



## The Means to Grow Up: The Role of Apprenticeship in Preparing All Youth for College and Career Success

12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### ***Defining Apprenticeship***

Robert Halpern describes apprenticeship as “a growing movement based in schools, youth-serving organizations, and arts, civic, and other cultural institutions” that engages youth in hands-on, in-depth learning experiences under the guidance of experienced adults.<sup>1</sup>

Preparing all youth for college and career success is a top priority, and a great deal of attention has been focused on the need for rigorous academic skills to ensure success. However, in order to ensure all youth have the skills to access and succeed not only in postsecondary education but in their careers as well, it is important to consider other types of skills that young people need, including problem-solving, critical thinking, employability, communication, collaboration, and personal responsibility. One way to help young people develop these skills is to provide opportunities outside of school to develop new knowledge and skills, experience real work, and interact with professionals.

In his book, *The Means to Grow Up: Reinventing Apprenticeship as a Developmental Support in Adolescence*, Robert Halpern examines a small but growing group of programs that link youth to experiences that let them practice the skills and responsibilities of a specific discipline. In contrast to passive learning experiences, which many youth report are not engaging, learning in a real world context provides opportunities for a push into the adult world and a means to explore a career pathway for youth in an area of their own interest. Halpern argues that such experiences are particularly well-matched to the developmental needs of high school students.

Today’s forum will highlight two types of apprenticeship programs for high school students in the U.S.: The statewide Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program, and the Learning Through Interest Program at the Met School in Providence, Rhode Island.

### **Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program:**

The Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program is a statewide program, operated by the state’s Department of Workforce Development since 1991, which incorporates apprenticeship into the overall high school structure. The Youth Apprenticeship Program is:

- Part of the state’s larger School-to-Work initiative
- A two-year elective program that combines academic and technical instruction with mentored and paid on-the-job learning that makes a real world connection for the students
- Currently serving 2000 high school juniors and seniors from 306 of Wisconsin’s 430 districts

### **The Met School, Providence, RI:**

The Met operates six small high schools of fewer than 120 students in Providence, and is committed to engaging students as active participants in their education. Each student at the Met School:

- Has a personalized learning plan based on their own needs, interests, and passions
- Participates in the Learning Through Interest Program, which pairs students with adult mentors at worksites in the community and utilizes school site advisors to connect work-based projects to school-based learning

<sup>1</sup> Halpern, R. (2009). *The Means to Grow Up: Reinventing Apprenticeship as a Developmental Support in Adolescence*. New York: Routledge.