

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School



BACKGROUNDER

Mission

The mission of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School is to provide out-of-school youth in Philadelphia with the broadest range of tools, supports and opportunities available to become self-sufficient, responsible and productive citizens in their community. YouthBuild Philadelphia's unique, one-year program provides a second chance for young people to earn their high school diplomas and learn vital job skills through rigorous academics, vocational training and community service.

History

In 1991, YouthBuild Philadelphia's founder, Taylor Frome, recognized the urgent need to deal with the issue of out-of-school youth in Philadelphia. The dropout rate in the city's public schools hovered at 50%, and there were few job-training opportunities available for young people without diplomas. With the support of a group of community representatives, Frome started YouthBuild Philadelphia, a program based on a model created by Dorothy Stoneman.

The program began in 1992 with 28 students. A year later, sixteen students had earned high school diplomas. Over the next years, YouthBuild Philadelphia grew into what is now a 200-student per year program. The school was incorporated under the name "Philadelphia Youth for Change" as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 1993, and was awarded charter school status in 1997.

With 15 years of experience, YouthBuild Philadelphia is one of the most successful YouthBuild programs in the country.

Program Components

A portion of the curriculum is addressed in the classroom with an intensive academic course load including Math, Language Arts, Science, Integrated Humanities, Life Skills and Career Development. Academics are balanced with hands-on job skills training through one of three vocational tracks including construction, technology and nursing. Students in the Construction Training Program learn hands-on skills at a worksite as they rehabilitate abandoned houses for low-income homebuyers. Students in the Technology Training Program learn software and hardware skills as they refurbish old computers to donate to local organizations and schools. Students in the Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) Program are trained in the essential skills of CNAs, and spend a portion of time working with residents of a long-term care facility.

During the year, all students engage in community service classes and service projects as part-time members of AmeriCorps. Full-time AmeriCorps members serve as community service coordinators and mentors, and are integral players in the lives of the students.

Support

A Case Manager is assigned to each student in order to assess and coordinate solutions for issues such as: short- and long-term goals, mental and physical health, substance abuse history, sexual health practices, family, relationships,

educational background, employment history, financial issues and legal issues. Each student also benefits from a staff mentor that provides day-to-day guidance and academic support.

Transition

The Transition Services team prepares students for full-time employment and post-secondary educational programs through career/college prep classes (twice-per-week), career workshops, job shadowing, job and college fairs, college visitations and internship programs. In addition, the transition services team provides assistance with driver's license testing, SAT preparation and registration, and college application/financial aid form completion.

Through a developed alumni network, graduates are encouraged to return to YouthBuild Philadelphia to consult with transition services staff and utilize the school's career and college resources.

Affiliations

YouthBuild Philadelphia is an affiliate of YouthBuild USA (www.youthbuild.org), a national organization dedicated to helping low-income young people become educated, productive adults. YouthBuild Philadelphia is a flagship program of more than 200 YouthBuild programs, nationally.

YouthBuild Philadelphia is a member of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) (www.ahsi.info), a network of organizations committed to creating educational opportunities for young people for whom traditional school settings have not been successful.

Agency Support

The program draws strength from a broad base of support including city and federal agencies, local and national foundations, corporate sponsors, and community-based non-profit organizations. Major supporters include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), AmeriCorps National and AmeriCorps State Direct via the Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Citizen Service (PennSERVE), the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Philadelphia School District.

Successes

Since its inception in 1992, YouthBuild Philadelphia has been producing consistently impressive results. More than **1,300** young adults have completed the program, **86%** of which earned their high school diplomas. In addition to transitioning successfully to post-secondary schools, apprenticeships, and meaningful employment opportunities, our students have:

- rehabilitated more than **65 houses** for low-income families;
- refurbished more than **2,500 computers** to donate to community organizations and schools;
- provided more than **4,000 hours of care** to individuals in long-term care facilities; and,
- provided **thousands of hours of community service**, annually.

Contact

For more information about YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, call (215) 627-8671, e-mail info@youthbuildphilly.org or go to www.youthbuildphilly.org.