



JOBS OUTLOOK 2016
Rev. Stephen E. Tucker
President, JOBS Coalition

Employment, Collaborations and Elections ... Oh My!

Much of the country is poised to see who will nab the Democratic and Republican nominations for president. The JOBS Coalition, too, is keeping close watch. And while the candidates volley on everything from foreign policy and health care to immigration and gun control, we are focused on an issue that has significant impact across the labor force.

By Rev. Stephen E. Tucker

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MAKING STRIDES: JOBS COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS



While raising awareness of workforce challenges and potential barriers to employment, the JOBS Coalition and its members have combined their resources and industry expertise to achieve the following results:

- Built the Bellevue Resource Center, a program facility serving the hard-to-reach, hard-to-employ, and returning ex-offender populations. The Center was completed on September 30, 2003.
- Guided the creation of the Construction & Design Academy at Cardozo, providing District students access, training, and preparation for careers in the construction industry and trades after graduation. The Academy officially opened in September 2005. □



A CUT ABOVE The ribbon-cutting ceremony at IDEA PCS with (from left): DCSCTF COO Carol Randolph, Miller & Long Chairman John McMahon, D.C. Council Member Yvette Alexander, IDEA Principal Lanette Bacchus and IDEA PCS Board Chairman David Owens.

TRADING SPACES: Move to IDEA PCS Breathes New Life Into Academy of Construction & Design

A massive poster stretches across the side of the school. On it, are the words signaling a new direction in learning: “Build your career at IDEA with the Academy of Construction and Design.” It’s the “sequel” for a program aimed at bringing skilled trades to young people throughout the District, and particularly to those living in Ward 7.

By Arnesa A. Howell

“This Academy, thank you for moving over to Ward 7,” said D.C. Council member Yvette Alexander (D-Ward 7), hailing IDEA Public Charter School as an ideal pick for relocating the program formerly housed at Cardozo Education Campus. “We need options for our students here. You can still go to college and have an additional skill that works.”

Alexander joined IDEA, D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, D.C. Public Charter School Board, and city government leadership Nov. 4, 2015, to unveil the Academy of Construction & Design in its new home. “This is the sequel, and we’ve got some

new players,” declared Shelly Karriem, director of the Academy of Construction & Design.

Starting in ninth grade, students enrolled in this career and technical education program are exposed to nontraditional classroom skills in electrical, carpentry, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning. Instructors teach students technical studies in math and science, and other areas that come in handy in the field of construction.

“We have to offer every option to our young people,” continued Alexander. “These are skills that will last for a lifetime – it’s exciting the potential this Academy will give you.”

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Employment. It's the single issue that has widespread impact on individuals and families, regardless of class, race or age. But it's the chronically unemployed, underemployed, underserved and returning ex-offenders who face some of the most difficult challenges when it comes to finding and maintaining employment. Therefore, it's vital for local governments across D.C., Maryland and Virginia to collaborate so there is synergy between jurisdictions when it comes to workforce development. The JOBS Coalition is anxiously waiting for the finger-pointing among the presidential contenders to stop so the spotlight can be trained on issues that matter, and we hope employment gains traction and rises to the top.

While looking forward, we must also reflect on our past year's accomplishments. In 2015, the JOBS Coalition continued to keep the future of our youth a priority. We supported the re-launch of the Academy of Construction & Design at IDEA Public Charter School, located in the Deanwood neighborhood of Northeast Washington, D.C. The move provides even more opportunities for students to participate in hands-on projects, and we're excited about working with a supportive staff that's equally enthusiastic about this fresh approach to learning. As part of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, the JOBS Coalition worked hard to expand the ACAD program so more students would have access to alternatives to traditional education. At IDEA, students are already exposed to learning architecture – and we welcome that addition to the Academy. Putting greater resources towards the futures of our children will result in increased workforce opportunities for our youth long term.

Also, we remained – and will continue to be in 2016 – tireless advocates for successful re-entry of the formerly incarcerated. We will be reviving the ex-offender forums to be more inclusive, with representatives from across the District and surrounding areas.

Last year's release of more than 6,000 federal prisoners (the biggest one-time mass release of U.S. inmates on record), brings increased attention to the lives of formerly incarcerated men and women. The Justice Department's decision to cut harsh drug sentences over the past three decades to reduce overcrowding has helped fuel the conversation on criminal justice, arguably putting pressure on government, businesses and communities to provide both job training and jobs for returning citizens. We need to strengthen re-entry strategies for those returning home to their communities and families so they

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A BRIGHT 'IDEA' Students turn out for the grand opening celebration of the Academy of Construction & Design.

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The Academy's move expands the program by offering instruction in architectural design, which is already part of IDEA's curricula. Furthermore, in anticipation of the program's arrival, the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation and its partners transformed 10,000 square feet of space at IDEA from six outdated classrooms into state-of-the-art trades classrooms and a construction lab, according to Justin Rydstrom, head of school at IDEA. "Estimates are that this is probably worth a half a million dollars in renovation, for which IDEA did not contribute anything," Rydstrom said. "We couldn't be more thankful for that, [and] to the Foundation and their leadership, led by John McMahon at Miller & Long."

Real World 101

Students dressed in crisp Junior ROTC uniforms greeted a steady flow of guests entering IDEA Public Charter School in Northeast. Ahead of the official ribbon-cutting ceremony, attendees filled seats of the "renewable energy" classroom – in eyeshot of one of the technical classrooms filled with specialty equipment, like an electrical workstation. The crowd also included students, many who are being exposed to the skilled trades for the first time through this program.

Anthony McGill, enrolled in the Introduction to ACAD class, is still deciding what area of the trades he will pursue. In the meantime, he's enthusiastic about the hands-on training the program will provide.

"We get to work hands-on, that's the best part," said McGill without hesitation. Although



ON DUTY, ON BOARD IDEA Principal Lanette Bacchus gives kudos for the Academy opening more doors to students.

his first love is football, he chose to enroll in the program as a safety net that could give him a jumpstart in work experience after high school. He's also anxious to get started on the Youth Farmer's Market, expected to launch this spring. There, Academy students are planning to grow and sell fresh fruits and vegetables to the surrounding Deanwood community. They will also provide fresh food alternatives to the school. Another of McGill's goals: to work on the micro-house, which on this day, is parked in the school's back lot.

"We're gonna put it together and build it with all my peers. That's very exciting," said McGill, 15. "I'm just looking forward to how it's gonna look when it's finished."

"That's who we're after, a kid that age to get their head in the game," explained John McMahon, president of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation. Working together with IDEA and its staff – both of which have been "all welcoming" of the Academy into its academic fold – brings together complementary disciplines that are mutually beneficial, particularly for the students. "What's unique here are the existing programs – the [Junior ROTC], the architectural

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TINY HOUSE, BIG DREAMS
ACAD students have completed the exterior of the micro-house project. Next step (inset): building out the interior, which a group tours after the ceremony.



that they can take to be successful in life,” said Owens, standing a few feet from the micro-house. Participating in a trades-centric program will personally and professionally benefit students, according to Owens, who himself has a background in engineering. As students work on the tiny house and prep to launch the farmer’s market, they will be able to follow projects from concept to implementation, and experience real world applications. And if they graduate and decide to pursue a trade as a formal career, he continued, they’ll ultimately have an opportunity to make “a very, very nice salary.”

Teaching ‘Grit & Stamina’

But career and technical education in the District’s schools hasn’t always had an easy path. Lanette Bacchus, principal of IDEA, acknowledged that construction and the skilled trades have historically had a negative connotation because of their link to blue collar jobs. But that perception is changing, marking a “new day.”

“There are other skills that students can possess and be professionals. There is value in working hard and being part of rebuilding the community,” explained Bacchus. She stressed that the Academy will not only teach students the technical component of a career, but also “grit and stamina” in an age of instant gratification.

She shared that a key part of incorporating the program into the school’s offerings included educating parents on the meaning of ACAD and the diverse opportunities its program brings. The school informed parents by sending out memos, meeting with them during orientation, and explaining the true meaning behind having a career and technical education. “It means your children can have a career if they choose to, they can go and get technical training or they can still go to college if they choose to – and they might use the skills they’re building along the way to help support what they’re already doing in their core academic program,” Bacchus said. “It’s a paradigm shift for our students and our parents.”

Education Renovation

The new space will also house the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy, a construction apprenticeship program for adult learners. “This city went in the wrong direction when it de-emphasized apprenticeships,” said Scott Pearson, executive director of the D.C. Public Charter School Board, during the ceremony, noting that apprenticeships, trade schools and career academies are essential to the college and career discussion.

Together, these two academies will continue to provide hands-on learning experiences aimed at sharpening minds inside – and outside – the classroom. For some, that will translate into a career where they can support themselves and their families. And for others, like 18-year-old IDEA student Diamond Buford, it’s about reaching for more than what she could have imagined: “It’s a chance to see career possibilities coming to light.” □

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design – it’s like putting on two gloves that totally fit,” said McMahon.

And IDEA leadership agrees. David Owens, chairman of the IDEA Public Charter School Board of Trustees, is among those who’ve embraced this concept for learning that aims to benefit both students and community. For one, said Owens, adding the Academy aligns with IDEA’s overall mission, which includes preparing students for opportunities after high school – college, military and now the chance to learn marketable trade skills.

“This will [add] a vital part to our school, to give our students three different pathways

STUDENTS FIRST Ward 7 Council member Yvette Alexander says: “We have to offer every option to our young people.”



JOBS Coalition Pathways

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too have a chance to live productive lives while contributing to the local economy.

As part of our mission, we bring together faith-based partners, construction industry leaders and community-based organizations to address core issues like workforce development. Ultimately, our goal is to move towards solutions. The JOBS Coalition sees the MGM National Harbor resort casino project as such an opportunity. I've spoken with Logan Gaskill, vice president of Human Resources for MGM National Harbor, and he's open to coming into our communities to talk about filling the 3,600 positions created by the project. Also, we've talked with the People for Change Coalition – a group representing nonprofits and minority businesses across the Washington, D.C.-area,

Baltimore, and Prince George's, Montgomery, Anne Arundel and Charles counties – and they have expressed strong interest in bringing the Academy to Prince George's County.

The JOBS Coalition is in a unique position to broker such conversations, and we are anxious to be a catalyst for change.

We intend to meet with as many D.C. Council members this year as possible, including David Grosso (I-At Large), chair of the Committee on Education, to articulate our goals. And, we look forward to building a relationship with the D.C. Workforce Investment Council.

We must continue in 2016 to keep our government officials sensitive to these issues to keep the momentum going on the work we have done, and work that we will do in the coming year. □

JOBS COALITION PROMISES

- Provide opportunities for District residents to secure gainful employment.
- Remove barriers that prevent meaningful employment.
- Provide educational and training opportunities for all District residents interested in pursuing careers in various industries and trades.
- Work toward the creation of a comprehensive, fair, and more open system of training and hiring the underserved, unemployed and returning ex-offenders.
- Ensure that the training and educational skills being taught are relevant to the job market of today and tomorrow.
- Engage elected and appointed officials to support legislation and maintain appropriate oversight to ensure gainful employment for District residents, including the underserved, unemployed, and returning ex-offenders.

JOBS COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

We will work together to develop a long-term strategy that creates an environment where aspiring District residents will have unprecedented opportunity to succeed. We strive to create a fair and open system, supported by government, industry, employers and the education and faith-based communities, which seeks to properly train today's apprentices while making an unparalleled commitment to educating students and others not yet in the workforce.



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