

WorkforceGPS

Transcript of Call

Education Industry Focus Call For Apprenticeship State Expansion and State Apprenticeship Expansion Grantees

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LAURA CASERTANO: Thank you for joining us today. Welcome to the education industry focus call for Apprenticeship State Expansion and State Apprenticeship Expansion grantees.

This call is moderated by Megan Scott and Erin Duckett with Maher & Maher. The call provides information about what is driving expansion of the apprenticeship model in education, the benefits and challenges for education apprenticeships, and promising models and partnerships that are working in the sector.

ERIN DUCKETT: Great. Well, thank you for joining us this afternoon for this industry focus call on education. My name is Erin Duckett, senior analyst with Maher & Maher, and I will be your moderator today for this awesome discussion that we have planned.

Please feel free as you're logging in to introduce yourself in the chat so we all know who's with us today. Let us know where you're from, your organization, if there's anyone listening with you as well.

Like I mentioned, our topic today is education, a real critical industry sector across the U.S. that's right now experiencing a vast array of both disruption and opportunity related to many things, shifting skill needs, the pandemic, the economy shifts because of the pandemic, et cetera.

I want to start with just a couple of statistics on the sector, and I know that all of the speakers are going to touch on some of these areas as well.

First of all, workers in the early childhood education field earn nearly 40 percent below the median hourly wage of workers in other occupations. Childcare workers are 95.6 percent female and disproportionately women of color. In 2018 there was an estimated shortage of 100,000 teachers in the K through 12 system. However, FY 2019 data show 226 active registered apprenticeship programs in the educational services sector.

There's a few occupations that are apprenticeship programs in this sector, including agriculture, education instructor, early childhood or pre-K teacher, teacher's aide, childcare development specialist, and counselor. In addition, there's a few other occupations that are found in schools that are apprenticed, including cook and building maintenance and repair.

Just a little bit of information on sort of what's going on in the states in this sector before we turn it over to our speakers.

In 2019, Pennsylvania announced the first registered apprenticeship program for K through 12 teachers. The Apprenticeship to Mastery Program for Public School Teachers. AMP is a two-year nontraditional apprenticeship program for K through 12 public school educators. We'll put a link in the chat to an article that really gives you -- Mike just put it in. Thanks, Mike -- more about that program.

And through our research and understanding, we found at least eight states are currently offering an early childhood education registered apprenticeship program, some of which are degree

apprenticeships, some are not. Each program varies in its administration and its offerings and the expectation of apprentices.

For example, some include two semesters of college-level coursework, while others award a CDA or associate degree following completion. We also have some information on that we're going to put in the chat so you can read more about some of those programs.

Washington also offers four occupations of registered apprenticeship for public schools. If you have been following our series, you know that we're doing the next on public sector apprenticeships. We're hoping to feature them on that call, but in the meantime, here's some more information in the chat about that program.

So today, I'm joined by a few experts who are going to talk about their work in apprenticeship expansion and what they're seeing in the education sector.

How we're going to run this call is similar to our other industry calls. We're going to ask all of them a few questions. They're going to give their perspectives and insights into what's happening in the sector and the landscape through apprenticeship.

At the end of that time, we really want to hear from all of you. What questions do you have, not just for the speakers in general, but what challenges are you facing in expanding into this sector through your grant and through -- in your state? So that's sort of the flow that we'll follow.

I'm going to introduce the speakers now. First, from Pennsylvania, we have Cheryl Feldman and Jim Reese. Cheryl has devoted her career to creating innovative education and training programs in health care, human services, and early childhood education as major drivers of a regional workforce and economic development strategy.

She worked for 30 -- 43 years for the District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund, which is a labor management education trust fund and workforce intermediary with over 50 contributing employers partners and served as the executive director for the last 18 years.

Jim has over 17 years of experience as a workforce development professional and has spent more than three years as an apprenticeship and training field representative for the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, who administers the state's registered apprenticeship program.

We also have two speakers joining us today from Indiana. We have Matt Presley and Jason Graves. Matt is the regional director in the Indiana Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship. And prior to this position, he served for 15 years in public education as an English teacher and college and career readiness coordinator.

He primarily worked with senior students to develop employability skills through a project-based learning course he created focusing on career exploration and work based-learning.

Jason is a regional director for Southern Indiana, and prior to his current role, he worked for 16 years in secondary education as a teacher, administrator, mentor, and CTE coordinator in the Louisville Southern Indiana area.

We are so glad to have this great group of speakers with us today. And at this time, I'm going to turn it over to Megan Scott, also a senior analyst with Maher, who's going to lead the discussion with our panelists.

MEGAN SCOTT: Thanks, Erin. First, I'd like to have each of you tell us a little bit more about your work, focusing on key strategies, approaches, and effective partnerships that are really driving your work in the education sector. We're going to start with you, Cheryl.

CHERYL FELDMAN: Well, thanks for having me. It's an honor to participate. I would like to start out by talking about how we designed our early childhood apprenticeship program. We created the Pennsylvania ECE Career Pathway Registered Apprenticeship Program approved by the Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Council under the auspices of labor and industry.

And currently, we have 181 apprentices, 60 high school pre-apprentices, 83 employers, and 8 higher eds as part of one statewide sponsorship with one set of universal standards. The sponsorship is under the training fund, the labor management fund that I was executive director of.

I just retired recently at the end of December, and it was really an innovation to work with the State Apprenticeship and Training Council to create this one sponsorship under which we could then organize regionally to operationalize the apprenticeship program.

From a statewide perspective, the goal is to create both a state system for ECE apprenticeship as well as a regional level system with an industry strategy to increase diversity and equity by creating an accessible career degree path, a teaching pathway for frontline ECE workers.

From its inception in Pennsylvania, what we did is we figured out that we needed to design a program that would truly be accessible to workers that previously didn't have access to a degree pathway.

So what we did is we went about developing the statewide apprenticeship model. We created an infrastructure for that in partnership with Jim Reese, who's here with us, and his colleagues. There was a centralized RAPIDS system created, regionally based, in order to register apprentices and employers into the apprenticeship system.

We also worked very closely with our Office of Child Development and Early Learning to embed the apprenticeship into its career pathway vision. And both Labor and Early Childcare have provided tremendous support with funding to implement the project.

In addition to the statewide level, we worked regionally to identify six intermediaries with six regional hubs around the state. And the graphic here shows how we organized these hubs. The intermediary could be a workforce board. We have a workforce board, we have two employers,

we have higher eds, and we also have our labor management partnership that serves as that intermediary organization.

And within that region then, that intermediary is responsible for organizing the employers, the ECE employers, the higher ed institutions that are going to offer the related technical instruction. We also have identified mentoring organizations, school districts that have worked with us, the business community, in some cases including the Chamber of Commerce, a really comprehensive partnership, which is key to the success of that regional program. And the intermediary then is the glue that operationalizes the apprenticeship standards that are approved at the statewide level.

And then on the next slide, if you could -- yes -- I wanted to share the vision for the teaching pathway itself.

Again, I think pretty uniquely, we created the whole pathway as part of this apprenticeship program. That is offered both as a college credit apprenticeship, as well as a high school pre-apprenticeship.

And then that leads directly into an associate degree apprenticeship, which is offered by, at this point, several community college partners around the state. And then that articulates into a bachelor's degree apprenticeship with teaching certification pre-K to four. And right now, we have one four-year college degree program with teaching certification as part of the apprenticeship, but there are several other higher eds that are working on completing their appendix A's and getting those approved.

And wrapping around this pathway then are supports for the apprentices, career coaching, case management, mentoring of the apprentices and their coaches, and the whole college navigation system, a cohort-based college navigation system. So I'll pause there, and you'll learn more about it as we go through the rest of the discussion. Thank you.

MS. SCOTT: Thanks, Cheryl. Jim, will you tell us a little bit about how the state was -- is -- still is supporting these efforts?

Jim Reese: Oh, good. I knew I'd have a problem with the mute button. So what I basically do is I provide mostly technical support for 1199C and their six -- the six hubs. Hopefully, a seventh one is coming up so we're going to have the whole state covered.

I basically provide support to each of the intermediaries, the higher education. That's about it. I make things try to run smoother. I've been working with them full-time now for a little bit over a year, and I'm surprised at the growth that a program like this has really experienced.

Right now, Cheryl mentioned about the pre-apprenticeship programs. We're getting -- trying to get one in each hub. As a matter of fact, we're going to have a couple in one of the hubs. They'll be getting their paperwork to me very shortly. So we're going to have a continuous pipeline of interested high school students in early childhood education.

And one other thing I want to mention is I knew nothing about early childhood education. You just drop your kids off and everything else. This really works. I know more than I should about early childhood education because of Cheryl. So -- but thank you.

MS. SCOTT: Thank you, Jim. It was exciting to hear that the work is continuing and you're -- you all are continuing to have growth in this workforce sector.

Jason and Matt, can you tell us about your work in Indiana?

JASON GRAVES: Absolutely. So, again, I'm Jason Graves and the southern regional director here in the state of Indiana. And we really are just -- we just launched a couple of pilots, and we're pretty excited about working with education and really making that an apprenticeable occupation.

If you don't mind going to the next slide, our plan really has been to increase apprenticeship around the state. So, Matt, do you want to talk about some of the things that we've done?

MATT PRESLEY: Absolutely. So just as a -- first of all, thank you to Maher & Maher for the opportunity to present and to share some of the great things that Indiana is doing, especially related to education here.

So our office was established in 2018 to expand work-based learning -- comprehensive work-based learning across our state. As regional directors, we are located and work in the communities in which we serve. And so we're familiar with our regions, and we're working to make connections between industry and education providers to expand those apprenticeship opportunities.

We've developed our own State Earn and Learn program, which is a state level apprenticeship, which you'll see more of today. And that is -- has all the same components of an apprenticeship. It serves as a pre-apprenticeship, and in some cases now, we're finding sort of this push towards taking our SEALs, our State Earn and Learns and turning them into registered programs. And that's -- in particular in education, I think there's the opportunity to do that.

We're also charged with building and expanding registered apprenticeship programs, and we're implementing a systems-wide approach in order to make that happen. So we have 12 regional workforce boards in Indiana. All of them are DOL registered intermediaries, and we're registering occupations and pushing out opportunities for employers to utilize our workforce boards to help facilitate apprenticeship expansion in our state. Next slide.

MR. GRAVES: And this is kind of our basic format here. We really have a couple of different phases and a couple of different thought. So looking at having these workforce boards or the school corporations kind of be the owners of this, or even, as I'll show you a little bit, multiple school corporations, certainly in rural communities, coming together.

Really what we want to do is really a try to recruit and attack three groups. One is high school students using these Indiana State Earn and Learns, getting high school students those dual

credits, industry certifications, whether that be the CDA or the parapro, using dual credits from our local community college, Ivy Tech, which is all over the state of Indiana, and really getting those students some paid work experiences inside the school and even outside the school to really get them ready and really taking those kind of grow your own programs and instead of sending them away to school, keeping them there and using them in these corporations and in these schools, getting that OJT, introducing the culture, and really getting them engaged in what's going around for the schools.

The second group that we're looking at is the veterans. Veterans typically leave service with between 12 and 60 credit hours, and they come back and they go -- they're looking for careers. They're looking for what they want to do after that. They've got tons of leadership. We've seen a lot of success in Southern Indiana of these -- kind of these transitions of getting veterans into teaching. But if they don't have a bachelor's, this is a great time for them to, again, start working in the schools as a para, to continue that coursework in education, and get that four-year degree.

And, finally, para educators, which sometimes are just tremendous. They're just fantastic, and they're already in the schools. And for whatever reason, they have not finished that four-year bachelor's to become a teacher. That's a great group of people to move in and to really build cohorts.

So, as you can see, we can really take these high school students with the hours they've got. We've got these veterans. We can kind of move them into a phase two where they'll work with our Ivy Tech Community College. They'll get an associate's. They will do kind of a para educator rotation, some OJT. They'll work in some different schools and classrooms, kind of figuring out what they like and what they don't like.

They will -- they'll get that parapro certification. They'll do some of that school safety training. They'll have kind of a wage range, and then they'll be that parapro occupation. And right about the time they finish that associate's, they'll actually move to what we call a phase three, where they'll -- can join para educators. And, again, if you've got a group of corporations, they can make some nice cohorts, kind of cut down their costs, bringing these people together.

We'll be using -- right now, Indiana University is the one that is our partner and is really backing this. However, if this could really be any community college and any four-year degree, as long as there's transfers agreements.

And, again, they'll be that full-time para educator in kind of one spot. They'll be working towards that state teaching license. The wage range can vary quite a bit here. And then after this phase three, it's two years. And what's nice is it's still a four-year degree but really coming in with all these early credits, they still graduate what we we'd say all -- on time and at four years. And then they can be a -- an educator. Would you mind going to the next slide?

And this is an example of one of those SEALs. So this is one of our high school programs, one of our pilots that we have launched. As you can see in the orange there, students start in their junior year. They do a rotation for some sort of on-the-job training. It's unpaid. Again, they're just kind of figuring out what they like, what they don't like.

They typically do this in elementary school. They'll complete six hours of dual credits, and they will go ahead and complete two courses in this pathway, in their secondary pathway. That senior year, they -- with this one, they will be doing the CDA. This one has a partnership with a local daycare where they'll be doing some after school hours, and they'll be getting some of those clinicals.

They'll be doing a paid rotation. They'll be doing some different things in the school, again, learn about all those different roles that are available inside a school corporation. And, again, this is a little flexible. We can kind of -- as you can see, I've got lots of different options there, but it is a paid experience. They'll complete six more credit hours, and this is not your general ed. This is just -- these are just -- these credits all build towards that associate's and that bachelor's.

So one really flows into the other, and that's been really important. They'll complete their final two courses of secondary, and then we have -- they have some, again, local agreements with the YMCA and some daycares where they'll actually have the availability to take classes year-round but also to work year-round. So even though they won't be working in these schools during the school year, they have other opportunities in the summer. They can come right back to the corporation in the fall and continue to work. Queue the next slide, please.

MR. PRESLEY: So this is another example of a State Earn and Learn program in education that is sort of a pre-apprenticeship to hopefully a future professional educator apprenticeship program in our state. But this one's a little bit different. It can take students all the way up to the associate's degree.

So you see in post-high school, there's 18 transferable credits. This is a career center. And so we've got sending schools. The students that are participating at their sending schools can get up to sort of those 12 general studies credits in humanities and history. And so they can actually complete the associate's in early childhood education through this program, if they're up for that rigor.

But they will get those 18 credits through the career center, and the second year they're working in their home school four days a week, so when they're in their sending school corporation and being paid as a classroom assistant. And then one day a week, they're back at the career center in the classroom working on some of the requirements for the paraprofessional certification.

So I think this is just a good example of collaboration. And, again, there has to be that alignment and that understanding of sort of seeing this as a talent strategy for schools. And a lot of work was put into sort of thinking about this model and how it relates not only to Ivy Tech but then to higher ed so that there's a seamless pathway for students to work and earn a professional license in teaching through this program.

MR. GRAVES: Yeah. And something I wanted to point out to, and, again, if you're not super familiar with Indiana geography and I don't know very many people that are, on the previous slide was actually very -- three very small school corporations, all rural communities that banded together. And they're all going to send a few students -- Shoals, Orleans, and Mitchell, they're all

going to send a few students to one of those locations, and then the students will go out into -- really they could go to multiple corporations.

So this is something that if you go, oh, well, this seems like maybe a lot for a small, we can band together. And whereas Elkhart is really a -- it's a little larger, not too far from South Bend, the home of Notre Dame there, and is definitely a manufacturing hub. It's a little larger. It's more of a suburban area. They can probably house this in just one corporation.

So we really feel like there is some flexibility here, number one. And, number two, I wanted to just point out, too, that if you look at some of the stats, you look at all of these educators that are leaving the profession really early in their career, in that first five years, part of that is they say pay and stress. And, to me, that tells me it's -- that's debt and that's them not being prepared for that first year.

I think four-year schools do a great job of getting students ready academically and getting them prepared for that coursework. But I think this really would give them that experience that would make them much more successful in the early years of education. And then I will -- I'm going to stop talking. So I think there's one more slide, but I think we're probably gone over.

MR. PRESLEY: I'll just mention just briefly, this is our -- so we have a SEAL process where we certify these programs, and so I won't read the bullets to you, but that is kind of some of the work that we do to engage with schools and to ensure that there's a program. And then we're approving that program, and we're helping to support it.

They own it. They run it, and we're providing that technical assistance to them. And then, ultimately, we're working to establish a professional educator apprenticeship occupation, and that -- I think that'll be -- that's an exciting opportunity for our state and for our country, really.

MS. SCOTT: Absolutely. It is exciting to see progress on the K through 12 educator workforce front.

Cheryl, can you talk to us about -- we're going to flip back over to early childhood right now, but what benefits have you seen that registered apprenticeship offers to early childhood educators and their employers?

MS. FELDMAN: Sure thing. First of all, I'd like to set the context in early childcare for those that may not be as familiar. The ECE field is in the midst of change. There are widespread calls across the country for all teachers, infants through third grade, to have an associate or bachelor's degree in ECE, and, of course, there's a need for fair compensation. They are very low wages in the field.

The other push is for quality in early childcare, that there should be a professionalization of the field with quality education being provided. It's no longer daycare. This is early childhood education.

At the same time, there's lack of access for the ECE workforce, mostly women of color, to obtain degrees. So you have this huge workforce that is kind of stuck in entry-level positions. They have academic barriers making admission to degree programs, sometimes challenging. They are also raising families and working and having large financial constraints that prevent them from having real access to degrees.

What happens is that the employers then are scrambling to fill ECE positions at all levels, especially leadership positions and lead teacher positions, and this has been worsened by the pandemic. Truly, some situations are highly critical in terms of the shortages of the work -- in the workforce.

Apprenticeship certainly is not the panacea to solve all the problems, especially the low wage scale, which is a bigger problem than employers in ECE can solve themselves. But there are great benefits.

So for the employers, apprenticeship is supporting recruitment. Pre-apprenticeship is a great example of the great work being done in Indiana, but apprenticeship is also supporting retention of the incumbent workforce who are now engaged in education, engaged in degree attainment, and feel valued.

Apprenticeship helps employers to create a culture of learning in the workplace because the on-the-job learning being led by onsite coaches employed by the employers -- and we've set up a whole mentoring system for the coaches as well -- they are working with their apprentice, but it is impacting the entire classroom where that apprentice and coach is working.

So we're creating a culture of learning in the workplace, which is supporting quality improvement, supporting employers to grow their own leadership from within their workforce of degree teachers, implementing standardized quality competencies in the workplace, and establishing a standardized way to provide wage increases aligned with credential attainment and competency attainment. So there are great benefits to the employers

For the educators, they're getting a pipeline of students that they might not otherwise have gotten because these frontline workers have been pretty much at a loss in terms of accessing degree attainment. It provides -- apprenticeship provides the educators with a closer working relationship directly with the employers, which has not always been the case.

It also provides -- and I'll talk about this when we talk more about the challenges -- an opportunity for the educators to transform their educational model in support of nontraditional students to work with these apprentices in cohort-based models and thereby customize support for these apprentices so that they are successful with embedded tutoring, with more counseling and navigation support, working with ESL students, with students with disabilities, linking with Title II providers to ensure that we're making use of the Title II funds to support the academic preparation of the apprentices.

And for the apprentices themselves, the benefits are just endless. We've designed our program to be as worker centered as possible. It's an incumbent worker program -- or to be as student

centered for the high school pre-apprentices. We build in wraparound supports to help support these apprentices to be successful with degree attainment.

Part of it is that the colleges are expected to give credit for on-the-job learning and credit for prior learning by obtaining that credential. So in many cases in the associate degree, the students are getting up to 18 credits for on-the-job and prior learning in lieu of sitting in a classroom. Whether it's online or face time, the credits are in lieu of that kind of classroom learning.

So instead of, for example, 62 credits to get the associate degree, the students are only having to sit for 44 of those credits in the classroom. The rest are given six college courses worth of credit for on-the-job learning and prior learning. This accelerates degree attainment, but, just as importantly, it provides that hands-on learning, applying what's learned in the classroom to what's learned on the job and providing that seamless, articulated career path from CDA to associate to bachelor's degree for that apprentice to ensure their success.

It is incredibly rewarding at this point in time for me personally to see apprentices that I worked with at the credential level who are now getting their bachelor's degree and teaching -- with a teaching certification. They're going to graduate a year from now. I'm just like -- I'm going to be at the graduation jumping up and down. I hope it's in person. But to see people do the whole pathway is just an incredible achievement and very exciting.

MS. SCOTT: That's great, Cheryl. It's obvious from your experience that you are just very passionate about this work, and it's really cool to see that.

Matt and Jason, we all know that the K through 12 system has a lot of similar issues regarding teacher pay and workforce shortages. Can you tell us about why you decided to pursue apprenticeship as a solution for some of the challenges your state was facing?

MR. GRAVES: Absolutely, and I think I alluded to it a little bit earlier. I think, if you look at -- and I think now in even some colleges, they talk about those first few years of teaching and then being in survival mode. And that being a bit of a wake-up call from that being four years at a -- on campus at a university.

I think for -- and just exactly what Cheryl said. Confidence, giving them experiences, giving them mentors, putting them in situations where they grow their confidence as an educator, they grow confidence in how they're serving the community, how to communicate with students, how to communicate with parents, how to build a quality lesson. When you do that on-the-job training and they see and they're working with and they're emulating the quality teaching, I think that that's going to be a great recipe for getting individuals to retain, to remain in that.

And I think -- for us, I think our strategy's a little unique in that we're really trying to recruit kind of three very different groups there and bringing them in. They've all got credits. I mean, typically, in all of these categories, they've all -- they're really coming in with credits. But it's, again, really kind of giving them a variety of experiences, I think, up front so that they can really find where they want to be and then -- and, again, kind of helping them and guiding them and

once they get in there to to complete that. So it's, I think, very important to have kind of all of that together.

MR. PRESLEY: I would add as a strategy, I think the SEALs, as pre-apprenticeship into an apprenticeship program is -- allows for an intentional effort to recruit and retain a diverse group of teachers. So we're looking to target really everybody who might be interested in teaching, and you can't be what you don't see; right?

And so I think, because we've got these students in classrooms, they do know what good teaching looks like, certainly in Indiana, and so I think it's giving -- it's students having the opportunity to really understand what it means to be a teacher, but then also the apprenticeship is defining the outcomes.

So it's providing some structure and defining outcomes in ways that really help, I think, recruit a diverse population. So you can sort of scaffold this for them, and they can see how they move from the CDA to the parapro to an associate's degree all the way up to that professional teaching license. And I think that's helpful.

And then some of the work that we do really is just talking with our schools that we work with about their intentional efforts to -- about being intentional in terms of recruiting for these programs. And the other thing about teaching that I think is unique is it does open up an opportunity, I think, with some of our comprehensive work-based learning programs and SEALs.

There is a bit of a -- sometimes students are really given opportunities for work-based learning if they can drive -- right -- or if they can make it and -- or maybe -- so because we're -- we have our students working in their home schools, there's really more -- I think it's much easier for a school to be creative about transportation or, in some cases, students might be working right in the building where they're going to school. And so I think that alleviates some of those concerns and does level the playing field, which is pretty exciting and I think really a nice piece of why we're so excited about apprenticeship for this profession.

MR. GRAVES: Yeah. I think apprenticeship in all human service area is really -- that's a very, I think, unique group of people to -- who really want to benefit the community, who want to serve, or who want to do good things to -- not that everyone does it, but to reach out to them specifically and say this is a very viable path where you can make a wage, where you can go to school, where you can help people and continue on.

I think that's also just very exciting in general and is really going to attract a group of people into apprenticeship that maybe never thought about it before.

MS. SCOTT: Yeah. That's wonderful. Let's briefly talk about some of the challenges that you all have had, and then we're going to move on to kind of audience questions.

So, Cheryl, we'll start with you, if you could talk about some of the barriers to developing apprenticeship in early childhood, which you kind of alluded to some earlier. And then we'll go

on with Matt and Jason, and you can talk about some of the barriers or challenges that you've had while developing your program. Cheryl, you're on mute. Sorry.

MS. FELDMAN: Thank you. I'll start with higher ed. So I really -- I've worked now with quite a few higher eds throughout my career but really deeply with the early childhood apprenticeship program. And I must say it's a relationship building experience that has been very rich and informative on both sides, very collaborative, but there have been issues with higher ed in creating this pathway for teaching pipeline that the higher eds that are participating with us have really had to overcome institutionally.

One is giving credit for on-the-job learning. That's a big one and how that's paid for, how that's transcribed. Those are all things we've had to deal with.

The biggest piece was the program-to-program articulation. So it was a really big deal to negotiate between the community colleges and the four-year university that there would be a program-to-program articulation where there would be no additional prerequisites, that the students would come in as juniors without prerequisites.

And that is a big deal, and the next big step will be to see how we do that statewide, not just between specific schools but how we create this apprenticeship pipeline articulated statewide. We're trying it out now where one of the community colleges is actually offering coursework to nonresident students who are in the other part of the state through online learning as part of our apprenticeship.

So the systems change that needs to happen at the higher ed is really important. Just creating the user-friendly navigation cohort-based models sometimes is a challenge for some of our collegiate partners that they've been willing to help with.

The admissions process, designing it so that math is not a barrier to admissions, because that's a really big issue for many of our apprentices, passing the math admissions testing bar. And the colleges have been willing to accept into the associate degree and even into the bachelor's degree folks that still need to work on their math. But the colleges are willing to support them to do that while they're already in the degree program.

On the employer side, there's certainly a lot of barriers. One is that we're asking employers to give some release time, paid time for the apprentices to attend classes or tutoring. Our model is three hours of release time for every one three-hour -- three-credit college course, up to a maximum of six hours, if the apprentice is taking two college courses. We've had some apprentices take three. That release time is really hard in early childhood because they're already short-staffed.

In addition, supporting not just the apprentices to meet with the coaches weekly paid time not in the classroom but also the training of the coaches and the ongoing mentoring support of the coaches that takes away from work time. So the employers are making a big commitment to support both the coaches and the apprentices with paid time to engage in the very important on-the-job learning activities.

Obviously, the wage increases. The employers are paying for these wage increases. Figuring out how to do that for some of these early childhood employers, how to braid their own funding so that they can make that happen is very important.

I think the other challenge I'd like to talk about is in creating this kind of systems approach, ensuring that our Department of Education and Department of Labor and Health and Human Services are all talking together and collaborating so we can implement this model recruiting and setting up these regional partnerships.

One of the roles that we've had is kind of statewide intermediary, and we've been so blessed to have what is known in our state as ambassador funding, two funding cycles in a row now from the state to help us have the staff to implement these intermediary roles throughout the state.

Very important, but there is a lack of sustainable funding for that intermediary role and lack of sustainable funding for the whole apprenticeship in general. There's obviously CTE money for the pre-apprenticeship or there's PELL money, in our case Teach money, which is early childhood money that helps pay for tuition. There's potentially workforce board money, but none of it is kind of ongoing. It's all applying grant to grant and program to program.

And the last thing that I want to raise is how important it's been to identify early childcare and the teacher positions as high priority occupations in our state so that we could access workforce dollars. And I have to say that not all the local workforce boards have been kind of willing to go there because ECE pays so low and they've set, rightfully, minimums for the entry-level wages before they're going to give funding.

And so we've had to come up with innovative designs with the workforce boards to support at least the pre-apprenticeship model but then -- and the youth apprenticeship model but then think about this whole pathway and can they figure out how to work with a teaching pathway that might start at lower wages but is getting increased wages as people go longitudinally through the pathway?

So these have all been challenges, and we've certainly not backed down on any of them. We've made huge progress on all of these fronts, but they have certainly been challenges that we've confronted and continue to confront.

MS. SCOTT: In the interest of time, Indiana, I hope you don't mind we go straight to questions because the first two are for you. Jason, you're on mute.

MR. GRAVES: I was just going to say -- I was going to say ditto anyway. I think, Cheryl -- me and Cheryl should hang out. I mean, we have a lot in common, so no. I'm -- that's perfectly fine.

MS. SCOTT: Okay. Erin, I'll give it to you then. Go ahead.

MS. DUCKETT: Sure. I'm going to start with a few questions that were already posted in the chat, but I also just wanted to mention a few people had asked about sharing the presentation.

So we will be posting a recording and a summary and all of those documents on our WorkforceGPS Industry Focus Calls page. It's linked a few times in the chat as well. You can see our previous calls and their recordings and summary information as well.

But I'll start with Jason or Matt. So two questions came up, and I'm going to ask them both together. "For the mentoring portions of your programs, are you engaging retired school teachers?" And then when you talked about certifications that you get, they were -- someone was wondering about participants getting a special education certification. Is that possible?

MR. GRAVES: Well, for both of those, one, we did not -- for the mentors, both of these programs, which is nice, has a funded dedicated person who will teach and oversee these experiences. So that's very handy. But I think a retired teacher could be -- retired teacher could be a great resource that we could utilize as this grows.

And, two, I think when originally thinking about this, we thought about special education. One of the things that I did when I was a CTE classroom teacher, one of the -- kind of the inspiration behind this is that we -- at the school corporation, we could not find people to work in special needs classrooms.

And lo and behold, I had two students who had been through several hours and done great jobs in ed professions secondary classes. And and it was like, why don't we just hire them to work in these middle school special ed, special needs classrooms? And they went in and they just -- they did great. And then the teacher was like, can I keep them? And we were like, well, sure. We don't see why not. And so that was kind of idea. The kid goes, well, I'm going to the local school. I can work here.

So the difficulty we ran into is some of the classes were during the day. So that's where we were kind of thinking, if we can structure cohorts, if we can get the universities on board and kind of get them to work with us on this where we've got, again, these kind of larger cohorts of students that are actively working during the day and if we can get big enough cohorts just for even to house some of these classes at the school corporation to make this less expensive for them, than this would work.

So, no. Actually, we think about incorporating special education or doing that and being a part of this. And we do talk about some of those -- the additional trainings you need for that. And absolutely. So I think that would be a great place. If you can find, again, high school or those community college students who want to work in those classrooms, get him in there. Pay them. Keep them. I mean, absolutely. I think that's -- it would be tremendous.

MS. DUCKETT: Thanks, Jason.

Cheryl, the next question is for you, and it's about ROI. So we had a person wondering, "Do you have an ROI example that higher education training providers could use to help school districts buy in? Sort of how are you selling that and would show the return on investment?"

MS. FELDMAN: I don't think I have a great answer for that. I know that there is a lot of work being done by Jobs for the Future on youth pre-apprenticeships and high school pre-apprenticeships. So we should look into that literature and see if there have been any ROI studies.

But I have to say that, to my knowledge, in this country youth pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, especially for opportunity youth but also for high school, have not been kind of robustly implemented in this country. This is kind of a new push and a new opportunity. I'm so glad to see what Indiana is doing.

And as we move into this, I think that high schools in particular have a responsibility to really look at the importance of this work-based learning model to prepare the youth for the future of work and for us to really be thinking of this as a future of work issue because the traditional four-year education, as we all know, is not going to suffice with the challenges that we have to fill credentialled positions in the workplace on so many different levels. So that's my poor answer.

MS. DUCKETT: Thank you. Matt or Jason, do you have anything that you want to add to that?

MR. PRESLEY: Well, Cheryl stole -- she's taking all my answers today, but I would say we would think of it as a -- like with the schools that I've been working with on this issue, it's really -- I mean, we're talking to them about it as sort of a talent pipeline strategy and an opportunity for them to, in the high school space or with -- in their corporation's -- right -- to improve retention of their paraprofessionals.

So they really do have a hard time finding substitute teachers in some cases or paraprofessionals to fill those roles that are so critical to education. And so if they can engage with these programs and then articulate those agreements and to find that pathway through apprenticeship and through State Earn and Learn, then we're really solving a retention problem for them. And I think we'll quickly see a return on investment -- right -- in terms of the amount of maybe the money that they're paying to have students working in their classrooms, that they're also taking care of their retention problem for those supportive roles.

MS. FELDMAN: If I could jump in on that theme just one sec, when you think about the ECE pipeline in specific, you're preparing young -- very young students for success in the K through 12 system by having a quality early childhood education program. So as I think about it, it seems in the best interest of school districts to create this teaching pipeline, not only for the future of their teachers but also for the future of their students.

MS. DUCKETT: Students. Yeah. All right. We had another question come in, and it looks like, based on time, this is probably our last question, wanting to know any information on teacher unions and how you navigate possible union issues and hiring for para educators, especially hiring high school students.

MR. GRAVES: I could just talk a little bit about the conversations I've had. I was a union member for 16 years. So I usually lead with that. And then, I mean, this is exactly the conversations I've had with them in asking for their support and their considerations for these programs is that we're not -- this is not less. This is more.

An apprenticeship is more. It's more opportunity. It's more experience. It's more hands on. Again, we're trying to build confidence in young people entering into education. We're trying to build a bridge for people that are looking for that second career. We're trying to make education better. In no way are we watering this down.

So when I talk in those terms and I talk about, I mean, when you look at the benefits of apprenticeship and in something -- what we would say traditional -- I don't know how traditional is -- but welding or health care and these other fields, it works. I mean, apprenticeship works. It's going to work here. And I fundamentally believe that.

I think this is going to help. 87 percent of school corporations in the state of Indiana -- I don't know what's going on in other states -- but reported that there was a shortage last year. COVID didn't help that. So I think -- I think one of the questions is how fast maybe can we scale this up in some places that are in dire need. And -- but I think when I talk with them and I said, we want to bring you more high-quality educators and we want those to be people from the communities, we want people that care about those communities, and we want to just help them get paid, keep them out of debt, and really bring all the benefits of an apprenticeship to education, they -- I didn't get any pushback.

They were pretty excited about that. But, again, it's still a four-year degree. It's still a bachelor's. It's still people meeting milestones. It's just a bit of a different structure. It's just it is a time -- and I loved what Cheryl mentioned earlier. It's a time to really kind of rethink things and to look at these traditional educational structures and not change them too much but certainly apply things in a different way. And I think it's time.

MS. FELDMAN: Very quickly, I think it's very important to have the union at the table before the program is implemented, even during the design period, so that there's input from the union.

And in addition to that, we're seeing more and more unions that want to actually -- we're a union-based program -- that want to actually lead the apprenticeship initiative. And when you have unions at the table in the role of not being a -- trying to stop things but actually trying to grow and be part of the solution, it's just a wonderful thing.

And right now in this country, both at the national AFL-CIO level but also at the state and local levels, unions more and more are stepping up to wanting to be part of this education discussion and the preparation of the workforce.

MS. DUCKETT: Thank you, Cheryl and Jason, for that.

We are just about at time. So just in closing, I want to thank Cheryl, Jim, Jason, Matt on behalf of Maher & Maher and our listeners. Thank you so much for your time today, your insights and knowledge around this topic, impact that you're having in the field. It's really -- you can see it on your faces and through your remarks just how passionate you are and really the differences that you're making.

To all of you listening, thank you for joining us today. As I mentioned, we will be posting a summary and the recording on our WorkforceGPS page. And please join us for any upcoming technical assistance opportunities and future industry calls. Our next one will be in May around public sector apprenticeships, like I mentioned earlier.

Thanks, again, everyone, for your participation, comments, questions, and have a great rest of your day and a great rest of your week.

(END)