication skills (85 percent and 80 percent).

EVOLUTIONS

New Haven, Conn.

120

Average number of students served during the school year

70%

Students from low-income families

Main funding sources:

- ▶ Grants
- ▶ Foundations

Challenges

Employers 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

EVOLUTIONS works to provide students with the tools to make decisions about their futures. A large part of its programming involves exposing students to careers outside of their everyday experiences and developing skills students will need in the workforce, such as communication and presentation skills. Students also learn job skills that are applicable to many fields, from the complexities of resume-writing to essentials like punctuality and shaking someone’s hand. Students build public speaking skills through mock interviews, scientific debates, and presenting research findings to the public. Operating within the museum, students learn about a range of careers in and out of the science field, including research scientists, graphic designers, and exhibit technicians.

For many students, EVOLUTIONS is a means to a first job. After completing their first year, students become eligible to apply to Sci.CORPS—a paid work opportunity within the museum that entails approximately 45 students annually educating the public about natural history and approximately 15 students interning at Yale research laboratories.

Program history

In an effort to improve the relationship between the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History and the New Haven community, EVOLUTIONS was founded in 2005 to increase New Haven youth and families’ access to the museum. Beginning with six students, the annual number of students served by EVOLUTIONS now totals 120.

Recommendations

for incorporating workforce readiness:

- ▶ Make sure if students have their first job in your program, they feel respected and part of the workplace community.
- ▶ Provide students with quality mentors that come from a similar background, showing them that their goals are obtainable.



**Afterschool
Alliance**

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