

Excerpts from interviews with 42 Generation Work Opportunity Youth (Education Pathways)

(Interviewees include 11 young adults from Port Jobs, 11 from ReOpp, 15 from South Seattle College (Georgetown), 2 from Everett-based AMTEC Manufacturing and 3 from RTC student enrollment center/hub).

| What are the biggest challenges you face in school/training? (In order of frequency, highest to lowest) | #/% of students | The text below combines responses (using the words of young adults) to the following two questions and aligns them with the challenges mentioned in the left hand column: (1)What are the best strategies that help students succeed in school? (2) What are the best strategies for overcoming these kinds of issues? |
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| Showing up regularly | 28 (66%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive calls or emails from staff if I am absent to find out the reason, and to provide help, such as bus passes, and also just to let me know I can catch up, but need to get back in class. • Help [advocacy] to reschedule <i>required</i> appointments (with case managers, housing managers, etc.) that are held during class time, and/or understand that these outside appointments are required, meaning that my instructor needs to approve an alternate way to make up for the lost time in class. • Understand that if I have to take 3 buses to get to school, and that means I will always be a little late for class, that I am trying to do the right thing, but can't get up any earlier or I would never go to bed. • Recognize that I can't drop my kid off any earlier to childcare. • Recognize that I am expected to work overtime in order to be seen as a good employee and keep my job, and/or need to financially work overtime. • Allow me [when stuff comes up] to miss class and make it up by working from home or doing extra assignments. • Assign students, especially those who are single parents a "Freindtor" who can help out repeatedly, just by being a friend, by going out to dinner, just regularly showing that they care that you are going to school and trying to better myself. You know - someone who can do normal stuff with me, like go to a movie with my kid. They would not be an advocate, they would be a friend. |
| Meeting high expectations for successful completion of the class | 24 (57%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When teachers are really clear about what they are teaching and what they expect us to learn, and what we need to do if we don't understand the materials - that really helps. • Make sure I know the attendance rules, test and certification testing rules, and what kinds of performance I need to have to earn credits or certificates. • Set aside time to ask the instructor questions that are outside of the class time (ideally right before or after class) if we need more help. • Understand that if we are trying in class but still don't quite understand the materials that we will have a chance to retake tests, and get tutoring or other specialized help. • Recognize success and problems along the way and don't wait for tests to do so. |

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| <p>Overload: managing my time</p> | <p>22 (52%)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help us plan realistically, taking into account that some of us have jobs, or children, and all of us need to have some time off when we are not on a bus, or in school, or at work. • Develop more achievable and doable action plans –even if that means it will take longer to complete school. I want to succeed and get done fast, but if I try to go too fast in school I will fail. • Help me plan ahead by connecting my school plans, to my housing and TANF subsidy so if that means I have to kick butt for a certain period than help me figure that out. |
| <p>Math ability is low</p> | <p>18 (42%)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring helps. • Print out worksheets that present the stuff I don't get. • Remind me how math applies to my career aims and goals. That helps, because I am going to be a welder, I hope, and need to know some math. • Take time to back up to where my math problems really start, which is way back. I am starting from zero. • Provide me with extra time to do over math assignments, while I am building my skills. • Recognize that it took a lifetime to be as bad at math as I am, and might take a little while to turn that situation around. |
| <p>Unsure whether course skills will actually improve my future job outcomes/leads to reduced motivation in class</p> | <p>15 (35%)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce again and again how skills we are learning in class are in demand in the labor market, and lead to credentials that will increase employability. • Show how the certifications will look on my resume (even before I have taken the certifications). Put them in highlighter and then as you earn them remove the highlighter. • Bring in job announcements that show how these skills and credentials are required. • Invite employers who talk about how important the stuff we are learning will be to them when we apply for jobs and go to work for them. |
| <p>Computer issues (lack computer skills, no internet, no computer, or not allowed to use computer because of group home status etc.)</p> | <p>11 (26%)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources for internet or netbook, laptop or computer rentals. • Provide basic computer workshops as part of orientation or online if instruction is available. |
| <p>Not comfortable in school, always feel self-conscious, under the microscope</p> | <p>10 (23%)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with different ways (tests, presentations, independent research writing, and demonstrations) to succeed, but find what their success area is. • Encourage students to try new things and not be self-conscious. • If a student does not like being called on to speak in class, then help them prepare something to report back to the class so that they get practice. • If students don't like or feel comfortable talking in class give them an exercise like calling 5 employers about their hiring needs and give them some questions to ask. This will help them do something that class members are interested in and build their confidence. |