Elements of Effective Education at a DOL YouthBuild Program

What does an exceptional DOL YouthBuild Education Program look like?
An exceptional YouthBuild education program aligns instruction and academic structures with the postsecondary, career, and life goals of every student. The culture of the education work is deeply integrated with the rest of the program components. All staff members see themselves as educators and learners responsible for encouraging a life-long love of learning in all students.

Instructional practices in such a program:

- Consider and build upon students’ strengths, accounting for individual learning styles and needs in ways that create the greatest opportunity for student learning and success;

- Employ a variety of approaches and materials which make instruction relevant to students’ lives, interests and culture;

- Build from strong, nurturing and sustained relationships between students and caring, knowledgeable adults;

- Respond to authentic and measurable outcomes for student learning through the implementation of an effective mix of formative and summative assessments and benchmarks which help teachers know what students are learning in real time;

- Incorporate information and communication technologies as instructional tools throughout the curriculum; and

- Create explicit pathways for students to make smooth, seamless and well-informed transitions into future academic and career opportunities.

The curriculum at such a program:

- Engages students in critical thinking, reading, writing, and quantitative reasoning;

- Aligns with expectations and entry standards of postsecondary institutions, apprenticeship programs and employers in the community and region;

- Provides meaningful opportunities for students to connect subject matter knowledge with real world and community-based themes, discussions, presentations and projects; and

- Includes course work that prepares students for the most appropriate and rigorous opportunity to pass state exit exams, achieve a High School Diploma, complete the GED, receive postsecondary credits and meet required standards outlined in the state education code.

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1 Created in conjunction with YouthBuild USA’s Education and Field Services Departments.
• Provides appropriate resources for a robust teaching and learning environment so that teachers have access to curricular resources, technology, and other supports. This requires a sustainable program that can plan for a couple of years ahead of its current funding cycle.

• Prioritizes comprehensive student supports services (counseling, tutoring, providing additional help for postsecondary and career readiness, recognizing and responding to learning disabilities) during and after students' YouthBuild experience.

• Employs staff members who are fully committed to the vision and mission of the program, with demonstrated passion for working with YouthBuild students to encourage their holistic growth and development.

• Benefits from a data-driven culture to inform and improve practice and the integration of education work throughout the program.

• Encourages ongoing feedback, professional growth opportunities, credentialing efforts and other conditions of work which promote the retention of effective staff members.

Facilities and resources in such a program:

• Include spaces arranged for creative and engaging teaching practices with comfortable work and learning areas;

• Create a positive, safe, clean and welcoming environment which reflects students' interests;

• Display student work as exemplary models and highlight student accomplishments (this could include a Wall of Fame where HSDs and GEDs are displayed as they are achieved and postsecondary and career placements are highlighted as these are earned); and

• Provide sufficient and consistent access to instructional technology – including hardware, software, internet access and emerging applications of technology.