

Every Teenager Needs To Have A Meaningful Summer Job and A Job After Graduation

What Kids Need

Every one of the city's 65,000 plus high school students must have at least one successful work experience before they graduate that helps them build relevant 21st century workplace skills. Youth employment opportunities should expose teens to a wide range of careers and types of employment, allow them to explore their interests, and build their social capital through positive connections with adults and peers in the workplace.

Every year, as many as 7,000 graduating seniors are likely to go into the workforce rather than attend postsecondary training or school.¹ With recent changes to Pennsylvania's high school graduation requirements, Philadelphia students must now demonstrate career preparedness to receive their diplomas. Not only do students need help finding a job before they graduate and support once they get a job, they need work experiences under their belt to finish school.² **To make sure Philly youth are ready for the workforce whether or not they attend college, the Mayor must:**

- Connect at least 20,000 high school students before graduation and 7,000 upon graduation jobs every year.
- Create an Office of Youth Employment that will assemble the key private and public sector partners and put the resources in the city budget to make sure every Philadelphia youth who wants to work can do so.
- Ensure that summer youth employment systems like the Philadelphia Youth Network are running a high quality program that taps organizations of all sizes to youth paid work experience, pays youth on-time and combines work and workshops that increase employability and financial literacy.

Why This Matters To Kids, Parents and, The City

Youth have only two pathways to permanently breaking the cycle of poverty – having a great education and strong job skills for a successful career. The School District has the primary responsibility for the first and the mayor must embrace responsibility for the second: real job experience by graduation and employment for those who want it after.

Every year, 28,000 children turn 15 in Philadelphia and enter the cohort of 100,000+ youth eligible for their first job. But the number of subsidized work or private employment options for youth are far short of what's needed to give young people their first job experience before graduation (assuming that every summer about 60% of youth ages 14–18 are looking for work).

While decades of research demonstrate that youth with at least one work experience before graduating high school have stronger lifetime earnings, the pipeline into employment for youth is shrinking, especially with the pandemic disrupting many industries that traditionally staffed up with entry positions in the summer and gave graduates a shot at their first job.

Why This Matters To Kids, Parents and, The City

The next mayor must use city resources to build a substantial youth employment system that offers summer and year-round work experience for high school youth. These experiences open their minds to dreams and possibilities. These dreams and possibilities become goals. Goals become their future reality. These programs are designed to groom the future business, civic and parent leaders of our great city.

The Details

Philadelphia, in the early 1970s, was able to place more than 23,000 high school youth in six week summer jobs. We've done it before and we should be doing it again. However, funding cuts wiped out 5,000 PYN jobs last summer, further squeezing the already dwindling supply of summer youth employment. Typically youth find paid summer employment by connecting with PYN which works with the Departments of Parks and Recreation and Human Services as well as community-based nonprofits to generate summer jobs for city youth.

Building a more robust youth employment system requires the mayor to use every tool available. While an organization like PYN can operate a program to place youth in jobs, it can't mobilize resources like the mayor or his/her designee can. To reach the youth employment scale needed, we need a high-level official that reports directly to the mayor to lead an ambitious and accountable Youth Employment Office.

Further, the next Mayor must:

- Ensure every city department creates significantly more summer and afterschool job positions that offer well-supervised, skill-building job experiences for youth. The Youth Employment Office must ensure that supervisors have the training and support needed for the youth to have a positive work experience. The Office must also work aggressively to streamline the paperwork so small organizations can participate and the payment systems so youth are paid on time.
- Engage every city contractor in the youth employment system by asking every vendor located in Philadelphia to identify paid summer and afterschool work experiences for youth, and for companies operating outside the city to contribute toward these work experiences or job training in some tangible fashion.
- Bring key new stakeholders in the nonprofit sector to the table to generate thousands of paid summer employment for high school students that ideally lead to permanent jobs in these large entities. Although nonprofit partners step forward every summer to create jobs for youth, too many large health care, cultural, and educational nonprofit institutions are not as engaged in creating these opportunities in ambitious and useful ways.

About The Kids Campaign

The Kids Campaign is a coalition of 60 plus child-serving groups in Philadelphia. Our coalition formed to make sure that the next mayor of Philadelphia is ready to do whatever it takes to ensure a **S.E.C.U.R.E.** future for every kid – a future with Safety, an Education, Careers, Uplift, Recreation, and a healthy Environment. A non-partisan effort, the Kids Campaign will share information parents and voters need to determine which candidate will make every day safer than the one before for children and youth. Organizations and individuals can learn more and join the Kids Campaign at www.thekidscampaign.org.