

PLAN SLATE BELT



- Bangor • East Bangor • Lower Mount Bethel • Pen Argyl •
- Plainfield • Portland • Roseto • Upper Mount Bethel •
- Washington • Wind Gap •

Education and Workforce Development Roundtable Notes

From the Plan Slate Belt interactive Roundtable held on March 4, 2020. The Roundtable discussions are intended to add detail to the draft goals outlined in the fall 2019 *Issues and Opportunities Report* and assist with policy and action development. Working Goals include:

1. A balance between growth and preservation.
2. A high regional quality of life.
3. Efficient local and regional governments.
4. A resilient transportation and infrastructure network.
5. A strong farming community.
6. A prepared student body and workforce.

Table 1

- ❖ Question 1: What does it mean to have a good education?
 - Exposure to a variety of educational options
 - Need problem solving skills
 - Continuing education for non-commuters: good public transit is an issue
 - There is a demand for skilled labor, but the area doesn't have the workforce with the needed skills
 - Funding is an issue: smaller districts can't meet the needs of a diverse population
 - 18-24 year olds move away quickly. Difficult to get to community college.
 - Keep kids here for schooling and they'll stay in the community
 - Charter schools take away from funding of public schools
 - Schools don't offer a lot of electives for students
 - Charter/cyber schools offer a lot more variety
 - Not enough students going into the trades. Need to educate students and parents about the trades. Kids are encouraged to go to college instead.
 - Career Institute of Technology (CIT) is not the answer. Students will take industrial arts classes but not vo-tech
 - Pen Argyl school district eliminated industrial arts classes, but should consider bringing them back
 - Workforce Board had an employment building skills pilot program in Allentown, which was shared with all schools
 - Businesses would like schools to work with them. Need a scripted co-op program with employers. Kids need to be interested though. Use social media to make students aware of opportunities.
 - Bangor School District had a work apprenticeship program

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- ❖ Question 2: What are desirable jobs for your current and future residents?
 - Workforce Board has a multi-employer registered apprenticeship program. They can work with Slate Belt students.
 - Virtual bank tellers are up and coming. Need technical skills. There are a lot of positions in India—cheaper labor and they are already training people. That’s not happening here.
 - Need to focus on science and technology for the next generation. There are 3 major pharmaceutical labs nearby, but they can’t fill lab tech jobs.
 - We need to keep kids here, we want industry here. Have a lot of small businesses, but need something larger.
 - Need the workforce to attract businesses, business comes to talent
 - Highlight the area’s work ethic, strong upcoming workforce, quality of life
 - Big demand for machine techs – need inventory of skills in Slate Belt, might be surprised at the available talent
 - Need to instill work ethic in kids, need to motivate kids in a different way than their parents. Need to find out what are their interests/passion.
 - Need small/medium businesses so if they close down, it won’t hurt as much. Need diversity of businesses
 - Match kids up earlier (16-17 year olds) with businesses. Most kids are working in the service industry.
 - Workforce Board has summer program that matches students with businesses. They’ll make a match anywhere.
 - Lower Mt Bethel is an agricultural township growing corn/wheat. Next generation does not want to farm. Need to get them to think of agriculture in a different way (e.g., organic farming, hydroponics). Find farmers to motivate kids.
 - What are the jobs of the future? We don’t know. But 40% of the lowest income people in the Slate Belt don’t have internet capabilities. Need high speed internet.

- ❖ Question 3: What types of skills are critical to the Slate Belt workforce?
 - Kids need financial training
 - Need critical skills: how to communicate, occupational skills. Basics of reading, writing, math and good work ethic.
 - All populations need training
 - Workforce Board will test on reading, applied math, maps/charts to determine what type of training is needed. Also, they provide testing to determine interests. They are trying to open a location in the Slate Belt. There is money available for training.
 - Need to match up interests with jobs
 - Industry that allows people to age in place – will be important over next decade

Table 2

- ❖ Question 1: What does it mean to have a good education?
 - Need to be a good communicator: reading, writing, speaking, digital communicator
 - Math skills, computer & technology skills
 - 339 PA State Program – all PA schools required to have counseling plan
 - Good education leads to better opportunity
 - Ability to ask the next question
 - Vo-tech education is as important as college degree
 - Generation gap, challenges between “old school” and “new school”, parents

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- No problem with education, have education but don't have a market to use
 - Lack of opportunity in the Slate Belt, can't keep kids here
 - No examples to follow
 - Robotics club is very exciting to kids
 - American History is missing
 - Exposure to variety of advanced education programs important for college prep
- ❖ Question 2: What are desirable jobs for your current and future residents?
- Desirable jobs need sustainable incomes, sustainable jobs outside Slate Belt
 - Hard to say what skills are available to say what is desirable, can't project the need
 - There are waiting lists to get into CIT programs. CIT serves 5 districts.
 - Need increased technology/logistical training
 - Manufacturing is top down – creates other jobs
 - General manufacturing seems to be a need
 - Today's kids have no respect for machinery, manufacturing is not "dirty"
 - Spread out work opportunities creates need to travel to work
 - County, state and federal go to population and create/improve economic development
 - Techo-Bloc is desperate for employees
 - Education is experience and experience is education, formal education does not provide kids exposure to skills
- ❖ Question 3: What types of skills are critical to the Slate Belt workforce?
- Need adult education programs. Adult CIT training ended – no interest. Potential for adult re-training.
 - Manufacturing – all kinds
 - Overall major disconnect between education and vocation. Bridge the gap between students and industry to link kids to what is here in the Slate Belt
 - Educate the parents that not everyone needs to go to college

Table 3

- ❖ Question 1: What does it mean to have a good education?
- Opens doors
 - Can weather economic downturns
 - Education is not just a degree: practical vs. traditional higher education
 - Older people/generations have life education, but perspectives of younger people is negative: need mutual education
 - On the job training is an invaluable asset, generational sharing
 - CIT is an excellent avenue to make a decent living
 - Base education is lacking in math, writing, communication skills: too much emphasis on standardized tests
 - Critical thinking skills are lacking: logical thinking is a lost art
 - School district challenges: funding; low caliber of students; need involvement from employers to keep up with ever-evolving needs/technical skills; state sets the curriculum, causing a delay in contemporary training

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- Displaced workers with a long career looking for work, but jobs have become so specific that it's hard to find a job; need flexibility in job descriptions. Also problematic for people entering the workforce.
 - Younger workers are job-hoppers and generally have a two-year tenure
 - Workers should show initiative to get jobs
 - Need more than hourly wage jobs, which are more prevalent in Slate Belt
 - Kids are not independent: a lot of guidance from parents
 - Need technical education
 - Warehouse proliferation, but not high paying jobs: what's going to happen to them in 10 years?
 - Look at graduation rates, PSSA scores, how many people go to college
 - Idea that there are no jobs: market to youth
- ❖ Question 2: What are desirable jobs for your current and future residents?
- Don't know the nature of jobs. What's next? How can you guide kids?
 - Entrepreneurial skills for the small business owner
 - Slate Belt-specific jobs: eco-tourism, natural resources, history, culture, heritage. Build off of what the Slate Belt has instead of reinventing the wheel to keep visitors here. Organize jobs, training around eco-tourism.
 - What is the Incentive to keep the best parts of what they have: farmland, open space and environmentally sensitive land?
 - Need to focus on farming as an industry (breweries, wineries, hemp). Who will be working on farms in 20 years? How do you showcase farming as a desirable job?
 - Lack of public transportation is an issue in getting to jobs
 - Maybe it's ok that jobs are not all here, but residents need to know where to find them
- ❖ Question 3: What types of skills are critical to the Slate Belt workforce?
- Apprenticeship programs on farms (e.g., work in a vineyard)
 - Farm incubator like seed farm
 - Ag is science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)
 - Co-mingled technical and classroom education: hands-on training
 - Curriculum development in the workplace
 - CIT programs: technical skills

Anything missed? Think of something after the roundtable discussion? Please email Sue Rockwell, srockwell@lvpc.org, with your thoughts.