

**New Jersey Institute of Social Justice**

**ECCCP**

**Essex County Construction Careers Program**

**A Systematic Assessment of the 8 Week Summer Pre-Apprenticeship Program**

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***Executive Summary – Essex County Construction Careers Evaluation***

***In the Summer of 2001, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice in partnership with the Essex County Council of Construction Building Trades, urban school districts throughout the Essex county, community-based organizations and a number of private funders sponsored a Pre-Apprenticeship Program to prepare young urban residents of Essex County to enter the construction trades. After nearly twelve months of planning and program development, thirty-two individuals began the eight-week program of instruction in mathematics and reading skills, workplace readiness and direct exposure to the construction trades. As of this writing, twenty-six women and men successfully completed the program and six have been accepted into the insulators, electricians and glaziers locals. More placements are anticipated as the unions begin their primary recruiting effort in the spring of 2002.***

***This report is written for policy-makers, educators, foundation representatives, community based organizations, unions, vocational institutions, advocates for out-of-school youth and young urban adults interested in creating partnerships between urban communities and the construction trades. In the text, we have detailed the program, the areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, in order to assist any communities interested in replication of the Essex County Construction Careers Pre-apprenticeship Program.***

***The Essex County Construction Careers Pre-apprenticeship Program (ECCCP) represents a significant and relatively unprecedented partnership of the construction trades, public schools and community based organizations within Essex County with the explicit purpose of expanding career opportunities available to graduates of Essex County schools and diversifying the membership of the construction trades in the County.***

***Given the timing of the funding, the pilot summer program was designed and implemented in a relatively short period of time. Nevertheless, the Joint Steering Committee, consisting of the trades unions, the urban school districts, and a number of community-based organizations, appears to have collaborated very effectively and cooperatively. A six method evaluation of the eight week Essex County Construction Careers Pre-apprenticeship Program concludes that:***

- ***the program was highly successful in retaining and graduating students in the cohort – 78% of the pre-apprentices persisted and graduated from the program;***
- ***the program improved academic skills of most pre-apprentices – 50% improved in their Math scores and 57% improved in their Locating Information scores***
- ***the program inspired positive attitudes about the construction trades in the pre-apprentices – pre-apprentices rated the program as very effective in terms of teaching, learning about careers in construction, combining academic and ‘hands on’ learning, and generating student confidence in becoming an apprentice***
- ***a full 90% of pre-apprentices feel confident that they will become apprentices***

- *the diverse constituencies of the Board of Education, construction unions, community based organizations and young adults from the Abbott districts consistently affirm the design and implementation of the program and strongly support its continuation.*

*At the same time, a number of issues arose that could be improved in a replication or expansion of the program. These issues include:*

- *A clear and shared set of expectations with regard to the outcomes of the program among the partners of the Joint Steering Committee;*
- *Specific efforts to improve the recruitment process to maximize the number of individuals that continue to the next phase of the process – initial recruitment, testing, interviewing, and program initiation (this is being addressed in the Spring 2002 program by engaging an outreach coordinator and ensuring that newly placed school-to-careers staff clearly understand the strong career options offered by the construction trades).*
- *Specific efforts to address a number of issues that may inhibit the ability of graduates to take up positions in the trades such as suspended driver's licenses, inadequate financial resources, limited access to private cars, etc. on both a policy and program level.*
- *Because many of the entry exams required by the unions are offered several months after the completion of the program, efforts may be necessary to provide refresher courses to keep the skills of the graduates sharp.*

*In general, however, with a rich and delicate coalition, this project has accomplished much in a very short period of time. This report, written several months after 9.11 with unemployment rates rising, the public sector in fiscal trouble, and programs for poor and working class young adults in jeopardy, this program seems just the type of intervention that offers a win-win to community economic development, the growth and diversification of the construction trades, and the individual lives and families of young men and women in Essex County.*

## Background

The construction industry in Northern New Jersey is facing a boom that is projected to extend well into the next decade. This consists of both public and private sector work including airport expansion, bridge and tunnel repair, downtown and waterfront development, and the \$12 billion school construction program under the Abbott Supreme Court decision. In fact, the state's association of building contractors anticipates that up to \$20 billion will be expended for construction over the next two years alone. New Jersey's construction trades, however, are not well positioned to respond to this projected growth. Union membership is currently unable to meet existing construction demand. Journeypersons are already being drawn from other states to work on New Jersey projects. At the same time, in July, 2000 the state Supreme Court mandated the repair or replacement of schools in the state's poorest school districts. This is expected to result in an expenditure of over \$2 billion in Newark over the next fifteen years.

In effort to ensure that this expenditure generates both 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and local economic development, the state has proposed regulations that encourage and fund the training and hiring of minority and women workers as a key component of the school construction program. In addition, the Abbott legislation encourages the development of school-to-careers programs to meet the needs of non-college bound high school graduates. This combination of events: enormous amounts of projected construction; trade unions, historically closed to minority applicants, in desperate need of workers to meet this demand; and large-scale, local, public expenditure requiring training and hiring of minority and women workers with related funding support has been characterized as '*Jupiter aligning with Mars*'. The Essex County Construction Careers Program was established to ensure that the economic development opportunity arising from this remarkable circumstance is made a reality for residents of Abbott districts.

The Institute for Social Justice has an abiding focus on linking urban residents to good-quality employment opportunities. The construction trades offer an ideal opportunity because of their wage rates which can be as much as \$60,000 per year plus benefits for journey workers and basic entry requirements that can be met by many Newarkers (a high school diploma or equivalent and valid driver's license). Importantly, involvement with the criminal justice system does not preclude a career in the trades. The expanding need for workers offers the opportunity to build a homegrown middle class in Newark. To explore this idea further, the Institute provided seed funding to Ms. Rebecca Doggett (see attached resume) to develop a program to facilitate a linkage between young Newark residents and the trades.

Ms. Doggett, drawing on her experience with other models around the country, particularly in New York City, focused on entry into the construction trades through formal union-based apprenticeship programs. A process was initiated to bring key parties together capitalizing on interests of the unions, school districts, and local residents. A Joint Steering Committee (JSC) was formed consisting of the leadership of local building trades, Superintendents of Public and Vocational School Districts, and community-based organizations. Under the direction of Ms. Doggett, this steering committee undertook the design and implementation of a pilot program to prepare high school graduates and local

residents to apply for formal apprenticeships in the construction trades, a component of the Essex County Construction Careers Program (ECCCP).

Connections with the leadership of the public school districts and the unions proved critical to the early development of the JSC. The ECCCP was introduced to urban superintendents by the superintendent of the vocational school system (an early partner in the project). This help to build a high-ranking cadre of peers interested in the program who then assigned school-based personnel to move the program forward. Similar meetings were held first with union leadership and then with the individual building trades.

The Institute for Social Justice drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU see Appendix II) laying out the terms of the collaboration among JSC members and a resolution for use by school districts. The MOU was distributed at the first meeting of the senior members of the JSC. This MOU may have provided comfort to members with respect to the discrete assignment of responsibilities. The purpose of the JSC was to plan and implement the program, however, it also created critical lines of communication that did not previously exist among these new partners. For example, the construction trades, which historically operated as closed societies closely controlling information and using family and other connections to draw in new members would now have to rely on community organizations and schools for recruitment. On the other hand, school district personnel traditionally measure their professional success in terms of college placements of their graduates. Administrators, counselors and teachers have a limited and often incorrect understanding of the construction industry and the career and earnings opportunities offered by the building trades. The JSC provided a forum for these unlikely partners to begin to exchange information and to educate one another in fundamental ways. The design and implementation of an actual program within a short, three-month period provided a concrete focus for the committee's energies. All JSC members observed some deficiencies arising from the quick pace of the programs' development, however it is doubtful that a more thorough understanding of the needs and expectations of each of the collaborators could have been achieved through a longer development process. The actual operation of the program forced issues to the surface that may not have arisen in additional meetings such as data on timing and nature of union exams, outcome expectations, attitudes and discipline of participants, understanding the availability and scale of apprenticeship slots and the need to ensure that the schools provide access to high-potential candidates for the trades.

The recruiting process moved the program development to a new level. The JSC members participated on three-person interview panels. This had the benefit, from a relationship-building perspective, of demonstrating the seriousness of the program. Candidates for the ECCCP were required to complete written applications; take a skills exam and come within striking distance of union requirements; and arrive at an appointed time for an interview with 3 interviewers. Those candidates found to be unqualified were deferred pending remediation of outstanding issues or were not accepted into the program. JSC members remarked that the rigor of the process was useful and should produce good candidates.

This report notes a significant drop-off at each phase of recruitment: application, testing, interviewing and the initiation of the program itself. Through interviews with participants and those who chose not to pursue the program after applying, we recognized the need to modify our recruitment process to ensure that in-school personnel, guidance, school to careers, and administrative staff understand the good quality employment opportunities offered by today's construction trades and the nature of the apprenticeship approach to training which provides a living wage along with on-the-job and classroom training. In our next phase we have worked to establish an informed network of in-school recruiters that can identify, nurture and support individuals with an aptitude for the construction trades. The anticipated result is a lower-drop-off rate because those applying are well informed and sincerely interested in construction as a career choice.

As described in the balance of this evaluation, conflicting expectations among the parties continued. Some of these will be worked out as the program demonstrates its value in producing superior candidates for the trades.

An extended evaluation will capture the placement, follow-up and retention experience of the program beyond those graduates who have been placed to-date. The evaluation reviews strengths and weaknesses of this program, makes recommendations and identifies key considerations involved in the replication of the program.

## **ECCCP EVALUATION**

***This report is a preliminary documentation of the Summer 2001 Pre-Apprenticeship, with empirical material that documents the academic success of the program and raises a series of programmatic recommendations for replication.***

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions serve as this evaluation's point of reference. Essentially, these questions are the theoretical framework used to shape and drive this evaluation. All questions were generated in collaboration with ECCCP's Project Director, Rebecca Doggett.

- (1) What were the varied expectations for the program as expressed by key partners, educators, unions and students?
- (2) In what ways can ECCCP's outreach and/or marketing capabilities be improved?
- (3) In what ways can the program, academically and vocationally, be strengthened?



## Methodology

Given the short duration (8 weeks) and pilot nature of the program, we constructed a multi-method design that would allow for varied kinds of data to be collected from the many constituencies involved:

1. Archival analysis of records of applicants, admits and students
2. Participant observations of classrooms and field trips.
3. Pre/post surveys of students.
4. Individual interviews with key partners and students.
5. Telephone interviews with applicants/admits who did not become students.
6. Focus group specifically targeted at questions of outreach and marketing.

*Archival Analysis:* Archival analysis allows for the systematic review and examination of all files or records (i.e., memos, documents, grants, protocols, demographic information, etc.) related to the program. This technique alerts the researcher to particular aggregate trends across the sample and/or overall project. Such trends reveal the demographic background of the participants across the program's tenure.

*Participant observations:* Participant observations are used to experientially explore an environment (e. g. having an adult hang out in a high school for a year). In such a design, the researcher involves him/herself within the environment or some selected environments of the participants. Through these data, researchers are able to identify key *contextual variables* and *interpersonal dynamics* that might not emerge in surveys or individual interviews.

Field or ethnographic observations consisted of taking systematic notes of the regularly scheduled Monday morning presentations, Friday field trips as well as a number of classes. Specifically, field observations involved exploring subject matter, content, student engagement, faculty interactions as well as interpersonal dynamics in these three settings.

*Pre and Post Surveys:* Two short surveys were developed based on initial field notes as well as input received from central office. This survey was developed to assess the participants' attitudes toward and experiences of the pre-apprenticeship program; to identify programmatic areas of success as well as spaces in need of improvement. Survey 1 and 2 included questions on outreach, perceptions of specific areas of the program (i. e. staff, course and curriculum, etc.) as well as career interests and confidence in making it into an apprenticeship. (See appendix for the pre and post surveys)

*Individual Interviews - Participants:* Individual interviews were conducted to get a deeper sense of the expectations, goals and interests of varying parties connected to the pre-apprenticeship program. Twenty three one-on-one interviews were conducted. Interviews on average lasted between 15-45 minutes. All student interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Students who agreed to participate in the one-on-one

interviews received a \$20 reimbursement for their time. All incentives were given in cash directly after the interview.

*Individual Interviews – Institutional Sponsors and On-Site Personnel* - Nine ECCCP sponsors were interviewed, including central office personnel, pre-apprenticeship instructors, vocational school partners and union representatives.<sup>1</sup> These interviewees were not tape-recorded<sup>2</sup>. These interviewees received no monetary incentives for agreeing to do an interview. (See *appendix* for the interview protocol used in this evaluation)

*Telephone Interviews:* Telephone interviews were conducted to gather data on applicants and admits who decided against attending the program. Interviews consisted of asking one question, thus, interviews lasted between 2-3 minutes<sup>3</sup>.

All applicants were asked, “What was the primary reason you decided not to participate in the pre-apprenticeship program?” This sub-sample consisted of 17 people.

*Focus Group:* Focus groups often provide advantageous opportunities for gathering group perspectives and brainstorming. Specifically, a focus group of 5 students was convened to further explore the issues. The group was all men, with one older/non-recent high school graduate, 3 were African-American and two Latino. They were all given a \$10 stipend for their participation.

### **Recruiting and Participant Profile**

Initially well over 200 young men and women expressed interest in the pre-apprenticeship program. Over time, 80 returned for interviews, 50 pursued the program, and eventually 32 students enrolled. After the first drug test, two students were released from the program due to testing positive, bringing the cohort size down to 30 students.

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<sup>1</sup> High school principals and guidance counselors were aggressively pursued for interviews. However, due to incompatible schedules interviews were not conducted with principals and guidance counselors.

<sup>2</sup> During key sponsor interviews, interviewees appeared uncomfortable with being tape-recorded. As a result, a decision was made to collect data by way of taking notes.

<sup>3</sup> In one case, an interview lasted for 30 minutes. A parent refused to have me speak with her son. She noted that she did not appreciate how ECCCP and officials in the schools (i. e. teachers, guidance counselors, etc.) encouraged her son to attend the pre-apprenticeship program without consulting her. Apparently, her son was developmentally challenged and was tracked in the high school’s special education department. This parent expressed an overall skepticism of persons who serve students in special education.

As an initial measure of success of the program, a full 78% (26) of the original cohort completed and graduated from the program. The graduation class was quite diverse: 20% (5) were women and 80% (21) were men; 72% (18) of the students were African-American, 24% (6) Latino, 1 White and 1 identifies as "other". Ages range from 17-38. With respect to geography, most pre-apprentices (76%) reside in Newark, 8% (2) are from Irvington, 8% (2) from Belleville, one from Orange and one from Maplewood. A full 30% of pre-apprentices on Survey 1 indicated that they provide financial support for a child/children, and 20% help support a spouse.

### Brief Portraits

- *Kevin* is an African-American male who resides in Newark, New Jersey. He has been out of high school for approximately 2 years before attending the pre-apprenticeship program. He attended Malcolm X Shabazz high school. After high school he attended Essex Community College for a year. Although he was in sufficient academic standing, Kevin said that he found the college experience “to not be for him.” He entered the pre-apprenticeship program enthusiastic about learning about the construction trades.
- *Mika* is a 32-year-old African-American woman who lives in Irvington, New Jersey. She is single and has one son. Although in the pre-apprenticeship program she can come off as having a quiet demeanor, Mika nonetheless, moves throughout the classes with a noticeable sense of confidence and work ethic. In fact, Mika after leaving the pre-apprenticeship program at 3:00PM goes to a second job where she is an assistant program coordinator at the Board of Education.
- *Justin* is an 18-year-old White male who lives in South Orange, New Jersey. He graduated “part time” from Columbia High School and Essex County Vocational School. That is, he attended one school in the morning while attending the other in the afternoon. Justin in many respects was fortunate enough to receive a high school education specifically tailored to his interests. Moreover, his father is involved in the construction trades. In fact, Justin’s father was the person who informed and encouraged Justin to participate in the pre-apprenticeship program.

As displayed in Table 1, the pre-apprentices entered the program after performing satisfactorily on the TABE’s math and reading/locating information test. A number of the pre-apprentices achieved above average scores on the “Work Keys” tests (math and locating information).

Table 1: Incoming TABE Assessments  
And the Math and Locating Information Pre-Test Scores\*

Early Assessment Test (April) TABE		Pre-Test (July) Work Keys	
Math	Reading	Math	Locating Info.
8.1**	9.3**	3.8***	3.4***

\*Mean scores represent averaged test scores of those who graduated.

\*\*This number represents the grade level.

\*\*\*scores range from 1-5.

**Results: Expectations, Recruitment, Experiences and Recommendations**

The thoughts of each of the partners are presented in this section. These responses are often provided in the ‘voice’ of the varied program constituencies further highlighting the rich and complex dynamics of the development and operation of the pilot program.

***To what extent were the various partners invested in the program, and what were their expectations of and motivations for involvement in the ECCCP?***

It was impressive to hear how invested the many constituencies – pre-apprentices, sponsors, vocational partners and educators -- were in the ECCCP program. Although varied with respect to initial motivations and expectations, most agreed that their investment came from a sense that this was an opportune time to expand opportunities in the construction trades, particularly along the lines of race and ethnicity. In our review of these data, we begin with the pre-apprentices.

**Program Participants**

The pre-apprentices were attracted to the program primarily because of the **professional and financial sense of security** it promised. To the survey question, “What interested and/or motivated you to get involved in the program?” 100% of the respondents indicated an opportunity to develop a “career” as well as receive quality benefit packages; 45% of this sample indicated that the “money” in combination with the opportunity for a “career” appealed to them. On survey I, when pre-apprentices were asked, “What concerns do you have about the possibility of joining a union,” a full 55% of the respondents indicated that they had no concerns. On survey II, after having a fair amount of exposure to the construction trades and union life, this same question was reintroduced and again, 55% of respondents indicated that they had no concerns about the possibility of joining a union.

In fact, by the end of the program, nearly 1/3 of the respondents on survey II noted they had already applied to an apprenticeship.

Most pre-apprentices came to the program with strong motivation and appreciation for education. They saw the pre-apprenticeship program as a continuation of their educational aspirations. Indeed, as a measure of the strength of ECCCP, pre-apprentices' expectations of an apprenticeship grew substantially more confident from survey I to survey II. Interviews confirm the survey finding that pre-apprentices held strong expectations for securing an apprenticeship. They were also, however, realistic about the competition for these positions. Most indicated that if they did not gain access into an apprenticeship, they would apply to college and/or seek another vocational opportunity/program.

### **Urban School Districts**

Sponsors and educators also began the program with much enthusiasm. As a group, they characterized ECCCP as a significant “match” for many of their institutional interests. Recognizing the delicate balance of interests represented, many suggested that this project emerged at just “the right time.” Financial, historic and cultural factors were in place so that a program like ECCCP could be implemented without confronting overwhelming social and political resistance. Most spoke of the program as a significant symbol of “change and progress” for the inner city communities and the unions.

Many noted that for the pre-apprenticeship program to be successful, however, all partners overtime would have to “continue conversations,” “reeducate” themselves and “rethink” how to serve the students. One commented that the program was long overdue, but had much history to overcome:

“Historically, there has not been a relationship between minorities and construction unions... We have to build this understanding in the entire program—from the administration to the pre-apprentices... There’s a lot of (additional) education of our publics that needs to happen—the community, apprentices, administration...”

These interviews reveal the commitments, and the big stretch, involved in this rich and developing collaboration among educators, community, unions and the students of Essex County.

Reflecting on the partnership, sponsors appreciated that the varied constituencies in the Joint Committee were willing to sit “around the same table.” One noted that the program “nicely matches the interest of all of the parties, with everyone working at the same table toward a rich development of the program, and recognizing the need to persist and hang in there to get this program where it needs to be.” Ever aware of the power and delicacy of these many institutional collaborations, some spoke of how ECCCP has a “real shot” to develop into a “social equalizer,” constructively contributing to assuaging poverty and related issues (i. e. urban education, unemployment, etc.) in several communities in Essex

County. Most sponsors admitted that the construction unions have historically not been “particularly open to minority apprentices,” but felt that “changing times” have made the construction trades receptive to correcting these issues.

### **Union Representatives**

Union representatives were also very positive about the pre-apprenticeship program. They viewed ECCCP as an opportunity to recruit and diversify their membership. One issue concerning expectations, however, was mentioned with some frequency.

Some union representatives noted that the ECCP, specifically the use of the word pre-apprentice, put the unions/locals in a somewhat awkward position. “The word pre-apprentice creates an illusion; it just sets up false hopes,” explained one representative. Another explained that he did not want, “to be used, or viewed, as an [employment] insurance policy.” The worry expressed by these men concerned pre-apprentices who would not perform well enough on standardized tests issued by the locals. The locals did not want to be viewed as the principle obstacle to gaining access into apprenticeships. Across locals, union representatives were eager to see program administrators generate viable alternatives for such pre-apprentices who do not make it in to the apprenticeship slots.

### **Vocational School Partners**

Vocational high school partners also expressed deep commitment to the pre-apprenticeship program. They spoke with a particular passion for students having options and voice, articulating a strong concern for low-income students of color. Eager to offer suggestions for re-shaping the pre-apprenticeship program for such students, they noted that, “unions were never particularly open to minority apprentices.” They described an ideal program as one that would not only give low-income students of color opportunities, but one that was culturally sensitive to the economic, academic and cultural experiences of these students.

One vocational partner described the need to construct a program that serves the needs of these students, recognizing that there was a dramatic “learning curve” for everybody involved. And yet he, like the others, was optimistic that this shared learning would happen over time. “We better know how to serve them – to do this we have to allow their voice to directly shape, assist and direct our program. We have to build around them. The students must be involved in conceptualizing the program.”

### **Site Manager and Instructors**

The site manager and instructors were unanimously enthusiastic about the program. From the beginning, they demonstrated high expectations and a strong sense of confidence in working as a team. When asked about his (heavy) teaching load, one instructor explained, “We’re a team!” He said he was “honored and excited” to have an opportunity to work with a good team of instructors.

Classroom observations (see Section III on *program experience*) confirmed that instructors taught with deep commitment to the students and the subject matter. Eager to serve the pre-apprentices, instructors taught in ways that encouraged students to consider the social and political benefits of life in the construction trades. As impressive as their commitment to teach, these instructors modeled a willingness to learn from the students. Holding the pre-apprentices accountable, the instructors expected and demanded quality work from the young men and women in their classes.

### **The Recruitment Process:**

*To what extent can ECCCP's outreach, recruitment and marketing capabilities be improved?*

#### **Program Participants and Applicants**

Three of our methods speak to the question of outreach: telephone interviews with applicants/admits who did *not* come to the program; the focus group, and the pre-post surveys.

Telephone interviews revealed two key reasons that some of the originally interested ECCCP candidates later decided *not* to attend the program: (1) better financial opportunities and (2) scheduling problems with the ECCCP office and/or pre-apprenticeship program. Money and opportunity related explanations were by far the dominant response given in the telephone interviews.

Of the 17 respondents contacted, 11 noted that their decision changed because of more financially rewarding opportunities or worries about whether or not the program would really result in a job in the construction trades. Specifically, respondents noted that they accepted another job opportunity (4) or decided to attend college (5) instead of enrolling in the pre-apprenticeship program. Two other respondents noted that they would have pursued the program if they had an, otherwise, more stable living situation or lifestyle.

Five respondents explained that they encountered a scheduling conflict with ECCCP. Two reported that ECCCP never returned their phone calls and/or otherwise failed to follow up. Two others indicated that due to previously scheduled summer vacations, ECCCP encouraged these candidates to partake in the pre-apprenticeship program at a later date. One respondent said that at a later point of inquiry he was informed that classes were filled.

In the focus groups, strengths and weaknesses of the outreach and recruitment phases were discussed, with a number of suggestions generated. All pre-apprentices in the focus group found ECCCP in the initial phase to be exceptionally professional. Although several of the students in the focus group saw the initial phase of interviews and tests to be tedious, these hurdles came to be seen as an opportunity to develop self-confidence.

The required math and drug tests, as well as the interviews, affirmed that this program was a rigorous and serious opportunity for advancement.

Savion explained, “To me it felt like if you had to take a test to get inside the program it must be the real deal. That’s the way I felt. It’s like some programs, all you got to do is just show up and you in. For this one you had to qualify to get in. In a way, like, when I had the acceptance letters... (I felt like) I must of did something good, so it must be the real deal. So that’s why I basically kept going with it.” Derrick added, “The math test, the interviews they boosted up my confidence. If I could pass this math test I could go through this interview. So it really boosted up my confidence about this program. It got my hopes real high about it.”

Focus group members admitted that initially they thought the interviews were intimidating, largely because of the number of interviewers in the room at the same time. However, the students agreed that they quickly became comfortable when they began to perceive the interviewers as genuinely interested in the assets they brought to the interview:

Rahim: When I first got here, you know, I wasn’t really motivated. I thought it was like any other thing. You know, but, the knowledge she {Ellen Brown} gave me during that short period of time made me decide to go through with it... She enlightened me on what was going on and what was to be expected. And she told me what this program was striving to. She gave me a sense of direction. And in that session, just that short little brief thing, motivated me. She was—they were very professional about it, you know. She took her time, she made sure I understood what was going on, ok and if I had any questions she would sit there as long as it took. So I really liked that about her.

With respect to recruitment, participants indicated that they learned about the program through their high schools through an intercom announcement, a guidance counselor or teacher. On survey I, 35% of the respondents indicated that they heard of the program through a teacher.

To the extent that these men identified a problem with recruitment, they focused on the flyer. In the individual interviews, a number of respondents said that they understood clearly what was promised and what was potentially forthcoming. In the focus group, however, a number of the men said that they viewed the flyer as misleading. It was clear that the focus group members initially had a weak conceptual understanding of the word “pre-apprenticeship” and to a lesser degree, “apprenticeship.” With no background in the construction trades, they didn’t understand – and thought most others would not understand -- the subtle distinctions implied in the flyer between what *would* be earned as a pre-apprentice vs. what *could* be earned as an apprentice. Although they did not find the recruitment efforts of ECCCP to be intentionally deceptive, the focus group cautioned that some of ECCCP’s recruitment strategies were read as misleading.

Men in the focus group said that they originally thought that coming into the pre-apprenticeship program meant participating in a “job training program” that would pay



them \$11-17 an hour. Several thought the pre-apprenticeship program was designed to “prep” interested recent high school graduates with the necessary construction trade skills for an apprenticeship; that entry into an apprenticeship was not contingent on an application and interview process as well as strong test scores by the union local. For the most part, they believed all they had to do was perform well in the pre-apprenticeship program, and an apprenticeship slot would be provided to them.

John: “With this information they gave on the paper, it seemed like we wouldn’t have to go through this, type of stuff. I thought we were going to be training for the job and after they train we was going to get paid like \$10 per hour. It said it on the paper, \$11-17 per hour upon coming into the program. It didn’t say after the program you going to take a union test and then you are going to start making the money. It said when you come in this program you are going to start making the money.”

Derrick: “To me they did false advertising. They didn’t, exactly, explain in detail. All they put in big bold letters was \$11-17 per hour. They didn’t say an apprentice was going to be making it. That’s all they said in big, black letters”

Hector: “They should have said you were going to get \$100 every week. That’s not going to throw people off cause then your still going to benefit off of it but it would have made it more clearer. It would have been better for the program.”

Focus group members were, nevertheless, clear to note that they appreciated the opportunity to participate in this program. They valued the educational experience and the skills received from the pre-apprenticeship program. The group suggested that if the program “clearly” promotes what it is in a position to offer, a substantial number of candidates would still be attracted and none would feel misled.

Focus group members generated a list of meaningful recruitment suggestions. For the most part, these suggestions centered on community high schools as a site most conducive for recruitment.

Savion: “Even if you just target the schools themselves. You would get the word out to so many people because we are related to the schools one way or another. You either got kids, you’ve been there, your parents are working there. If you just targeting schools word spread so fast, it’s ridiculous”.

Hector noted union presentations as experienced Monday mornings in the pre-apprenticeship program, would be a key way to promote the program to other high school students. He said:

“In the schools that’s even better, cause, we’re like in our environment, school. We’re like there basically every day and we feel more comfortable in that environment, so why not have them (unions) come down to the high school and explain what they do? If we are in our

surroundings, then it would be more comfortable and then basically we would have a better interest.”

*Focus Group Suggestions for Recruitment:*

- **Internet/Web Page:** Create a web page for potential or interested candidates.
- **Sporting Events:** Promote the opportunities of ECCCP in Essex County’s “big” high school football and basketball games.
- **Multiple High School Orientations/Information Night:** Periodically throughout the year have information nights in the various high schools for potential candidates.
- **Street Promotional Team:** Develop a street team, largely consisting of high school students, who put up posters, hand out flyers and generally spread the word of ECCCP.
- **Union Presentations:** Conducting union presentations (as in the case of the pre-apprenticeship program) in the high school to promote the opportunities of ECCCP in the construction trades were thought of as a recruitment strategy. Also, focus group members thought ECCCP should organize high school trips to the locals or apprenticeship sites.
- **Improved Flyers:** Pre-apprentices thought there was a need to redesign the promotional flyer. Pre-apprentices think that a small team of high school students, recent pre-apprentices and central staff in collaboration should work on improved flyers as well as promotional items overall.
- **Earlier Recruitment:** Interviewees wanted ECCCP to begin recruitment earlier in the year so that it would give candidates more of an opportunity to take the locals standardized tests.
- **Younger Recruitment:** Focus group members argued that recruitment should begin as early as 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Although interviewees generally found the \$100 stipend to be inadequate, they suggested that \$100 stipend should be used, nonetheless, to catch the attention of high school freshmen. This amount would keep their attention and provide ECCCP with a stronger opportunity to build relationships over time.
- **Direct Recruitment by program administrators:** Focus group members expressed a desire to see more of the program administrators during recruitment, schools and communities, and throughout the course of the pre-apprenticeship program.

## **Vocational School Partners**

Vocational partners also offered thoughts and cautions about outreach. Voicing an exceptionally strong student orientation, these partners argued that programs have to better recognize the strengths, needs and experiences of the persons they serve. Specifically, they wanted program designers to be more aggressive in generating a program that recognizes and responds to the experiences of low-income students of color. One vocational school partner said, “We have to do it with quality... We have to be more aggressive! No more 1 shot deals like a career day. We need something more deeper because then we have good candidates who know what they are getting into!” These partners were concerned that, for the future, the program needs serious planning and time to organize and to encourage students to appreciate the possibilities of a pre-apprenticeship program, e.g. to see the construction trades as potential careers.

Moreover, vocational school partners expressed a concern that traditional high schools are not able to contribute the necessary hours to advertising and recruitment as well as developing conceptual linkages to advance a pre-apprenticeship program. One vocational high school partner said that the principals involved in the project are “overwhelmed with paper work” and day-to-day activities. “When it was time to recruit kids they didn’t even know about the program... No one (principals) responded to the email sent by Becky and the superintendent in March.” Another vocational high school partner reinforced this concern, noting that traditional high schools tend to be skeptical of the career potential of construction and are therefore unlikely to devote the necessary time and energy to promote such a program to their students. “The high schools were the most difficult to convince... The attitude typical of the (high) schools is that these are dead-end jobs.”

## **Pilot Program Operation**

*What were the varied experiences of the program as expressed by key partners?*

### **Participants**

Pre-apprentices expressed high levels of appreciation for, confidence in and support for the pre-apprenticeship program. They regard ECCCP as a program that educates them well, opens up career options, is socially concerned and generous. They report that pre-apprenticeship experiences made them far more competitive for the union apprenticeships. In fact, 90% believe they are “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to “ultimately become an apprentice in one of the trade unions.” Thirty-eight percent of the respondents on survey II indicated that the construction trades are where they see their careers over the next 10 years.

All interviewees want the pre-apprenticeship program to continue. With respect to the program’s teaching, pre-apprentices frequently commented upon the high quality of instruction they received. On both surveys and in interviews, pre-apprentices remarked

on the rich educational opportunities to learn in ECCCP, sometimes in contrast to what they hadn't learned in high school. Kersha explained, "... the learning experience is good. I feel like I'm learning more. Stuff that I didn't learn in (my) last school... certain math skills." On survey II, a full 87.5% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that, "The instructors are competent."

In particular, pre-apprentices reported that the program sharpened their understandings of the use of math in professional capacities. In response to the question, "What could you have learned in high school that would have better prepared you for this 8 week pre-apprentice program?" thirty eight percent of the respondents indicated "math" A full 95% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that applied math in the pre-apprenticeship program was taught well.

El-Hajj: "The reason why the teachers are pushing us is because they want to see us succeed."

Brett: "They should just leave as it is ...[don't change anything]"

Yaw: "They (instructors) get really into the math, you know, that I have weaknesses in, you know, they go through that and strengthen them (skills)..."

As you can see from Table 2, most students on Survey I agreed or strongly agreed that courses (except for Physical Education) were taught well. By Survey II, these ratings dropped slightly for all courses, except for Applied Math. The combination of academic and hands on experiences produce high levels of confidence and, as you will see in the next section, improvements in academic competence.

Courses	<u>Survey I</u> Mean Score*	<u>Survey II</u> Mean Score*
Construction Basics	3.1	2.5
Work Place Readiness	3.2	2.6
Physical Education	2.5	2.4
Applied Math	3.3	3.4

\* Pre-apprentices were asked to rate 1-4 (4 is highest) how well they thought the courses were taught.

A second strength of the program noted by pre-apprentices was the program’s practical, “hands-on” teaching philosophy. Pre-apprentices valued the fact that the program incorporated a hands-on approach while teaching the construction trades.

Pre-apprentices were scheduled weekly to attend personal presentations at local apprenticeship sites. There they were given a tour and allowed to engage in several hands-on exercises (i.e. driving a crane, pipe bending, welding, etc.). Most interviewees reported that this helped them better understand the construction trades. On survey II, 87.6% of the sample from survey II felt they had a “good understanding of the application process for my construction trade of interest.” By program’s end, students felt confident and assured that they were well equipped by the program to secure an apprenticeship. On survey II, 87.5% of the sample reported confidence that they would become a union apprentice.

*Pre-apprentices’ academic improvements.* As noted above, as an initial measure of success of the program, a full 78% (26) of the original cohort completed and graduated from the program. The quantitative assessments suggest that these pre-apprentices not only persisted, but most also improved in their academic and vocational skills.

Table 3 reveals that nearly 50% (11 out of 23) of the pre-apprentices improved their scores on the Work Keys math exam and 57% (13 out of 23) of the pre-apprentices improved their scores on the locating information assessment. In contrast, 22% (5 out of 23) of the pre-apprentices’ scores fell on the Work Keys Math scores and 8% (2 out of 23) of the pre-apprentices’ scores worsened on the Locating Information post-test. There are no data for 3 of the pre-apprentices.

Test	% of increased scores	% of scores that remained the same	% of decreased scores
Work Keys Math Score	50%	26%	22%
Work Keys Locating Information Score	57%	30%	8%

- Exams administered in July (time I) and August (time 2)

Table 4 demonstrates that even those students who entered the program with relatively underdeveloped academic skills (performing at less than 8<sup>th</sup> grade level) produced strong academic gains by program end. In fact, 54% of the students who scored less than an eighth-grade math level on the TABE pre-test, by the end of the pre-apprenticeship program, scored either a 4 or 5 on the Work Keys Math Post test. Sixty-two percent of the pre-apprentices who scored between eighth and twelfth grade scored a 5 on the Work

Keys Math Post test. This is the level considered ‘passing’ for most union trades. These data strongly suggest that the 8-week pre-apprentice program powerfully improved the overall math scores of this first cohort, especially those who entered most behind grade level.

Tab Math Pre Scores	Work Keys Math Post Scores		Work Keys Locating Information Post Scores	
	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Less Than 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade (N=11)	36%	18%	55%	--
8-12 <sup>th</sup> Grade (N=8)	9%	62%	70%	10%
Above 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade (N=2)	--	100%	--	100%

*Pre-apprentice attitudes toward the program.* As Table 5 reveals, students report overall positive attitudes toward the program. They feel confident, well educated, respected, and sure that they can find help when they need it. Scores were consistent from Survey 1 to Survey II.

Survey Attitudinal Questions	<u>Survey I</u> Mean Score*	<u>Survey II</u> Mean Score*
Confidence in how pre-apprenticeship program would prepare students**.	3.1	3.0
Adequacy of weekly \$100 stipend.	2.6	2.4
Respected by the instructors.	3.2	3.0

Concerned about support received up until the test date.	-----	2.8
Respected by administrative persons.	3.2	2.8
Instructors help me in class.	3.5	3.1
Most people are friendly in the program.	3.2	3.1
Instructors are very competent.	3.1	2.9
A good understanding of the application process.	-----	3.0

\*Pre-apprentices were asked to rate 1-4 (1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- agree and 4- strongly agree) how well they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

\*\*All statements have been abbreviated for the purposes of preserving space in this text. See appendix I for perusal or a copy of all survey questions in their entirety.

Participant Concerns

As the surveys suggest, and interviews confirm, the pre-apprentices identified a number of concerns about the program:

- A number were worried about remembering and applying what they learned in class to the union tests (in some cases, the lag time is as long as 3 or 4 months);
- Quite a few noted repetition and some monotony in the union presentations;
- A substantial group expressed concern that the stipend was considered low. On the survey, 35% considered \$100 to be inadequate, particularly given that 30% of pre-apprentices on survey 1 indicated that they provide financial support for a child/children, and 20% help support a spouse.

One student, Malik, spoke poignantly about how financial struggles affect participation and motivation in the program:

“Sometimes (students) in here we’ll be asking people like, ‘can I borrow something to get something to eat. You know what I mean? Sometimes, ‘can I borrow something to get on the bus’. People don’t be havin’ it, yo. So give people bus tickets and food...

You lost people (during the recruitment phase) because of the transportation. People don’t got money, yo. Everybody don’t have money. I mean, like two hundred dollars every two weeks is nothing, yo.... ... you got to pay three dollars to get up here every day (on the bus), so add this up. Three times five is fifteen. Then your food, say about ten dollars, that’s fifty-sixty dollars (a week). Not counting, the money you spend when you on the streets. So that adds up more than two hundred dollars (every two weeks). Speedy (A summer employment program designed for teenagers) pays more than this.”

- A set of respondents commented negatively upon the facility, including the lack of air conditioning as well as an inadequate gymnasium, and
- A number of the pre-apprentices requested that issues of race, racism and the history of construction unions be addressed head-on.

Rasheed, a pre-apprentice, explained:

“I mean, it’s a reality... Race is going to be out there, you know what I’m saying. Different races are going to have to interact with different races.... We just are going to have to deal with it. Don’t treat somebody unfairly because they a different skin color and at the same time don’t expect to be treated fairly. It shouldn’t be that way but you can’t just assume everybody’s going to treat you correct. Cause some people just got these, ah, their own biases and they don’t like too many people, but you just got to adapt, that’s the game you got to play, you going to have to adapt to their game to get where they’re at and once you’re in there—you can try to change the whole institute, like the social format of it... you got to adapt to their ball game, you know.”

#### Pre-Apprentice Subgroup Analysis: Women and Older Students

Qualitative analysis reveals distinct and noteworthy experiences of pre-apprentices who are women and/or older students. When women were asked about their thoughts on coming into a field not heavily populated with women, they typically responded that they did not see it as a problem. Although they were aware of the history of women in the construction unions, they felt that overall attitudes had improved. This small and select group of women was certain that their gender would not be a barrier for getting into the union trades or for sustaining a career in the construction trades. Marta explained, “Like the guys all be like ‘You’re Puerto Rican, you can’t do this, you can’t do that’ and then maybe because I’m a female I (might) see it as sexist. But, honestly, me personally, I don’t foresee any problems like that for me because I’m a woman or because I’m Puerto Rican.”



Although women interviewees did not believe that their gender would adversely affect entry and/or their capacity to perform as an apprentice, field notes reveal that on field trips and during Monday morning presentations, women often inquired about the overall status of women in the local (i. e. “How many women apprentices do you on average bring in per year?”). Smart and aware, these women were both optimistic and cautious.

Interviews with the older students or non-recent high school graduates also suggested distinct experiences in the program. Most older students were connected to the board of education through work in the schools, another vocational program sponsored by the board of education and/or through a friend, spouse or family member working for the board of education. These older students voiced strong concerns about the attitudes of some younger students. Union representatives echoed concerns about the younger students’ abilities to conceptualize linkages from the pre-apprentice classroom to a particular construction trade and/or job. They believed the young or recent high school graduates are more concerned with money, and haven’t yet developed the passion required to maintain a career.

“A union is like a fraternity... You take a pledge to get involved with this. This is how serious it is... It’s not just I got a job, it’s a career... This is my identity. I am an *ironworker* by trade.” He continued by noting that until the pre-apprentices understand the construction trades on this level by seeing this opportunity as more than “money, then we are going to have problems.”

*Some Pre-Apprentice Suggestions to Consider:*

- **Shorten School Day:** A number of the pre-apprentices in their individual interviews expressed that the 6 – 6.5 hour days were too long particularly when juxtaposed against the humidity of the summer heat in an un-air-conditioned building.
- **Longer Lunch:** Pre-apprentices expressed an overall concern for a longer lunch.
- **Food and Bus Tickets:** A number of pre-apprentices expressed that increased stipends, could come in the form of free bus tickets and on site lunch in the cafeteria of the building. Pre-apprentices thought this might help to reduce tardiness and absences.
- **College Level Instructors :** Some pre-apprentices thought a teaching faculty of all non-adjunct college level professors would help the program on at least two fronts. First, it would help solidify the integrity and credibility of the program. Second, pre-apprentices reported that college professors are use to dealing and speaking with adults. As a result, non-adjunct college level instructors according to some pre-apprentices would help to reduce the treatment of them as “children” or “high school students”. Pre-apprentices consistently expressed a need to be treated as young adults. In response to this concern one man said in his interview, “...sometimes they want to treat you like you ain’t got no say so... Like you in high school.”

## **Institutional Sponsors**

Sponsors consistently expressed an overall level of commitment to, confidence in and support for the pre-apprenticeship program. Like the pre-apprentices, these men and women wanted to see the program continue to evolve and expand as an economic vehicle for social change.

Three issues emerged from these interviews: a recognition of the different institutional investments in the pilot, some concerns about pre-apprentice behaviors, and recommendations for ECCCP.

*Institutional Investments in a Significant but Delicate Coalition.* To varying degrees, all interviewees mentioned that this program integrates distinct institutional interests, histories and competitions. The variation of institutional investments is an obvious strength, and an ongoing challenge for the program. One interviewee said, “When everybody heard about the 1.6 billion dollars, everybody wanted a piece of the pie!” A union representative noted that there is a fierce competition between budding programs such as ECCCP. “These program heads can be very cut throat with each other.” According to this representative, if he is not careful, this competition could interfere with relations in his local. It is important to note that he regarded ECCCP to be one of the better programs that has come through his local.

*Pre-apprentice behavior.* Overall, sponsors perceived the pre-apprentices to be a body of committed and well-intentioned young adults. They often spoke of the pre-apprentices as persons with the very characteristics necessary for success in the construction trades.

However, in addition to the praise, a number of interviewees thought that some of the pre-apprentices were “rude” and “embarrassing,” involved in verbal confrontations, too often late, sometimes disruptive or “lazy.” One instructor said that some of the young men need to internalize the adage “Whatever the mind conceives, you can achieve.” Most viewed the success of this program as primarily resting on the will of the pre-apprentice:

“It comes down to their will. It comes down to work ethic. If you don’t succeed, you don’t have work ethic!” Sponsors offered a number of recommendations for preventing such behavior.

- Interviewees recommended looking at students’ high school transcripts for patterns of disciplinary problems as well as developing a stricter punitive or accountability system for pre-apprentices.
- Ideas for structural interventions, e.g. wanting to see ECCCP concentrate energy on building a “reality” suited for their target population, e. g. implementation of vocational and/or construction related courses in public high schools.

- ECCCP could perhaps play a stronger role in facilitating high school environments that allow more low-income youth of color to better trust as well as feel confident and committed to these school environments rather than feeling alienated in these spaces. It is hoped that such a high school would enable potential pre-apprentice candidates to be in more of a position to trust such a career option. If pre-apprentices throughout an extended period of time are able to see that this program is taken seriously, supported and viewed as legitimate by friends, families and the overall community, interviewees believe future candidates will feel even more committed to the pre-apprenticeship program.
- Another suggestion was to better stratify the ages of the pre-apprenticeship's cohort. Specifically, a number of those interviewed thought some of the behavioral concerns resulted from the "immaturity" or youth of the group. Because most of the pre-apprentices were recent high school graduates, it was suggested that ECCCP think more clearly about how to handle younger pre-apprentices. Largely this concern stemmed from the assumption that pre-apprentices who were disruptive were younger or recent high school graduates. However, a number of the pre-apprentices who were noted as having behavioral concerns were in fact non-recent high school graduates. Also, although union representatives in their interviews offered this suggestion, they admitted that locals recruit substantial numbers of young or recent high school graduates. Perhaps deeper conversations between ECCCP and the unions are necessary so that apprenticeship sites can inform such programs of the strategies used to maintain discipline between the variously aged apprentices.

### **Instructors and On-Site Personnel**

Classes for the pre-apprenticeship program were held in Essex County Vocational/Technical high school (see appendix for curriculum). Courses, ranging from Work Place Readiness, Physical Education and Applied Math, were conducted throughout the building. Pre-apprentices were separated into three groups: A, B, and C, based on the pre-apprentices' first set of math scores.

Across the 8 weeks, pre-apprentices and educators persisted with enthusiasm, sometimes through difficult times. In classrooms, high levels of constructive student and instructor engagement were evident, as was quality teaching. These seasoned instructors were energized and motivated to instruct. They were excited, enthusiastic and took their work seriously. Instructors used the space of the entire classroom to instruct and involved as many students as possible. The instructors tried to teach conversationally, while clearly leading the class. Instructors were comprehensive in their approach, using a host of pedagogical strategies and activities such as workbooks, small group discussions, and individual assignments to make the connection between the physical and theoretical underpinnings of the construction trades.

With the intention of giving the students a deeper conceptual understanding of the trades, it was not uncommon for some instructors to focus parts of their classes on the history of

a specific trade. Some of these instructors taught how a specific construction field came to be and evolved over time. Consider the following set of field notes:

*The instructor took us through the history of the carpentry field indicating that the economy is directly responsible for the ebbs and flows of the field. He staked out at least three major time periods (Great Depression, 1970's & early 1990's) where carpentry was not in great demand. And he followed up by noting how the economy is currently in a good position, thus, very prosperous for the carpentry field... Carpenters are responsible in key ways for most of the physical structures in existence. He continued his talk by noting how the construction industry is responsible for so much in society. The instructor said 1/7 of the people in the U. S. are involved in construction; construction is a 1 trillion dollar industry in the United States.*

In addition to being highly engaging, however, there were a few instances when instructors found themselves having difficulty managing the classroom. These were instances when students spoke with concern and frustration about the relation of race and opportunities in the construction trades, raising questions about the pre-apprentice program.

To illustrate: one instructor said to the pre-apprentices during one class, "... there is a lot of money in this country for everybody." A student quickly and forcefully responded, "There ain't enough money—at least not in our communities. You heard Tupac, 'You got money for wars but can't feed the poor. This is a sweat shop!'"

While instances like this were few and far between, and not representative of the average classroom, it was nonetheless clear that many of the pre-apprentices had important, critical questions about the construction trades, the pre-apprenticeship program and the history of race and social class in America. In this case, two instructors were present and eventually able to adequately address this student's concern without losing the attention of the class.

The school and the classrooms, although clearly conducive to the general intentions of ECCCP, were in some respects under-resourced. For instance, the full potential of physical education could not be reached due to a lack of adequate locker rooms, showers and overall equipment. In addition, there were a number of complaints about the air conditioning and/or ventilation of the gym as well building over. During one Monday morning presentation, the humidity was so intense in the building that everyone (union personnel, pre-apprentices, staff, etc.) convened in one of the building's only classrooms with an air conditioner. Indeed, many pre-apprentices thought it would be highly effective if courses were taught in locals and/or a more highly resourced vocational facilities so that the pre-apprentices can develop even more of a conceptual understanding of the construction trades.

## Field Trips to Union Sites

Participant observations enabled us to gather data on the interactions between union personnel and the pre-apprentices throughout the 8-week summer pre-apprentice program. The students were regularly scheduled to attend union/local presentations at 8:30am on Monday mornings at Essex County Technical/Vocational High School. Also, every Friday by 9:00am, pre-apprentices were expected to be in attendance to depart via a commercial bus line from Essex County Technical/Vocational High School to attend a local or apprenticeship presentation. All presentations were specifically prepared and organized for the pre-apprentices. Pre-apprentices were very impressed with the settings for these presentations. Also, pre-apprentices found the practical edge incorporated in the teaching and learning at the union site visits to be particularly appealing. Pre-apprentices said this gave them a deeper understanding of the field they were trying to enter.

Participant observations reveal a number of common themes that cut across both Monday morning presentations and Friday field trips. Presentations typically proceeded with a wealth of information about pay and benefit packages. At these sessions, pre-apprentices were informed of the locals' jurisdiction; the hours required for an apprenticeship; as well as the monies accumulated through pay and/or benefit packages. For instance, read the following set of field notes:

*The presenter then spoke on the financial logistics of the apprenticeship. Journeymen at this local make \$28.28 per hour; an additional \$6 per hour goes to vacation and another \$6 per hour goes to an annuity fund which is not taxable. First year apprentices make \$14.14 per hour plus benefits. The apprentices have to put in 1000 hours and/or 6 months for the benefits to kick in. They receive a 10% raise every 6 months as an apprentice. After the apprentice's 3<sup>rd</sup> year they are held at 90% of a journeyman's wage.*

Union representatives advocated a strong work ethic, emphasizing the unions' resistance to laziness and tardiness. Consistent across all of the presentations was an explicit disregard for non-union workers. There were comments about immigrants who were the most likely to be hired as non-union workers; that non-union workers are typically paid less, receive no benefits, work under harder and less safe conditions; that non-union workers accident rates are four times higher than union members. In contrast, it was generally noted that union workers enjoy the benefits of membership because unions operate as the "lawyer" for the worker by protecting his/her rights with the hiring contractor; help get work for the construction worker; as well as ensure hardworking members "a lifestyle that's conducive to getting a piece of the American dream."

As one representative explained, "Unions have a saying. Teach a man to fish and he can feed his family for a day. If that man teaches his family to fish they will then know how to feed themselves for a life time."

## Programmatic Recommendations

*To what extent can the Essex County Construction Careers Program be revised to improve or maximize the satisfaction, effectiveness and the overall cohesion of the partnership?*

In closing, a number of programmatic recommendations are offered in the spirit of improving the program, and establishing the foundation for replication. These suggestions are designed to enhance pre-apprentice satisfaction and to strengthen programmatic strategies for recruitment and placement of pre-apprentices into apprenticeship positions. The union representatives, community based partners, educators and pre-apprentices would be enormously helpful in the design of any replication programs.

### I. Pre-apprentice Concerns

- **Curricular Issues.** Pre-apprentices were highly satisfied with the program. Nevertheless, from the very beginning of the program, pre-apprentices had concerns, voiced and whispered, about the long struggle for racial equity within the trade union movement, and the construction trades in particular. A series of concerns emerged frequently, and were never adequately addressed by the program. It is crucial to address these issues within the curriculum, either through courses, guest lectures, or even discussion groups. The issues are identified below:
- **The finances of the school construction ‘boom’** – Having heard repeatedly about “all the money coming into New Jersey,” these men and women were skeptical that the monies would make their way into communities of color. Although many of the partners want the pre-apprentices to develop more of conceptual basis and not be so drawn to the “money aspect,” virtually every facet of the program (i. e. recruitment, union presentations, class room lectures, etc.) was filled with discussions of how much money can be made in the industry. A fuller discussion of finances and the construction trade, historically and today, would demystify the finances.
- **The budget** – Now that the pre-apprentices have learned about the state dollars attached to school construction, they are eager to see how the budget has been allocated. That is, a number asked, “If this program is supposed to benefit us, why do we get paid so little – what do the unions get? or the personnel running the program? The evaluators? The instructors? Is our stipend really adequate?” Another boldly asserted, “We’d like to see the budget!” A review of the budget allocations would be educational and allay concerns that the pre-apprentices were getting the “short end of the stick.”
- **The history of racial prejudice and exclusion in the construction trades** – A number of the men, particularly those who are already outspoken, commented on

the long history of trade unions excluding men and women of color. There was a “healthy dose of skepticism” expressed about whether or not that would ever change. Discussions of the history of race, racism and the construction trades, the finances of school construction in New Jersey, and how to move from pre-apprentice to apprentice, are all topics in need of serious, sustained and open conversation among the many partners involved.

All of these issues, from our perspective, are legitimate and deserve to be addressed by the program. They should not have to be raised by pre-apprentices, especially those “bold” enough to raise controversy. They could easily be woven into a course or a weekly seminar on, for example, “The History and Contemporary Politics of Race and Labor in New Jersey.” Toward this end, it seems imperative to invite in speakers who know the history of race, racism and the construction trades, both from an academic perspective and from personal history.

1. **The balance of academic and hands on experiences.** According to the students, the design of the program should incorporate even more practical, hands on experiences. Students responded very positively to the academic courses, but were even more engaged when they were doing what construction people do. It may be important for both recruitment and pre-apprentice satisfaction to develop more construction related/practically oriented exercises while the pre-apprentices are in school, and then over the summer.
2. **Build in generations of support.** Design the academic year and summer programs so that every successive generation of pre-apprentices has a ‘buddy’ from a prior cohort. In this way, the ECCCP will build a community of support and will establish a vehicle for passing down knowledge from one generation of “pioneer” to another, within the construction trades.
3. **Union presentations.** Ratings on the union presentations ranged from ‘terrific’ to ‘repetitive’. It may be useful to coordinate across these presentations so that pre-apprentices are not presented the same information time and again. More tours in the facility would be encouraged. Films were often described as boring. Speakers need to be prepared, engaging and confident as well as know what has been said been before.
4. **The stipend -** A number of pre-apprentices suggested that the bi-weekly stipend of \$200 should be reconsidered. Transportation expenses, as well as the amount of time in program, combine to make the stipend insufficient to cover living expenses. Further, several of the men and women have family members to support. Pre-apprentices requested

ECCCP increase the stipend so they can more easily meet the day-to-day demands of living and successfully performing in the program.

Alternatively, or in addition, perhaps ECCCP could arrange for a network of paid opportunities to supplement the pre-apprenticeship experience. This network would be comprised of willing institutional sponsors offering, perhaps, part time jobs set-aside for pre-apprentices. Analogous to a work study arrangement, the Board of Education, Institute for Social Justice and/or the unions might set aside perhaps 7-10 hours a week to hire one pre-apprentice. Not only would financial needs be met, but pre-apprentices would gain in-depth experience in organizational work life and an expanded network of colleagues.

5. **Post-Program Support system.** It is essential to establish a rich, caring and educationally responsive system to support students with various skills and test taking abilities between the time when the program ends until they take their exams. This support system may be financial, but certainly needs to be academic – a “Stanley Kaplan” of sorts for pre-apprentices.
6. **Track pre-apprentice exam scores and placements.** In order to determine the ultimate vocational effectiveness of the program, additional data need to be collected by the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice on rates of exam passage and then entry into union apprenticeships.

## II. Programmatic Concerns

**1. Goals and Promises.** As noted throughout, while the varied constituencies agreed that the ECCCP program was a huge success, they disagreed on expectations for the program and held distinct expectations about what was being offered and promised to the pre-apprentices. A frank discussion among the partners, and the pre-apprentices, about the goals of the program, the likelihood of securing an apprenticeship and the steps required to actually land a position within a union need to be fully articulated to all.

**2. Meaningful Certificate of Completion.** A number of the union representatives suggested that completion of the summer program be acknowledged as a meaningful academic and/or vocational accomplishment. The program administration should consider how to recognize the academic and vocational work completed by pre-apprentices, e.g. by granting credit from Community Colleges or creating a Certification Degree at the end of the program. In that case, completion of the program in and of itself would be a recognized and legitimate accomplishment, not simply a step on the journey toward a possible (but not always likely) apprenticeship. It may prove useful to approach Essex County Community College and see if they would be willing to grant college credit for (one/two) summer courses taken and passed. This would be especially rewarding for those young women and men who do



not ultimately pass their exams to become apprentices. In this way, the summer would be an experience of value whether or not they actually join a construction union.

**3. Initiate hard conversations on the Joint Steering Committee.** It may be time to initiate a set of tough conversations within the Joint Steering Committee about expectations, experiences and creating a “reality” for the pre-apprentices within the trade union movement. Topics concerning the finances of the program, the history of race relations within the trade union movement, the likelihood of actually placing these pre-apprentices, etc. deserve serious and sustained discussion among the many parties involved in this collaboration.

**4. The Joint steering committee needs** to re-consider the role of testing and standards in the ECCCP. Evidence collected for this evaluation suggests that a rigid early cut-off score on the TABE would have excluded a number of men and women who turned out to be fine and highly qualified pre-apprentices. Recruitment strategies, for this pilot, were designed flexibly so that applicants who were accepted had a range of skills; no single cut off on a single exam was sufficient to remove someone from the pool. The data collected here reaffirm the ECCCP’s commitment to a broad—based recruitment policy.

**5. The Joint Steering Committee needs to think through the question of age of pre-apprentices.** The issue of younger (right out of high school) vs. older (out of school) pre-apprentices emerged often. There were three schools of thought: the younger group was responsible for most of the disciplinary problems in the program; the program was not designed for the older group; the groups should be separated.

Our interviews and even more so observations suggest that the combination of younger and older is actually very effective within the program. The “older” men and women create a stable presence for the “younger” ones. The combination is essential. However, the needs and strengths of the two groups should be recognized and built into the program design. It seems important to retain the commitment to both groups of men and women but to design the program so that their specific talents and not-yet-developed skills are addressed.

**6. Work on intensive recruitment campaign** in schools and in communities. It may be possible to identify early on a core group of in-school educators, train them in the vocabulary and opportunities associated with the Construction Trades and pay them to recruit young women and men into the program. Note – while the men and women are eager to assist in recruiting the next cohort, they feel strongly that the program should remain small. Specific recruitment recommendations include:

- **Redesign flyers.** Be clear or explicit about what the program can deliver – and what the program cannot guarantee. Do not assume the audience understands distinctions between an “apprentice” and “pre-apprentice”.

- **Consider radio announcements** of the program or public service announcements on radio or television. This, of course, needs to be considered in light of above concern – will you recruit broadly or narrowly? Will specific cut offs be enforced – if not, broad based recruitment is likely to produce more ineligible applicants than eligible ones.
- **Create a Recruitment Committee** of educators and former pre-apprentices to generate recruitment strategies, buddy system and a post-program support group.
- **Establish a Spring-term course on the Construction Trades** to be offered, perhaps at a Training/Apprenticeship Site, for seniors in high school eager to consider a career within construction.
- **Pursue focus group recruitment and outreach suggestions noted earlier in report.**

**7. After the telephone interviews**, tighten communication with potential pre-apprentice candidates. A number reported that they ECCCP failed to contact them after they expressed interest in the pre-apprenticeship program.

**8. Discipline Policy and Removal.** A clearer disciplinary policy, and more explicit enforcement of the policy, would enhance overall discipline and morale.

**9. General call for better resources**, e.g. heat, air conditioning and a gym where the pre-apprentices can work out. Many suggest that the educational program take place at a Local Training facility, and bring high school students to the facility as part of the recruitment package.

**10. Clarity on the Policies on Drivers' Licenses** – Given that most pre-apprentices do not have a car, some do not have a license, and some have a suspended license, the ECCCP may have to initiate an advocacy campaign in Trenton to ease up on allowing these men and women to reapply for licenses with a kind of amnesty program on outstanding fines (see report by the Institute for Social Justice on this issue).

**11. Disseminate report across constituencies.** Find creative ways to inform all constituencies about the report. Ask them for their reactions. Also, based on reactions from the report set up a review panel of instructors, former pre-apprentices and union personnel to review and make suggestions about the curriculum and other basic aspects of the pre-apprenticeship program.

\* \* \*

We write this report several months after 9.11, with unemployment rates rising, the public sector in fiscal trouble, and programs for poor and working class young adults in jeopardy. We view the ECCCP project as just the kind of intervention that offers a

win-win to community economic development, the growth and diversification of the construction trades, and the individual lives and families of young men and women in Essex County.

With a rich and delicate coalition, this project has accomplished much in a very short period of time. The pilot summer program was designed and implemented quickly, with skill and sensitivity. The consortium of varied constituencies appears to have collaborated very effectively and cooperatively. A six method evaluation of the eight week Essex County Construction Careers Pre-apprenticeship Program concludes that:

- the program was highly successful in retaining and graduating students in the cohort – 78% of the pre-apprentices persisted and graduated from the program;
- the program improved academic skills of most pre-apprentices – 50% improved in their Math scores and 57% improved in their Locating Information scores;
- academic improvements were most dramatic for pre-apprentices who entered the program with marginal skills;
- the program inspired positive attitudes about the construction trades in the pre-apprentices – pre-apprentices rated the program as very effective in terms of teaching, learning about careers in construction, combining academic and ‘hands on’ learning, and generating student confidence in becoming an apprentice
- a full 90% of pre-apprentices feel confident that they will become apprentices
- the diverse constituencies of the Board of Education, construction unions, community based organizations and young adults from the Abbott districts consistently affirm the design and implementation of the program and strongly support its continuation.

All parties should be pleased with the efforts and success of the ECCCP Summer of 2001. The economy, the public schools, the construction trades and the communities of Essex County benefited from this program. It is in our collective best interest that future generations of such programs, in New Jersey and beyond, be granted the support to flourish.

## Appendix I

### Survey Consent Form

#### **Informed Consent Form**

Dear Pre-Apprentice:

We appreciate your time and willingness to consider participating in this evaluative research. The purpose of the informed consent form is two-fold. First, we would like to formally inform you of our intentions. Second, an informed consent form ensures through writing the rights of the participant.

The goal of this research is to determine the effectiveness of this 8-week apprenticeship program in your lives. Your participation in filling out this survey will help us reach these goals and will be greatly appreciated.

Furthermore, your responses on this survey are strictly anonymous and confidential. That is, we will have no way of connecting survey responses to the original persons. No identifying information (e. g. names, address, etc.) is required on this survey.

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I have read the material above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

Thank you very much for considering taking part in our project. Your informed consent is implied if you decide to directly participate in this piece of the evaluative research.

If there are any concerns regarding this evaluative research please feel free to contact Rebecca Doggett, Ellen Brown and/or Ken Zimmerman at (973) 624-9400 as well as Michelle Fine at (212) 817-8710.

Sincerely,

Yasser A. Payne, MA, Graduate Student  
Graduate Center, City University of New York

Survey I (pre)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. How did you hear about the 8 week pre-apprenticeship program? (Check all that apply)

- Flyer \_\_\_\_\_
- Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Friend \_\_\_\_\_
- Parent \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. What interested and/or motivated you to get involved in the program? (Check all that apply)

- Money \_\_\_\_\_
- To develop a career in the construction trades \_\_\_\_\_
- Summer Employment \_\_\_\_\_
- To contribute to redeveloping your community \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. What to you are the most important benefits received from becoming a union apprentice?

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please list any concerns that you may have with the pre-apprenticeship program.

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_

5. How likely do you think it is that you will ultimately become an apprentice in one of the trade unions?

Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
1	2	3	4

6. What are the things that could get in the way of you becoming an apprentice?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the following items from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
7. I feel confident that this 8 week pre-apprenticeship program will prepare me for the construction trade of my interest.	1	2	3	4
8. The \$100 weekly stipend is an adequate sum for a student involved in this program.	1	2	3	4
9. I feel respected by the instructors of the program.	1	2	3	4
10. I feel respected by the administrative persons involved with this program.	1	2	3	4
11. The instructors help me when I have a problem in class.	1	2	3	4
12. Most people are friendly in the program.	1	2	3	4
13. I think the instructors are very competent.	1	2	3	4

14. Please rate each element of the pre-apprenticeship program.  
*I think the following courses are taught in a way that makes a student like me learn.*

A. Construction Basics	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
B. Work Place Readiness	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
C. Physical Conditioning	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
D. Applied Math	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
E. Safety Skills	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree

15. What could you have learned in high school that would have better prepared you for this 8 week pre-apprentice program?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

16. What other ways would you recommend to identify potential participants for this 8 week pre-apprenticeship program?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

17. How much did you know about the pre-apprenticeship program prior to beginning the program.

A lot                      A Good Understanding                      Not Very Much                      Nothing At All  
 1                                      2                                      3                                      4

18. What was the highest paying rate you received prior to entering the 8 week pre-apprenticeship program? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you provide financial support for any of the following (check all that apply)?

- (a) children \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) spouse \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) parent (s) \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) other \_\_\_\_\_

20. Are there any concerns you have about the possibility of joining a union?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

21. How many friends/family do you have in a union? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Where do you see your self in terms of a career in 10 years? Your response does not have to be restricted to construction related work. For instance, although you have an interest in the construction trades now, you may still see yourself in the near future preparing yourself to become a lawyer.

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Demographic Information

23. Educational Level:

- a. completed high school
- b. completed a GED program
- c. took some college courses
- d. completed at least on full year as a full time student in college
- e. completed two or more years in college

24. Degrees received: (a) high school diploma (b) GED (c) Associates (d) other

25. What high school did you attend? \_\_\_\_\_

26. City and state of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

28. Gender (Please Circle): Male or Female



## 29. Ethnicity:

- (a) African-American
- (b) West Indian/Afro-Caribbean
- (c) Latino/Hispanic
- (d) White
- (e) Asian-American
- (f) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Survey II (post)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What to you are the most important benefits received from becoming a union apprentice?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please list any concerns that you may have with the pre-apprenticeship program.

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How likely do you think it is that you will ultimately become an apprentice in one of the trade unions?

Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
1	2	3	4

4. What are the things that could get in the way of you becoming an apprentice?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

5. What might you suggest to improve the recruitment process for this summer pre-apprenticeship program for other students like yourself?

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Please rate the following items from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
6. I feel confident that this 8 week pre-apprenticeship program will prepare me for the construction trade of my interest.	1	2	3	4
7. The \$100 weekly stipend is an adequate sum for a student involved in this program.	1	2	3	4
8. I feel respected by the instructors of the program.	1	2	3	4
9. I am concerned that the period of time between the end of this program and the time that I will take the test, will greatly affect how I perform on the test.	1	2	3	4
10. I feel respected by the administrative persons involved with this program.	1	2	3	4
11. The instructors help me when I have a problem in class.	1	2	3	4
12. Most people are friendly in the program.	1	2	3	4
13. I think the instructors are very competent.	1	2	3	4
14. I have a good understanding of the application process for my construction trade of interest.	1	2	3	4

15. Rate each element of the pre-apprenticeship program.  
*I think the following courses are taught in a way that makes a student like me learn.*

A. Construction Basics	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
B. Work Place Readiness	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
C. Physical Conditioning	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
D. Applied Math	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
E. Safety Skills	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree

16. What could you have learned in high school that would have better prepared you for this 8 week pre-apprentice program?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

17. Have you already applied for an apprenticeship site?

Yes or No

18. When is your test date? \_\_\_\_\_

19. What construction trade will you be applying for (e. g., electricians, plumbers, iron worker, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

20. What other ways would you recommend to identify potential participants for this 8 week pre-apprenticeship program?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

21. Are there any concerns you have about the possibility of joining a union?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

22. Where do you see your self in terms of a career in 10 years? Your response does not have to be restricted to construction related work. For instance, although you have an interest in the construction trades now, you may still see yourself in the near future preparing yourself to become a lawyer.

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## Appendix II.

### Interview consent form

#### Informed Consent

Dear Pre-Apprenticeship Program Member,

As you know, you are in the pioneering class of the Essex County Construction Careers Program. Because this the first time we are running the program, we would like to draw on you experience to determine ways that we might improve the program for the next time. We appreciate your time and willingness to consider participating in an evaluation of the program. This informed consent form has two purposes. First, we would like to formally inform you of our intentions. Second, the informed consent form details your rights as a participant in this evaluation.

The goal of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of this 8 week-pre-apprenticeship program in your lives. Your participation will help us to reach these goals and is greatly appreciated.

As part of the evaluation, you may be asked to be interviewed, either individually or with a group of other pre-apprenticeship program members. All persons who agree to participate in the individual interview will receive an additional \$20 (one payment for up to four sessions); all persons who agree to participate in the group interview will receive an additional \$10. Interviews will be conducted to get a better sense of your expectations and feelings about this program. Also, you will notice that I am on-site from time to time observing the classes, students, and instructors, etc.

Furthermore, your interviews (individual and/or group) are strictly confidential. Whatever you share with the evaluator remains with the evaluator. We are looking to get a general idea, through all of your individual comments, of how students feel about the program. No identifying information that links students to their personal or group interviews will be shared with anyone besides the evaluator. In addition, all interviews will be tape-recorded.

Sincerely,

Yasser A. Payne, MA, Graduate Student  
Graduate Center, City University of New York

**Interview questions for executive personnel (union representatives, instructors, high school partners, etc.)**

1. *What got you interested in becoming a math instructor (or what ever position they hold)?*
2. *What did you think of the pre-apprenticeship program or how it was presented to you prior to the beginning of it?*  
*-3 phases (feasibility, planning and development & implementation)*
3. *Talk to me about how you see the program progressing throughout the summer?*
4. *What future suggestions based on your experiences now would you have for the program?*  
*-The Union tests*
5. *How do you feel about the students in program?*  
*-There attitude*

**Interview questions for Pre-Apprentices:**

1. *Where were you at in terms of your sense of direction prior to agreeing to attend this program? What were you considering doing before agreeing to attend this program?*
2. *What got you interested in wanting to attend the summer program?*  
*-What did you think of the drug test, initial assessment test*  
*-What might they do next time to better recruit high school students*  
*-Was there enough information available to make you want to get involved in the program.*
3. *What did you think of the pre-apprenticeship program or how it was presented to you prior to the beginning of it?*  
*-How did you feel about the interview*  
*-How did you feel about the corresponding letters*  
*-Do you think we lost people because of the drug test?*  
*-How do you feel about the drivers license requirement?*
4. *Talk to me about how you see the program progressing throughout the summer?*
5. *What future suggestions based on your experiences now would you have for the program?*
6. *How do you feel about the intervening structures in the program (e. g. union representatives)?*
7. *From the perspective of a low income male (or woman) of color, how do you think about the program?*