



Warren County Business Advisory Council (WCBAC) 12/5 Meeting Summary

Topic: Hiring Youth & Strengthening Professional Skills Across Warren County

Focus of the Meeting

The December BAC meeting focused on two central objectives:

1. **Understanding how to hire youth effectively** - including legal requirements, workplace expectations, and the real benefits and challenges employers experience.
2. **Reviewing curriculum options** that could create *county-wide consistency* in preparing students with the professional skills employers repeatedly identify as gaps.

1. How to Hire Youth: Legal Framework & Opportunities

Overview of Ohio Law and Requirements for Employing Minors

Stephen Clegg, Chief of Ohio Wage and Hour, provided a detailed review of what employers must know when hiring minors. Key points included:

Employer Responsibilities

- Employers must maintain a work permit, wage agreement, record of breaks, and a posted list of minors employed
- Clear hour limitations:
 - Ages 16–17: cannot work past 11 p.m. before a school day.
 - Ages 14–15: limited evening hours and maximum weekly hour caps during the school year and summer.
- Clear lists of prohibited occupations (e.g., driving, roofing, power-driven machinery) and additional restrictions for 14–15-year-olds.

The Ohio Manufacturing & Construction Mentorship Program (MCMP)

Expanded in 2024, this program allows 16 - 17-year-olds to participate in supervised, temporary employment in manufacturing and construction.

Key components include:

- A designated mentor and close supervision.

- Required safety training, including a 10-hour OSHA course.
- Clear boundaries on which tools and equipment may be used, including permitted, conditional, and restricted-use categories.

Industry Panel & Table Discussion: Insights, Experiences & Recommendations

Local employers shared their experiences hiring youth and highlighted recurring themes:

Positive Organizational Impact of Hiring Youth

Panelists described:

- A strengthened talent pipeline, especially in skilled trades and high-demand industries.
- Increased workplace energy and innovation - young workers bring fresh perspectives.
- Opportunities for existing employees to grow into mentorship and leadership roles.

Employer Insights

Across industries, employers agreed that:

- Working with high school students is beneficial, but requires explicit, structured support.
- School relationships with industry partners are critical to ensure students are placed in companies that will be a good fit for them and a good experience for the employer.
- Students who have had previous exposure to workplace expectations transition far more successfully into fulltime roles.

Common Challenges Observed

- Inconsistent professional skills, including communication, punctuality, reliability, and managing feedback.
- Gaps in business communication skills: writing emails, seeking clarification, speaking with supervisors, and participating in meetings.
- Students often need stronger foundational understanding of workplace norms, including documentation, chain of command, and accountability.

2. Curriculum Review: Identifying a Countywide Solution to the Professional Skills Gap

The WCBAC reviewed resources that align with employer needs and supports students across all Warren County districts.

OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) Readiness Seal

The OMJ Readiness Seal emphasizes 15 professional competencies, including reliability, work ethic, punctuality, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

The validation form clearly defines these skills and provides structured mentor feedback sections, making it an excellent framework for assessing student growth.

- Employers noted strong alignment between these competencies and what they expect from young workers.
- Most schools are working on the seal for graduation requirements.

Junior Achievement (JA) Business Communications Course

The JA curriculum is focused explicitly on the communication and professionalism gaps employers identified. The curriculum provides a semester-long, standards-based program. However, there was much discussion around how the courses could be folded into existing classes and framework.

Topics include:

- Interpersonal communication
- Business writing
- Organizational communication
- Communicating about performance

This curriculum directly supports the needs noted by industry partners, including:

- Teaching students how to communicate appropriately with supervisors.
- Strengthening writing and verbal communication.
- Preparing students to participate in workplace meetings and evaluations.
- Reinforcing professionalism and accountability.

Curriculum Goal

The WCBAC discussed implementing a consistent professional skills curriculum across all county schools, so that:

- Employers experience more prepared and workplace-ready youth.
- Students have equitable, aligned preparation regardless of district.

- WBL coordinators and industry partners are working from a common language and expectations framework.

Overall Meeting Outcome

The WCBAC achieved consensus on the following:

- Hiring youth is highly beneficial for employers, communities, and students when done with clear expectations and structured support.
- There is a significant professional skills gap, echoed across industries.
- A countywide, unified curriculum is essential to addressing that gap and improving student success in employment and helping employers easily understand competencies regardless of the school district the student attends.
- The OMJ Readiness Seal and JA Business Communications course provide strong frameworks for building student readiness.
- Employers are eager to partner in this effort and are committed to offering guidance, mentorship, and opportunities.