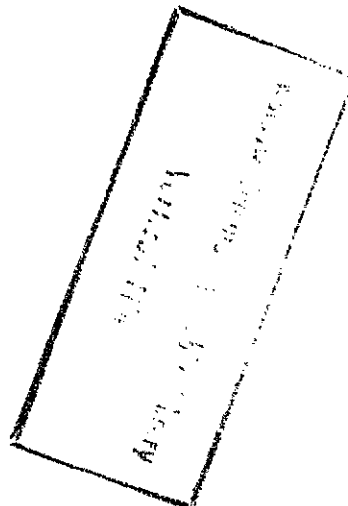


High School Co-op Programs: Are Local Businesses  
Utilizing This Valuable Resource?

Kosciusko Leadership Academy  
White Paper Project

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## I. Introduction

*"I want to work for a company that contributes to and is part of the community. I want something not just to invest in. I want something to believe in."*

*Anita Roddick*

*Founder and Managing Director*

*Body Shop International*

As local businesses compete in an increasingly global economy, one of their main concerns is the supply of a workforce with the skills needed to become productive employees. The burden of producing this workforce falls in the hands of our educational system. Many times our schools are critiqued on SAT scores and how many students are going to college. On the other hand, when you consider that on average about 40% of graduates from county schools are entering the workforce directly after graduation, local business need to make sure there are programs available to those students not involved in the college preparatory curriculum. Currently, the program that allows the most involvement from businesses in the community is the Co-op Education Program run through each county school's Vocational Education Department. This program allows students to work part time during the school day in industries in which they are interested, thus giving

students much needed experience and training they could not get from our school systems. In turn, businesses are able to train potential full time employees in a manner that will allow them to be a productive member of their work force. Obviously, for such a program to work there must be a lot of cooperation and participation from both the schools and the business community. This paper will focus on the needs for such a program, the organization of the program and the degree of success of the program.

## II. Area Needs For Labor

The success or failure of any Co-op Program for both students and businesses is largely dependant on its ability to satisfy the area needs for labor. Local businesses must clearly define their needs and work with Co-op Education administrators to tailor or customize the appropriate programs. This type of interaction between business and schools does occur, but it cannot affect change immediately. Schools and businesses must be able to forecast changes in labor requirements to be able to effectively plan and administer Co-op Programs.

A recent survey by Dr. James Segedy of the Department of Urban Planning at Ball State University gives some preliminary data on the labor needs of Warsaw and Kosciusko County. When one compares a ten year period ending in 1980 to a ten year period

ending in 1990, there appears a large increase in technicians and support jobs, protective services jobs (police, fire) and agricultural and forestry jobs. These increases are true to the local community, but are not reflected state-wide. It is for this reason that co-op programs must be customized to the local community. Further research shows the local community leading the state average in areas of manufacturing, communications and public utilities, retail, entertainment and recreation. All of this demonstrates the uniqueness of our community and gives area schools a foundation for planning the future of Co-op Education Programs.

### III. Business Perspective

The Co-op Program, because it services the student and local business, has different goals for each. The advantages for the student are different from those for local businesses and both can be met within the Program.

The Co-op Programs have distinct advantages for local businesses. These advantages or benefits stem from the very features which are appealing to the student. As was mentioned previously, the workforce of today is changing rapidly. Businesses have the opportunity to expose the workers of tomorrow to the requirements of the changing workforce today. The training that is required today by businesses may take several years for implementation

into programs in the educational system. Co-op programs have the ability, through the direct work experience, to compress this lead time to zero.

The Co-op Program can serve as an extended interview for the employer. This can be used to evaluate the work ethic of the employee and their willingness to improve themselves and their benefit to the company. Employees can be trained for specific jobs which will be available to them after high school graduation. All of this can be achieved very economically.

The employer recognizes the training involved. The employee must recognize their lack of experience. With these facts in mind, wages are negotiated based on the ability of the employee and are usually around that minimum set by the state.

#### IV. Student Perspective

Students opting for the Co-op Education curriculum can be grouped into several categories. There are students who are certain they do not want to continue their education after high school. The Co-op Program gives them training and experience in their chosen field which in turn gives them a marked advantage over the untrained job hunter with no experience.

There is the student who is uncertain about education after high school. The Co-op experience may serve to create a work

experience foundation from which the decision for the future can be made. The student may choose to continue working, continue on with advanced vocational training, or proceed on to a two or four year college degree. This decision would be intensely more difficult and costly without the Co-op experience.

The final scenario is one where a student has chosen a career which requires both work experience and training as well as schooling beyond high school. The student can obtain both experiences while in high school. This will provide a foundation for the student by giving him/her the experience of juggling studies and a job. With an estimated 65% of Co-op students obtaining employment in their trained area, it is clear that the Co-op program can fulfill the needs of the student in all of these areas.

#### V. Co-op Programs in the County

Each of the county high schools has a vocational director in charge of the Co-op Program. George Hathaway of Whitko High School and Cindy Kimmel of Tippecanoe Valley High School are in charge of the students that are funneled through Warsaw High School's Career Center and participate in the Industrial Cooperative Education (ICE) Program run by Bob Huffman. Wawasee High School's program is run by Pat Huber. The two programs have similarities, but are also quite different.

The Wawasee High School Marketing and Distribution Co-op is beginning to become a more popular option for students. Students are required to take an Introduction to Marketing course during their Junior year as a prerequisite to the Senior Co-op Program. During the Co-op, the number of hours at work is determined by the "training station" with two exceptions: (1) Students are to work a minimum of 15 hours a week to receive credit and (2) The maximum number of hours can be changed if it is interfering with their academic success. The following are some of the most active stations from communities in the Wawasee School System:

Dana Corporation	Syracuse
Mutual Federal Bank	North Webster
The Mail Journal	Milford

The training stations fill out evaluations each 9 weeks. This will determine the students grade along with their 3 hours of credit. Teacher coordinators visit stations and aid in placing students and act as a communication contact between student, school, and business. The Marketing and Distribution Program can handle 20-25 students a year currently. This represents about 10% of an average graduating class.



## VI. Focus on Warsaw ICE

Warsaw High School's Industrial Cooperative Education Program, as you might guess, is quite a bit larger and more sophisticated than Wawasee's program. As was mentioned earlier, Whitko High School and Tippecanoe Valley High School participate in the program as well. In the 1993-94 school year, Warsaw has 110 students participating. Whitko has 29 and Tippy Valley has 14. Students must also take prerequisite classes in the ICE program to qualify for a Senior Co-op. For example, those interested in machine shops must take machining classes at the high school during their Sophomore and Junior years. During their junior year, students must fill out applications to the ICE program. They then must interview with a program coordinator who will attempt to place them with a local business. The student must then interview with that company before being permanently placed. Students then begin working their senior year. They are required to work 15 hours a week and keep a weekly log.

The ICE program is broken down into 5 specific areas each run by a coordinator. They are shown below.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Coordinator</u>
Marketing	David Raft
Business/Secretarial	Jim Folk
Consumer/Homemaking	Judy Egolf
Industrial	Joe O'Brien
Agriculture	Dave Adisson

Each coordinator is responsible for businesses and students in their respective area. The following are some of the more involved businesses: Biomet, DePuy, Creighton Brothers, Monteith Tire, Millers Merry Manor, Lake City Bank, and Kosciusko Community Hospital. Many of these larger companies employ multiple students in the program. There are a number of small companies involved as well like, L & L Coin, WAWC 103.5, Raab Soft Water, and Craig Welding and Mfg.

#### VII. Business Participation

The success of the Co-op Program centers around its ability to meet the needs of both the student and local businesses. This success is directly related to the amount of involvement from both areas. Too many students and inadequate business participation creates the scenario of a largely unskilled,

untrained workforce entering the workplace. This results in lower productivity from the worker at a cost to the employer and the community. This situation often creates feelings on the part of both the employer and the employee that the educational system is lacking proper programs for those individuals who choose to enter the workplace after college. Once again, a rational review of the situation leads to the conclusion that participation from businesses and the educational system is crucial to the success of the local community. It is beyond the scope of this paper to pass judgment on the success or failure of the Co-op Education Program. It is however pertinent to look at some statistics concerning the program.

As of January 1, 1994, there were 500 members in the Warsaw Chamber of Commerce. While the majority of these businesses are from Warsaw, there is representation from Syracuse, Fort Wayne, South Bend, Atwood, and many other outlying communities. From this list, 9% or 45 businesses are currently participating in the Co-op Program. There are an additional 12 businesses not included on the chamber list which participate for a total of 57 area businesses. There are currently about 150 students participating in the Co-op Program. This means there are on average approximately 2.6 students at each participating business. With this limited statistical information, no conclusions regarding success or failure of the programs can be made. Some general conclusions can be made with reference to

these numbers. First, there is adequate business participation in the program because those students seeking placement in the Co-op Program achieve placement. The second and more important conclusion stems from the fact that there are multiple students at many area businesses. This means that, of those businesses who do participate, they see the value of the program and sponsor many student employees. This is very positive, indirect feedback for the program and should seriously be considered by businesses not participating.

An indirect often overlooked way for business's to participate involves sponsorship of students who enter state and national contests in areas such as Marketing, Machine Shop, and Agriculture. Students are in need of funds for supplies and projects as well as funds for travel to the various contests. Businesses can obtain advertising by the "sponsored by" technique and generate good will in the community for their dollars donated.

#### IV. Conclusion

It has been discussed previously that the success of the Co-op Program depends on the participation of local business and the educational system. The current system appears to have adequate cooperation from both of these areas and is successful in administering to both the student and local business. The system

also appears to have the key ingredient of dynamism. In other words, the Co-op Programs cannot be static in their approach to administering. It must be in a constant state of evaluating adjusting, and adapting to the changing needs of the community which do not necessarily reflect those of the state or the country.

Students considering the job market after high school should be encouraged to test their talents through the Co-op Programs. Participating local businesses obviously see the benefit of the programs and they should continually be encouraged to continue their participation. Other local businesses should take note of the Co-op resource as presented in this paper and should strongly consider participation through student placement or sponsorship.

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## KOSCIUSKO COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL CO-OP PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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WHITKO HIGH SCHOOL	GEORGE HATHAWAY	219-723-5146
TIPPECANOE HIGH SCHOOL	CINDY KIMMEL	219-353-7031

