



Changing the Conversation: Regional Assessments Assessment of Workforce Development and Related Educational Challenges and Opportunities

Created in 2005, the Danville Regional Foundation (DRF) is a catalyst for innovation and an agent for transformation. Understanding that significant community change takes time, the foundation invests for the long term in efforts that promise sustained positive impact for the Dan River region. The foundation is committed to activities, programs, and organizations that address the health, education, and well-being of residents of Danville, Pittsylvania County, and Caswell County.

In the last two years, DRF has developed its vision, mission, values, and focus (see <http://www.danvilleregionalfoundation.org/vision.html>), issued guidelines (see http://www.danvilleregionalfoundation.org/DRF_GrantProposalGuidelines.pdf), hired staff, and begun awarding grants (see <http://www.danvilleregionalfoundation.org/grants.html>).

To help the foundation better understand the opportunities and challenges facing its region, DRF retained MDC, Inc. of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to develop three regional assessments on community health needs, workforce development and related educational challenges, and community and economic development.

Each assessment used a variety of techniques to gain opinions from within the region, quantitative data about the area, and recommendations that the authors believe might be beneficial. Thus, each assessment is a unique picture, reflecting the values and judgments of the authors, based on what they learned about the region. Accuracy of the information included in each report is the responsibility of the organization that conducted each assessment.

DRF believes these assessments are important contributions to critical policy discussions in the region and beyond. The foundation does not endorse the assessments or necessarily totally agree with them. A careful reading of all three assessments will show disagreements about perceptions, priorities, and proposed initiatives. In fact, if DRF were to fully adopt the recommendations contained in the three assessments, it would not have any resources to respond to requests emerging from the region.

DRF is using these three reports to inform its own deliberations. The foundation believes these reports illuminate many of the challenges and opportunities within the region. DRF encourages organizations throughout the region to use these reports in a similar way. There is much in these reports to give all of us encouragement and concern. DRF shares the assessments in the interest of supporting a better informed public discussion about how we use limited resources to transform the region and create a better future for all the region's residents. DRF is using these assessments to inform its consideration; DRF is not limited by the results of these assessments.

Questions and comments about the assessments are always welcome. They should be sent to Karl Stauber, President and CEO of Danville Regional Foundation at kstauber@danvilleregionalfoundation.org. Over time, DRF anticipates producing other assessments and community studies. Ideas for future topics of study are appreciated.

Report to the Danville Regional Foundation

Assessment of Workforce Development and Related Educational Challenges and Opportunities



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Looking at the Region Workforce Development and Education

Introduction

Over the last ten years, the Danville region¹ has been weathering an economic storm that has devastated many manufacturing-based communities across the country. Tidal waves of globalization have sent increasing numbers of U.S. manufacturers overseas in search of lower production and labor costs. Since 1990, the Danville region has lost over 15,000 jobs. Many of the Danville region's core industrial employers—tobacco processing, textile and apparel, and wood products manufacturing—have either gone out of business or sought economies with lower pay scales on other shores, leaving in their wakes thousands of laid off local, low-skilled manufacturing workers. Meanwhile, a substantial segment of the region's high school students have dropped out of high school before obtaining their high school diplomas. Cohort graduation rates in Danville City and Caswell County for 2003-04 hovered around 50 percent. Pittsylvania County achieved better outcomes of 71.5 percent, but still was below the NCLB goal of 90 percent. With the changes in the regional economy, the young people who leave high school without diplomas are likely to be both out of school and out of work—with all of the negative personal and social consequences associated with that status.

In anticipation of the impending economic crisis, a forward-looking group of the region's civic, academic, and community stakeholders mobilized to create a new institutional foundation for the region's long-term viability. Stakeholders acknowledged that cheap, low-skilled labor was no longer the region's competitive advantage. The former abundant, low-skilled industrial and agricultural jobs that fueled the local economy in the past would not be returning. They concluded that the region's future was contingent upon its ability to compete for the new breed of higher-tech, knowledge-based, and service sector industries.

Recruiting this new breed of employers would not be an easy task as the educational, training, organizational, and cultural norms that supported the traditional, industrial sectors over the last century were still very much in place. Facing the prospect of double-digit unemployment, key stakeholders, led by the Future of the Piedmont Foundation, began promoting a set of strategic imperatives that would:

- Diversify the region's economic base;
- Aggressively recruit new employers to the area who could employ the thousands of workers being displaced by the plant closings;
- Identify and nurture specific industry clusters for future relocation/expansion in the region;
- Develop an educational and training infrastructure that could support the current and future education, management, and workforce needs of the target clusters; and
- Upgrade the skill and education levels of the region's existing and future workforce residents to prepare them for the technology-based manufacturing jobs of the future.

The openings of Danville's technology-based Galileo Magnet High School in 2002, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) in 2004, and the Regional Center for Advanced Technology & Training (RCATT) in 2005 are all indicative that the Danville region has made tremendous strides toward its strategic imperatives over the last six years. The unemployment rate is in the single

¹ In this paper the Danville region will be used to refer to the Danville Regional Foundation's service area: the City of Danville, Virginia; Pittsylvania County, Virginia; and Caswell County, North Carolina.

digits and the soon-to-be-announced completion of Phase I of Swedwood North America's² state-of-the-art furniture manufacturing facility in the Cane Creek Center signals what many hope will yield a Twenty-first Century economic development and job creation boom for the Danville region.

Matching the skills of the region's existing, low-skilled workforce with the minimum requirements of these new industry employers, however, presents a major challenge. The prospective technology-based industries as well as the region's new state-of-the-art manufacturing employers such as Swedwood, even at the entry-level, require a pool of highly skilled, flexibly trainable workers. Such workers are currently in short supply. For the existing workforce (and future workers currently in the area's public schools) to compete successfully in this new, more lucrative regional labor market, they will have to rapidly upgrade their education and skill levels. If the local low-skilled workers are unable to meet the needs of this new generation of employers in the short term, higher skilled workers will have to be imported from other locales. In the long term, the short supply of skilled workers will hamper the region's economic development competitiveness. In both scenarios, the biggest losers are the region's indigenous, low-skilled workers who will become trapped in dead-end, minimum-wage jobs with few opportunities for career and wage advancement.

The Danville region is at a pivotal point in its economic, workforce development, and education trajectory. A significant percentage of its low-skilled workforce—entry-level workers, displaced workers, and out-of-work/school youth—are in danger of becoming a “*Lost Generation*,” permanently marginalized from the regional and national future economic progress. This group, a significant percentage of whom are African-American, has low high school graduation rates, possesses few transferable skills, and requires interventions at multiple levels to direct even a fraction of them on a path to career advancement in the new, regional economy.

Similar challenges exist in the education area. Graduation rates for two of the local school divisions—Danville and Caswell County—fall well below state and national averages, while Pittsylvania County's mirrors both averages. Few graduates are prepared to enter credit-bearing courses at the community college, either toward an associate degree or professional certificate. Of those who do enroll in community college, a significant segment fails to graduate. The middle and higher ends of the regional labor market seem poised for competition thanks to the support of the community college system, RCATT, and IALR. However, the workforce development needs of the lowest skilled sectors of the regional labor market and the educational needs of the young people require the immediate attention of the Danville Regional Foundation and other key stakeholders.

Summary of Recommendations

Based on quantitative data and qualitative research obtained from site visits and interviews conducted in September and October of 2007, this assessment will outline two sets of strategic recommendations designed to assist the Danville Regional Foundation in formulating a philanthropic investment strategy around the region's most pressing workforce development and education needs. The first set of recommendations draws on the assessment of the region's educational needs, challenges, and opportunities, primarily from the perspective of *school-to-life* transitions. A similar analysis for workforce development is provided which offers a set of three recommendations for strategic investment. One final, overarching set of recommendations at the conclusion of the report speaks to the foundation's role in developing a strategy for community engagement pertaining to workforce development and education.

² In November 2006 Swedwood North America, a furniture manufacturer and subsidiary of IKEA, began construction of Phase I of its North American manufacturing operation in Cane Creek Centre, an industrial park jointly developed by Pittsylvania County and the City of Danville. The plant will produce furniture for IKEA home furnishing stores in North America. Upon completion of Phase I (of three) at the end of 2007, the plant will employ up to 740 people.

As will be seen in the report, educational recommendations are aligned with three goals. Specific investment strategies are suggested that would support progress toward each goal:

Support Initiatives to Improve High School Graduation Rates

- 1. Support initiatives to enable young people to “start strong” in high school, and*
- 2. Invest in school-community collaborations to improve outcomes for struggling and out-of-school youth.*

Support the Development of Strategies that Increase Academic Preparation for High School Students

- 3. Support partnership strategies to increase college and career awareness,*
- 4. Support programming to increase students’ academic skills, and*
- 5. Invest in collaborations to provide professional development for high school teachers.*

Support Strategies to Create Pathways to Success in Community College

- 6. Support participation by the region’s community colleges in state and national initiatives to create quality pathways to certificates and degrees.*

Based on the region’s most pressing workforce development needs, the workforce development assessment outlines three strategic recommendations for workforce development:

- 1. Support the expansion of workforce intermediary strategies focused on the needs of employers and the entry-level workers of the region,*
- 2. Support the organization of a regional workforce development funders collaborative, and*
- 3. Support the development of a generation of new leaders and community-based capacity.*

The Foundation is well positioned for civic leadership in this region. To that end, the overarching recommendation is to elevate the educational and workforce agenda within the region and engage the community as partners in building a new future. To carry out that recommendation:

- 1. Develop and launch a campaign to mobilize community engagement in educational and workforce development for the future of the region, and*
- 2. Build a practice of multi-racial collaboration and encourage diverse civic leadership on these issues.*

These recommendations for the Danville Regional Foundation provide guideposts for the construction of a workforce development and related educational investment strategy that understands, respects, and responds to the needs of the region’s youth, individual, low-skilled workers, and employers.

“Changing the Tape” on Educational Attainment and Readiness³

An Assessment of the Danville Region Education Pipeline

Prepared by Maria McCarthy and Lucretia Murphy, J.D., Ph.D.

I. BACKGROUND

The Danville region’s young people will soon enter an economy that bears little resemblance to what their parents faced twenty years earlier. The economic decline of the past decade means that jobs that typified the “old economy”—reliable, secure, low-skill jobs requiring less than a high school diploma—no longer exist in large numbers. The region’s recent economic development efforts have enticed companies from the higher technology service and knowledge industries to consider relocating to the Danville region. These industries promise better paying jobs, although they require more in return.

The nation’s and region’s changing economies demand, at a minimum, a high school diploma. Beyond that, they require a sizeable population with postsecondary education and training. For Danville’s “new economy” employers in potential growth fields such as biotechnology and robotics, college and sometimes graduate level education are a prerequisite to gaining employment. In the higher end manufacturing and service jobs of the region’s new economy, a high school education and at least some post-secondary training or education are necessary criteria for employment. Economic security for today’s school-age and young adult population and economic competitiveness for the Danville region will require higher levels of educational attainment.

If the educational system fails to transition the region’s young people through high school and into and through postsecondary education or skilled training, Danville’s economic strength suffers. Young people will become adults with low skills and will be passed over for the higher skilled, higher paid positions that will be available in the new economy. Employers will be forced to import skilled labor; the region’s economic development will leave its own people behind.

For individuals and the region to be prepared for the future, young people must be prepared to make successful transitions through all stages of the educational system. Educational outcomes for the region’s young people reveal that large numbers of them are failing to reach key points along their pathways through high school and college.

- 1) *High school graduation.* At a time when a high school credential is the minimum requirement for college and secure employment, 30-50 percent of the young people in Danville City, Pittsylvania County, and Caswell County are not graduating from high school. While the figure varies across the divisions, the dropouts are most likely to be ninth graders. Students who successfully complete ninth grade have a better chance of graduating, but many are dropping out in the upper grades. Administrators in the region expressed concern for certain catego-

³ Focus is on the later years of public pre-K-12 education. Major attention should also be paid to earlier and middle years of schooling, but that is not included within the scope of this report.

ries of students who fare worse than their peers: black males, females, and students who are overage for their grades.

- 2) *Transition from High School to College.* Many more students complete high school than will ever enter a college classroom. Several factors explain the small percentage of high school graduates who make the transition to college: inadequate preparation in high school; lack of awareness about college and career options; and low societal, familial, and peer expectations for attending college. In the region, the most significant reasons appear to be low expectations and inadequate academic preparation.
- 3) *College Completion.* Acceptance to college is only the first step to college success. Too many students, both youth and adults, stumble shortly after and never finish a degree or complete a skill certificate program. A number of factors contribute to the low retention in community college. Among the most significant is the number of people who enter in need of two or more developmental/remedial courses.

This report highlights opportunities for addressing the specific challenges. Opportunities for intervention are based on examples of successful national models that have tackled similar problems. There are also promising regional initiatives already underway in schools and the region's community colleges. We conclude the report with recommendations for investments with the potential for systemic impact in the region.

II. ANALYSIS—CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION'S EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE

Nearly 30 percent of the nation's young people do not graduate from high school in four years, if at all. In the nation's large urban centers, the dropout rate is much closer to 40 percent or 50 percent. Students of color and low-income youth fare even worse in the nation's large cities. In an economy where "some college" is increasingly the minimum requirement for employment that secures a family-sustaining wage, too many students are not even crossing the stage for high school graduation. Their futures are dim.

The Danville region faces similar challenges in transitioning young people through the educational institutions. While there are challenges in the region, educators are involved in strategies to increase the number of students who graduate from high school, smooth the transition from high school to college, and increase the number of students completing college. This section reviews both the vulnerabilities and assets that exist in the region with respect to educational attainment.

Increasing the Number of Students who Graduate From High School

When thinking about peer communities, Danville City and Caswell County bear little resemblance to large urban cities. In dropout rates, however, they are nearly identical. For example, Philadelphia and Boston (when not counting exam schools) report graduation rates around 50 percent. Data from the Graduation Project finds Danville City Schools (DCS) has a 52.6 percent graduation rate; Caswell County Schools (CCS) graduates 49.6 percent of its students in four years. Pittsylvania County

Schools (PCS) loses 28 percent for a graduation rate of 72 percent; but even there the division leaders acknowledge this is still “too many students”⁴ not graduating.

Students’ struggles in high school begin early

The ninth grade is the challenging year for high school students regionally. As Table 1 reveals, the majority of dropouts in each division left school in the ninth grade. In Danville City, over half of the students who drop out of high school do so in the ninth grade. But this is not just a problem for DCS. The high school dropout rate is, in large part, a ninth grade dropout problem for each division in the region and across each state, Virginia and North Carolina. (Data on Pittsylvania County is not available in this format, but the division and school leaders indicate that the ninth grade dropout rate is a particular concern.)

Table 1. Dropout Rates by Grade Level

	Danville City	Pittsylvania County	Virginia	Caswell County	North Carolina
2003-04 Graduation Rate*	52.6%	71.5%	73%	49.6%	66.1%
% of Dropouts who leave in 9th grade*	55.4%	NA	41.2%	42.5%	44.0%
% of dropouts who leave in 10th grade*	12.9%	NA	25.1%	17.4%	25.9%
% of dropouts who leave in 11th grade*	31.7%	NA	15.9%	24.0%	20.1%
% of dropouts who leave in 12th grade*	0%	NA	17.8%	16.2%	10.0%

*As reported by The Graduation Project, 2007, Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center, Education Week

*As reported by The Graduation Project, 2007, Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center, Education Week

** From Virginia Department of Education report cards based on average of past three (3) years

To say the dropout problem is a ninth grade problem does not necessarily mean that young people are dropping out of high school in the first year. Many students will repeat the ninth grade two or three times before leaving. This does mean, however, that the majority of the dropouts are leaving with few high school credits and very limited skills.

For most of these young people, however, the problem with the ninth grade actually begins in middle school. Research in several communities has shown that 75 percent of dropouts can be predicted as early as the sixth grade by looking at four key indicators: attendance, course failure in math,

⁴ There are different methodologies for calculating and reporting data on high school graduation and dropout rates. This report, uses the nationally recognized data from the Cumulative Promotion Index. This data is more appropriate, because it calculates the graduation rate based on a four-year cohort rate; i.e., the graduation rate is based on the percentage of students who enter ninth grade and graduate from high school four years later. North Carolina now uses this methodology to calculate and report dropout/graduation rates. Methodology will yield a lower graduation rate than the methodology most states and districts report under NCLB.

course failure in English, and classroom behavior. While the scope of JFF’s assessment did not include the region’s middle schools, this high school data suggests the problem with high school dropouts is not just a high school issue.

Some populations are more at risk

As the data show, however, the dropout rate is not only a ninth grade problem. Concerns were raised by many about the young people referred to as “overage and undergrade.” These students have usually been retained multiple times in middle or high school and have failed so many courses that they lack credits to keep them on track to complete high school within a reasonable time frame.

Older youth are also a concern as they often leave for life circumstances unrelated to school. This population is at high risk of becoming out of school and out of work. Their recovery options too are limited, since at least an eighth grade reading level is required to prepare for and pass the GED.

The racial gap in graduation rates is a continuing concern for a community trying to overcome a history of disenfranchising the African-American community. As seen in Table 2, African-American students at DCS graduate at far lower rates than their white counterparts in the division, well below the state average for African-American students, and far below the goals for African-Americans as a group under NCLB. Caswell County’s white students trail North Carolina’s state average for white students by eight percentage points, although interestingly, the state’s extremely low graduation rates for African-American students actually trails the county. The positive note is Pittsylvania County where the graduation rate for African-American students is only slightly below the white students. If not eliminated, these gaps in the graduation rate will inevitably perpetuate the black/white gaps in every segment of society—employment, housing, educational attainment levels—and leave the region perpetually struggling with racial tensions.

Table 2. Graduation Rates by Race

	Danville City		Pittsylvania County		Virginia		Caswell County*		North Carolina*	
2005-06 Graduation Rates (reported on district report card)	All	68%	All	81%	All	79%	All	65%	All	69%
	Black	63%	Black	79%	Black	71%	Black	66%	Black	61%
	White	78%	White	81%	White	84%	White	66%	White	74%

* AYP 4-year cohort graduation rate

Gender gaps also surfaced in the conversations with school leaders. Principals at multiple schools in Danville expressed special concern for African-American male students in educational achievement and graduation rates. But there was also a call “to not forget the girls.” Some principals speculated that high teen pregnancy rates were prompting greater numbers of girls to leave school early. Principals in Pittsylvania County noted a high rate of teen pregnancies in their schools and considered targeting high school girls to stem their related high dropout rates. Unfortunately, data on state report cards do not allow for analysis of graduation rates by gender or by age.

Local Strategies for Increasing the High School Graduation Rate

Given the magnitude of the dropout problem, the region faces an invention challenge—developing programs and/or alternative schools for effective dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery. Fortunately, educators can build on some work that has begun in the region.

For example, educators in the region are beginning to address the ninth grade dropout problem. Through the Virginia’s Honor Schools Grant Program, two PCS high schools—Dan River and Gretna—received grants to develop and implement programs for ninth graders. In its first year, Gretna High School saw improved achievement scores for the identified ninth graders and fewer dropouts among those in the program. In Danville City, the principal and faculty at George Washington High School offered a ninth grade orientation day for incoming ninth graders and their parents in the fall of 2007. GWHS has also begun to forge informal, collaborative relationships with feeder middle schools through invitations to develop strategies for preparing middle school students for the transition to high school. In Caswell County, the new principal of Bartlett Yancey High School expressed strong interest in a summer orientation program for rising ninth graders. These efforts can serve as building blocks for systemic approaches to addressing this challenge.

In the region, Danville City Schools appears to be making the most intentional interventions to increase graduation for the young people who are overage and undergrade through the Langston Focus School and the Teen GED program.

Langston Focus School represents a promising model of a small alternative school for sixth through twelfth graders serving 170 students. The school follows an accelerated model that emphasizes mastery over seat time, so students can earn more credits during the year. From the outset, the program emphasizes career awareness goals and strong academic preparation. It offers dual enrollment courses through Danville Community College in study skills and technology. Over the past three years, the program has graduated an average of 34 students per year. Of the thirty-seven 2007 graduates, 27 percent is enrolled in post-secondary programs, 38 percent is employed, and 5 percent is enlisted in the military, while 30 percent is unemployed.

The *Teen GED* program serves young people who are at least one or two grades behind and unlikely to graduate because of significant credit deficiencies. With a personalized environment, this program provides young people an opportunity to earn a high school credential. The program also offers additional supports, such as job training and life readiness, at the same time that students pursue courses to prepare for and pass the GED.

The *Middle College I* program at Danville Community College is an eight-week, dropout-recovery program for young people, aged 18-25, from across the region. It prepares students for the GED, trains them in Work Keys to earn a Career Readiness Certificate, and supports them through the completion of the college financial aid application, resume and cover letter, and choice of program.

Ensuring High School Students are Ready to Make the Transition to College and Careers

High school graduation is a critical milestone to be sure; yet future economic security for this generation will require postsecondary education as well. Educators in the region are very concerned that many high school graduates are not making the transition to postsecondary education that will secure their futures. Two concerns emerged repeatedly when discussing the challenge of students not making the transition from high school to college.

Low Expectations. Far too many students in the region do not expect to go to college. This expectation is reinforced by community and peer expectations. An entrenched tradition that a high school diploma is “good enough” also perpetuates a culture of low educational expectations. Low expectations may be particularly true for those students who would be the first in their families to go to college—the trailblazers. Changing this tradition of low expectations is a significant challenge. Sue Davis, Danville schools superintendent, explained: “We have to change the tape in the students’ heads. They hear ‘you’re stupid. . . you’ll never be anything.’ It’s up to us – and for some teachers this is a hard thing—to change the tape in their heads. ‘You can go to college’ is part of the new tape.”

Inadequate Academic Preparation. High school and college leaders shared two primary concerns about academic readiness. First, students are not taking rigorous courses in high school. For some students, this is a result of a decision to “coast” through high school. For other students, not taking rigorous courses is a consequence of falling behind early in high school and then being unable to catch up to the courses that will prepare them for college. The second concern arises from the first: high school teachers are not able to accelerate students who fall behind and/or prepare on-track students for rigorous courses in high school, particularly in science and math, that would prepare students for the standards of “college readiness.”

Without strong academic preparation in high school, the graduates are entering college but not ready for college level work. The president of Piedmont Community College expressed concern that “so many high school students are coming to the college in developmental courses; especially our neighbor across the field [Bartlett Yancey High School]. More than 50 percent of the students are taking developmental courses.”

Table 4 provides data on the Virginia side of the region.⁵ The percentage of students from DCS and PCS who enroll in remedial reading, writing, and math classes at Danville Community College is significantly higher than the state’s average. Mathematics rates are especially alarming with over 80 percent of entering students from Danville and Pittsylvania County Schools required to take non-credit remedial math courses.

Table 4.⁶ Percentage of Danville and Pittsylvania County Public School Graduates Enrolling in Developmental Courses at Danville Community Colleges

Percentage of 2005 and 2006 entering Danville Community College students needing remediation	From Danville City* (G. Washington High School n=71-79 students)	From Pittsylvania County* (all high schools combined n=93-100 students)	All Virginia students entering community colleges in 2005 and 2006 needing remediation **
Reading	49%	51%	31%
Writing	58%	57%	40%
Math	80%	86%	77%

*Source: Report from Danville Community College Director of Planning, Effectiveness, and Research

**Source: “College Readiness Report,” August 2007, prepared for the Honor States Grant, National Governors Association

⁵ Piedmont Community College data was not available in this format.

Local Strategies for Preparing Students to Make the Transition from High School to College

Fortunately, there are strategies in place to address both of these concerns. Danville Community College and Piedmont Community College offer incentives to promote students accelerating rather than coasting. Both colleges offer dual enrollment courses to high school students to provide early exposure to college rigor and expectations. For the most part, this opportunity is reserved for high achieving students; because they have to take the placement test to take the dual enrollment course. It should be noted that some dual enrollment courses have aims other than academic rigor: some give students a chance to become acquainted with a college setting and spark interest in college for students who would not likely consider attending. For example, DCS is piloting these dual enrollment courses for students at the Langston Focus School.

Efforts have also been made locally to build teacher capacity, particularly in the areas of math and science. The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) has provided professional development opportunities and other resources for teachers in technology, math, and science through its Teacher Education Outreach strand. Specifically, IALR has hosted *The Cutting Edge*, a symposia for teachers about new topics in science and math and ways to teach these subjects, and the *Southside Educators' Development Institute* that shows teachers how to incorporate technology in their instruction.

In the case of struggling students, high school teachers need to be able to accelerate the learning of students who arrive in ninth grade with major skill and knowledge deficits. Two schools in Danville City Public Schools have implemented their own approaches to this challenge. Langston Focus School operates on a mastery-based system whereby students can accelerate to a higher level course when they can demonstrate content and skill mastery. Galileo High School follows a block schedule and teaches year-long academic courses within a semester so that students who fail freshman English or math courses in their first semester can retake the course the following semester rather than waiting a full year to retake the course. This ensures that all students master the content without jeopardizing students' placement in their grades while also keeping them on track to take more rigorous coursework the following year.

Increasing the Percentage of Young People Earning a Postsecondary Credential by Age 25

For students to be successful on the path to a post-secondary credential, they need to do more than enter college; they need to finish. This is the case not only for the young people making the transition directly after high school but also for the adults in the region seeking further education and training. Research and conversation with the community college leaders in the region have identified multiple factors that stand in the way of students' success in community college.

- *Length of time to completion*

The majority of community college students in the region are enrolled in at least one developmental education course. Students do not receive credit for these courses, although they use their financial aid to pay for them. Nationally, research shows that enrollment in developmental education courses decreases the likelihood of graduating from college.

- *Lack of Supports*

For many community college students, the demands of family and work cannot be set aside while they pursue postsecondary education and training. However, colleges do not often acknowledge or are unable to provide the supports that working adults need, such as child care, to make it possible for people to add college to their lives without compromising other demands.

- *Lack of Clarity About College and Career Pathways*

When students enter college through developmental education courses, the programs they are enrolled in are often disconnected from the credit-bearing academic and vocational courses they need to earn a degree or employment certificate. As a result of departmental boundaries within an institution, it is often difficult for students to navigate the pathway from the developmental education courses they are in to the credential they are trying to attain.

In combination these challenges and others undermine the efforts of many students to secure the education and training that will enable them to sustain themselves and their families in a changing economy.

Around the country, innovative community colleges are developing strategies to enable students, particularly those entering without “college ready” skills, to earn credentials that are the gateway to family-supporting careers. Retention ranks high on the national conversation for improving outcomes for community college students, such as in the three national initiatives—*Achieving the Dream*, *Breaking Through*, and *Ready for College*—that are integrated into instruction in the region’s community colleges.

The *Achieving the Dream Initiative* advances policy and programmatic change in community colleges to improve outcomes for community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color. Twenty-seven colleges nationally, including Danville Community College, participate in the initiative. Partnering institutions are placing a sharper focus on developmental education outcomes, making retention an institutional rather than programmatic priority, and advancing research and public policy change to improve student achievement. (www.achievingthedream.org)

Breaking Through, a multi-year demonstration project, promotes and enhances the efforts of community colleges to help students with low literacy skills prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs. North Carolina, through the generous investment of the GlaxoSmithKline Foundation, launched a “system-wide” approach to introduce and then implement the initiative’s innovations in the community colleges throughout the state as well as to draw on successes from other community colleges in North Carolina. (www.breakingthroughcc.org)

Ready for College is a new initiative recently launched by DOE’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education. OVAE selected the North Carolina Community College System as one of four grantees through a RFP to participate in a national program to increase the rate at which young adults, aged 18-24, successfully complete adult secondary education programs (basic education) and transition to postsecondary education.

The previous sections identified challenges the region faces in successfully transitioning young people through high school and into and through college. Challenges are significant, but they are not paralyzing. As this report has tried to capture, educators and community partners in the region are putting building blocks in place to improve the educational outcomes for youth in Danville City, Pittsylvania County, and Caswell County.

This section offers recommendations for investment to guide the foundation's leaders in decisions about partnering with the divisions to more successfully transition young people through the educational system. It may be that implementation of investments varies with the particular context of each community, but all three school divisions would benefit from investments designed to address the high school dropout challenge, smooth the transition from high school to college, and increase college completion.

Increasing the Number of Students Who Graduate From High School

The data reveal distinct trends contributing to an overall drop off of young people graduating from high school. The majority of dropouts from Danville and Caswell County occur in ninth grade; Pittsylvania County leaders also acknowledge this particular pitfall in their division. It is also clear that the dropout problem does not end with ninth graders. Many young people experience continual failure in high school, increasing the possibility of dropping out of school in the later grades.

Fortunately, there are national models and local action to draw upon to turn this dropout tide toward graduation. The foundation could partner in efforts to correct the dropout trends by supporting initiatives to help high school students “start strong” and improve prevention and recovery programming so “every student is a graduate.” *Jobs for the Future*, working with several communities facing this challenge, has a framework for local action that can be shared with the foundation at its board's request.

Recommendation 1

Support initiatives to enable young people to “start strong” in high school

The foundation can make both systemic and programmatic investments to improve outcomes for the ninth graders in the region. At the systems level, the most critical investment is to improve the capacity of the divisions and schools to use data to create an accurate portrayal of the dropout population and identify the students at risk for dropping out. The national data presented in this report gives a snapshot of the situation in the community, but nothing replaces local data capacity. We would recommend investments in each division to enable them to conduct a dropout assessment. In other communities, districts have conducted cohort studies that identified early indicators of dropping out in middle school and predictors in ninth grade as well as assessments of size and needs of the out-of-school population. The findings from these and other studies clarified the size and scope of the challenge and also targeted the intervention strategies.

High schools in each division have either put in place or are interested in developing programming to improve the transitions from middle to high school. Strategic use of data could inform these initial strategies and also enable the schools to expand the strategies to target the most at-risk youth. Philadelphia, for example, used its analysis of early indicators of dropping out to shape a middle school intervention strategy. The foundation could partner in these efforts by supporting collaborations between middle and high school faculty to develop middle school and ninth grade intervention

strategies. For example, the foundation could provide innovation or planning grants for high school/middle school partnerships (with community collaborators) to develop summer orientation programs for the rising ninth graders, and/or develop specialized programs or whole school models for ninth graders (e.g., designs for ninth grade academies, professional development for ninth grade teachers).

Elsewhere in the Nation:

Step-Up (Portland, OR)

Portland Public Schools is in the process of scaling up a ninth grade transition program for high schools in their district based upon the success of the *Step Up Program* they launched in one district high school in 2003. Designed as a collaboration among Roosevelt High School, its feeder middle schools, and Open Meadow, a community-based program, *Step Up* targets and provides services to middle school students who are most at risk of dropping out. These include middle school academic tutoring, a pre-freshman summer leadership and academic camp, and extended day, after-school tutoring in freshman and sophomore year. The program boasts impressive reductions in the dropout rate and significant academic improvement, especially among students of color. In the 2006–07 school year, 100 percent of participants remained in school at the end of the year, earning on average a GPA 27 percent higher than the school average.

Recommendation 2

Invest in school-community collaborations to improve outcomes for struggling and out-of-school youth

While high school graduation is an education issue, improving outcomes for these young people is not work that schools can perform alone. Collaborations between schools and community partners, youth serving agencies, and higher education make a difference in keeping older youth connected. Foundations in other communities have supported partnerships to develop integrated curriculum to make school more relevant, provide funding to create staff capacity to coordinate services between school and community-based organizations and agencies (e.g. pregnancy prevention, mental health counseling) and develop innovative programming that integrates academics with strong youth development strategies (e.g. leadership, character development). In fact, President Owen of Piedmont Community College expressed a particular interest in working on this issue with Superintendent Barker. He is interested in expanding GED programming and high school outreach to increase the prevention and recovery efforts with Bartlett Yancey High School.

During local interviews, community leaders identified community-based organizations that had collaborated with schools to support at-risk students. It was noted that these collaborations were positive, but the organizations lacked the resources and capacity to provide services. Because of this lack of resources, the foundation should make investments to develop the capacity of the non-profit sector in order to expand supports necessary for addressing the dropout crisis.

Additionally, investing in collaborations between community and school partners to eliminate persistent gaps in graduation rates between African-American and white students and male and female students is another way the foundation can support efforts to ensure that all students graduate from high school. A critical issue is to develop public will to bring the resources of all sectors of the

community together on this issue. Foundation investments could support forums in the community to raise awareness and build community-wide commitment to close the gaps. There are a few community organizations already working at the periphery of these efforts that would be interested in more targeted and well-coordinated programming: Boys and Girls Club, Church-Based Tutorial, and Alliance for Excellent Education. The foundation could support efforts of community-based organizations to partner with schools to develop mentoring programs, character education, and other strategies that bring community and education sectors together.

Elsewhere in the Country

African-American Male Achievement

In Ossining, NY, programs serving African-American males have been put in place at the high school, middle school, and elementary levels. They include special mentoring from African-American teachers for African-American elementary school boys, along with one-on-one guidance outside class, extra homework help, and cultural activities during the school day. The district spearheaded its African-American boy-focused programs with a college-preparatory program designed to address the disproportionately low achievement of these students. From 2004 to 2007, the percentage of African-American students in Ossining who enrolled in college-level courses in 11th and 12th grades jumped from 26 to 55 percent.

Ensuring High School Students are Prepared to Transition to College and Careers

Making students aware of their opportunities after high school is a critical first step in preparing them to make the transition to postsecondary education and training. While programs exist to prepare students for the college transition, they are not sufficient to overcome the chronic culture of low academic expectations among parents, students, and teachers. Clearly more should be done to build college awareness and expectation and to create the level of collaboration between schools, post-secondary education, and community partners required to help young people navigate the path from high school to college and careers.

Recommendation 3

Support partnership strategies to increase college and career awareness

Mentors or counselors in the schools or from the community (e.g. community college, community organizations, churches) who work together to help students understand the expectations for going to college and support them in completing the college application and financial aid process are potential investment targets. For students who are immediately going to work, the foundation could support programming between schools, colleges, and employers that provides education and skills training to prepare students to secure and **keep** the first job as well as provide information about the career path, further training and education, and career advancement. The Middle College's Work-Keys program that culminates in a Career Readiness Certificate is a local model of short-term training that can help ease the transition for young people moving from high school to work.

Too often those that graduate high school with plans to attend college lack the skills they need to succeed in college or secure and advance in skilled employment. The high percentage of students taking developmental education courses in the region's community colleges is evidence that students are not graduating college ready. There are two strategies under consideration in the region. The first

is to expand students' exposure to and engagement in rigorous courses (especially in math, science, and writing). The related strategy is to provide more support for teachers to develop their abilities to teach more rigorous courses. Foundation investments could advance both of these efforts.

Recommendation 4

Support Programming to Increase Students' Academic Skills

Schools in the area struggle with preparing students for science- and math-related study and work. To address this challenge, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research provides programming for young people in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. The foundation could support collaboration between IALR and the divisions/schools to design and implement curriculum and programs for building students' content area skills in these areas.

Supporting collaborations to develop summer programming to bridge the transition from high school to the college classroom or workplace would also be a beneficial investment for building college readiness. According to President Carlyle Ramsey of Danville Community College, one of the reasons young people fare so poorly on the math placement exam is that they have not had a math and science course in their entire senior year. Summer bridge programs could be developed with community partners, including the area's colleges, to enhance content area skills such as math, science, or writing.

Elsewhere in the Country

Boston College/Brighton High School Math Excellence Partnership (Boston, MA)

Boston College/Brighton High School Math Excellence Partnership (B2MEP) supports teaching and learning of advanced mathematics at Brighton High School through enlisting Boston College faculty in professional development for Brighton High School math teachers. University faculty members work collaboratively with high school math teachers to introduce real world business problems into the math curriculum and teach them strategies for engaging students in rigorous mathematical problems.

Recommendation 5

Invest in Collaborations to Provide Professional Development for High School Teachers

A particular concern in the region is building the capacity of math and science teachers. A number of strategies can support teacher professional development in these content areas. For example, the foundation could provide grants for high schools to partner with IALR to design math, science, and technology professional development that addresses the divisions' needs and takes advantage of IALR's expertise. The grant could also fund planning for better integration of IALR's existing *Cutting Edge* workshops with the divisions' own internal offerings.

The foundation could also support strategies for teacher professional development that help teachers identify the gaps between high school requirements and college readiness and support teachers' efforts to fill these gaps. For example, a grant could be awarded to support the colleges administer-

ing the COMPASS or other college placement test to students in their junior or beginning of senior year. Through professional development in collaboration with university faculty, particularly in math and science, high school teachers would gain an understanding of college standards and gain strategies for teaching to the standards of college readiness.

With additional support, high school and college faculty could collaborate to interpret the data to clarify college readiness standards and create a focused remediation plan for students who are not college ready. Supporting teachers and administrators in understanding and implementing credit recovery and acceleration models would also enable struggling students to move beyond lower-level material to access higher-level courses. This could take the form of learning grants to study models of academic support and credit recovery. These models, if implemented, would help students successfully master lower-level coursework so that they can access upper-level courses.

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Elsewhere in the Country

California State University's (CSU) Early Assessment Program (EAP)

The EAP administers the CSU college placement tests on a voluntary basis to high school students in their junior years to assess their readiness for college-level English and math, diagnose academic gaps, and develop remediation plans to master skills and content before leaving high school. EAP offers professional development workshops in teaching effective reading and writing skills taught by CSU faculty. Beyond this training, English and math teachers benefit from the program's web-based resources as well.

Increasing the Percentage of Young People Earning a Post-Secondary Credential by Age 25

Young people in the region consistently celebrate when they are accepted at a college. Many of them are the first in their families to achieve this milestone. Too often though, these students enter college through developmental courses and don't make progress in their desired academic or occupational pathways. Too often, they leave college without earning the intended credential or certificate.

Recommendation 7

Support the region's community colleges in participating in state and national initiatives to improve access and quality

A number of national initiatives designed to address this challenge overlap in the region. Each of these initiatives sponsors peer networks designed to support the sharing of best practices, design, design of enhanced programming, and strengthening of pathways from developmental courses into academic and career certification programs. Working with *Jobs for the Future*, the foundation could support the participation of Danville and Piedmont Community Colleges in these national learning institutes for the *North Carolina Breaking Through* or *Ready for College* initiatives.

Reclaiming the Lost Generation

An Assessment of Workforce Development in the Danville Region

Prepared by Orson Watson, Ph.D.

I. BACKGROUND

A Regional Economy in Transition

The Danville regional economy is in the process of a relatively rapid yet painful metamorphosis brought on by a succession of industry redundancies, rising unemployment, and shrinkage of the region's core manufacturing employer base. Although globalization is the easily recognizable villain in this transformation, the structural problems were more accurately generated by the region's economic over-dependence on the textile, tobacco, and furniture industries and the low-skilled labor required to fuel them. For decades many of the region's employers and civic stakeholders viewed the area's low-wage/skilled labor profile as the region's primary competitive advantage and not surprisingly, many of the region's institutions, infrastructure, and organization norms aligned in support of it.

A Former Dan River Employee

My grandmother, my mother, and my two sisters all worked at the mill (Dan River). My mother got me a part-time job at the Mill (Dan River) the summer after eleventh grade. When the summer was over, I had gotten used to having some money in my pocket and being able to buy nice clothes, so I left school and went to work full-time... I worked in Maintenance for 20 years until the plant closed two years ago... The Mill was a good job. I was making twelve dollars an hour. I know it doesn't sound like much, but with the over-time and double-time on weekends; I was able to keep my car and buy my own house. I didn't have to worry about nothing except getting to work... Since I was laid off, I have been getting Trade Act money and I am studying to get my GED. When I'm finished I hope to get a job in retail or food service.

The Danville region is ranked number one in Virginia and fifth in the U.S. with regard to the concentration of workers with manufacturing skills. Area manufacturers also have one of the lowest average workers' compensation rates (43 percent lower than the national average) while at the same time, manufacturing companies pay no local income tax or inventory tax. Because the majority of the jobs in traditional industries did not require the completion of secondary education or advanced education, the region's public education system has historically been under funded. Even today, over 30 percent of the region's adult population has neither a high school diploma nor a GED⁷; and among low-income residents of the region, education has been traditionally undervalued. For those

⁷ As the result of a statewide push to raise the education level of the state's workforce, the Commonwealth of Virginia implemented the "**Race to the GED**" initiative in 2006. The City of Danville became a pilot for this program. As part of this initiative, the City of Danville required all city employees to have a minimum of a GED education level. Some existing employees were "grand-fathered" along with timeline-based exceptions for GED completion for existing and some categories of new employees. Additionally, Danville's **Race to the GED** initiative also involved a campaign to get all employers in the city to adopt a voluntary minimum GED qualification for all new employees. Regional services were expanded to meet the increased educational demand caused by this policy. This initiative, which was intended to be a "tough love" educational incentive, more accurately functioned as a new additional employment barrier for many of the region's low-skilled workers.

area residents (particularly those of color) who did manage to earn postsecondary levels of education, their successful career pathways usually required them to emigrate to another part of the country.

The production jobs offered by traditional industries were highly “de-skilled.” Industrial processes were broken down to their most basic components creating repetitive jobs with few opportunities for advancement, requiring little independent thought or initiative beyond showing up. For decades the labor-driven industries provided employment, stable-if-not-high wages, and valuable, long-term job security to the region’s low-skilled workforce, their children and their grandchildren. For example at Dan River Inc.,⁸ the guaranty of long-term employment was so strong and the barriers to entry were so low, that plant jobs functioned as an incentive for dropping out of high school. When all of these factors are coupled with the region’s rural characteristics and the peculiar lack of direct interstate road access, it is understandable that the region’s low-wage/skilled workforce has traditionally been socially, economically, educationally, and politically isolated.

A combination of severe economic downturns, industry consolidation, and the offshore export of manufacturing jobs caused the gradual decline of the region’s traditional industries over a twenty-five year period. In the face of widespread layoffs, plant closings, and high unemployment, the region’s key stakeholders confronted the snowballing workforce crisis:

- The region’s economic development authorities began to aggressively recruit new employers to the area that could provide jobs for the growing number of displaced and unemployed workers;
- State and city agencies provided triage benefits to displaced and unemployed workers and provided them with direction toward new jobs and training opportunities through the One-Stop system; and
- The region’s public educational system, including high school extensions, Danville Community College, and Piedmont Community College stepped up their literacy, GED, customized training, and certificate programs to help workers upgrade their skills to fit available job opportunities.

Danville Region Five-Year Percentage Decline in Employment (2001-2006)	
Top 5 Industries	Percent Decline
Danville City	
1. Technical and trade schools	53%
2. Building finishing contractors	30%
3. Gasoline stations	16%
4. Electric goods merchant wholesalers	15%
5. Offices of physicians	14%
Pittsylvania County	
1. Highway, street, and bridge construction	57%
2. Electronic markets and agents and brokers	47%
3. Management of companies and enterprises	44%
4. Business support services	39%
5. Offices of physicians	36%
Caswell County	
1. Logging	68%
2. Building finishing contractors	62%
3. Gasoline stations	25%
4. Building foundation and exterior contractors	21%
5. Grocery stores	17%

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

⁸ Dan River Inc. employed as many as 14,000 workers during World War II and was the State’s second largest employer until the 1980s. After years of decline, the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2004. In 2005 Gujarat Heavy Chemicals of India bought Dan River, shut down Virginia manufacturing, and moved production overseas.

But it became clear to some in the community that in addition to these short-term solutions, the region needed to develop a long-term strategy for returning prosperity to the counties and city. The area's traditional labor-driven competitive advantage would have to be relinquished. Resources would have to be refocused on long-term diversification of the regional economy and identification of new competitive advantages for the future.

In 2000 the *Future of the Piedmont Foundation* was created to develop bold, new strategies to reorient the regional economy from its traditional manufacturing and agriculture base to information and high, technology-based industries. The result of the work of the Future of the Piedmont Foundation and other region-wide initiatives was

- ***The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR)***

A new research institution representing a collaboration between Pittsylvania County, the Future of the Piedmont Foundation, Averett University, DCC, and Virginia Tech was envisioned, funded, and constructed. IALR, set up to serve as a catalyst for economic and community transformation by developing the technologies, human infrastructure, and capital necessary to participate in a knowledge-based economy, began operations. Virginia Tech is the partner engaged in development; six research centers at the IALR are focused on robotics, motor sports, advanced polymers, biodefense, toxicogenomics, and high value horticulture and forestry. It is hoped that the research will attract faculty and graduate students; the new technologies will stimulate entrepreneurial activity, attract small and medium sized companies, and stimulate the growth of a new technology-driven manufacturing sector.

- ***Target Economic Development Clusters***

In line with the work of the IALR, the region's Economic Development Authority has identified the following clusters for targeted future economic expansion: Plastic Manufacturing, Warehouse and Distribution, Information Technology, Biotechnology/Pharmaceuticals and Auto Supply Manufacturing.

- ***Regional Center for Advanced Technology & Training (RCATT)***

Opened in 2005, RCATT's facility was built to support regional economic development by helping area businesses address their current and future hiring, employee training, and technology application challenges. Services provided by the center include: employee assessment and job profiling, Internet-based training courses, industry improvement conferences, job certification training, technology-transfer workshops, customized company-specific training programs, and on-line and distance learning courses. RCATT also sponsors the Information Technology Institute and provides advanced manufacturing technology and polymer training.

Danville Region 2006 Employment by Sector			
Sector	Danville	Pitt. Co	Caswell
Construction	1.90%	10.20%	8.20%
Trade	19.50%	15.10%	14.90%
Transportation and Utilities	0.90%	2.70%	4.60%
Manufacturing	13.00%	24.60%	19.70%
Information	1.30%	0.20%	2.30%
Financial	4.70%	1.80%	6%
Services	43.20%	19.10%	38.40%
Government	15.70%	18.60%	4.10%
Agriculture, Natural Resources, Hunting, Fishing, Mining	N/A	1.60%	1.60%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Economic Development Agencies of Danville, Pittsylvania, and Caswell Counties

The Lost Generation

Undoubtedly, the region has made tremendous strides toward maintaining its economic vitality and relevance. Unemployment rates have improved from their low point a few years ago, because new jobs are being created in the region. The new plant announcements and improved unemployment figures, however, cannot mask the reality that many of the region's low-skilled, adult workers remain out of work or trapped in low-paying, dead-end jobs with few prospects for career skill and wage advancement. This group is in danger of becoming a permanent "Lost Generation" of regional workers. This group is not the intended immediate beneficiary of the IALR's research and cluster development work. Many of the new, promising job opportunities being created in the area require a minimum high school diploma or GED—out of reach for many of the region's middle-age and aging displaced manufacturing workers. Even the area's new entry-level manufacturing jobs such as those being created by Swedwood, require a level of technological dexterity and a set of flexible-specialization oriented skills—problem solving, just-in-time orientation, cross-trainability—that were considered liabilities for workers in the traditional, mill-manufacturing culture.

Danville Region Unemployment Rates			
Year	Danville	Pitts.	Caswell
2006	8.5	5.4	7.2
2005	10.02	6.2	7.7
2004	9.29	6.2	7.9
2003	9.49	6.5	8.8
2002	8.59	7	8
2001	6.95	5.8	6.8

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau Of Labor Statistics

An Employer Association Representative

What we hear from our members is that while we have an entry-level labor pool that has the basic attitude and aptitude for jobs that are available, few job candidates have the basic skill sets. It is the basic skill set that seems to be the stumbling block for most of the traditional workforce. Some of it is GED and high school but even job candidates who have GED/high school diplomas lack very basic problem solving skills sets. We actually have to provide training for traditional low-skilled manufacturing workers so that they can qualify for basic entry-level positions in the new manufacturing plants.

Most tragic, included in this group are the children of the current generation of traditional low-skilled workers, many of whom are still conditioned to follow the well worn, but now overgrown, high school dropout-to-mill career path. High school completion rates and educational aspirations remain low among this group, particularly for young African-Americans in the City of Danville. Compounding this problem is the fact that according to one source, employers report that an average 50 percent of all job applicants for entry-level positions are unable to pass pre-employment drug tests.⁹

II. The Workforce Development System

Given the population, the region is fortunate to have significant training assets. A number of institutions and organizations across the region offer training and job placement services to the *Lost Generation*.¹⁰ Both of the region's community colleges, DCC and PCC, have been particularly active, independently and in partnerships with key stakeholders, in devising innovative strategies to meet the needs of both employers and low-skilled workers.¹¹ Despite these significant program assets, the region's workforce training and placement system contains critical gaps that limit its effectiveness in addressing the needs of employers as well as low-skilled workers and job seekers—the primary customers in dual customer workforce development models.¹²

- ***The Demand-Side***—Many area employers report that the region's workforce development and employment system is neither proactive nor user-friendly. Despite the region's high unemployment and underemployment, employers report that filling open entry-level positions can take months. While the regional employment system does source an ample volume of job candidates, the screening and job-matching function seems absent. Many of the referrals from public agencies cannot pass basic aptitude and/or drug screening requirements as well as lack required but poorly defined “soft skills” necessary for employment. A significant per-

⁹ The Virginia Drug-Free Workplace Act encourages (but does not require) drug testing by all employers by offering employers a 5 percent discount rate on their workers compensation insurance if they institute and maintain a drug-free workplace program. In addition as part of the Virginia Public Procurement Act, state and local government agencies issuing contracts for more than \$10,000 must certify that they provide a drug-free workplace. Eighty percent of the region's employers conduct pre-employment drug testing. All stakeholders in the area report drug use as the major workforce development problem. Data is not available, however, to prove whether drug use is actually on the rise or whether this is merely a perception generated by the widespread practice of drug testing.

¹⁰ Regional education and training providers include: Danville Community College, Piedmont Community College; Pittsylvania County Community Action; the Virginia Employment Commission; the North Carolina Employment Security Commission; Danville Regional Center for Advanced Technology & Training; Dan River Business Development Center; WIA supported programs in Danville, Pittsylvania, and Caswell Counties; Pittsylvania Career & Technical Center; Pittsylvania County Community Action; Virginia Employment Commission Field Office; and the Danville/Pittsylvania Chamber of Commerce.

¹¹ With support from the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative, DCC opened four Neighborhood Educational Opportunities Centers that function as satellite campuses in target, low-income areas of the region. These centers provide GED, computer literacy, and continuing education services. Caswell County's comprehensive One Stop Career Center is located on the PCC campus. They have been governed for 50 years by North Carolina State mandate that requires them to address the skills and education gaps of low-skilled people who have dropped out of high school.

¹² These summary comments were transcribed from a focus group of displaced workers at RCAT on September 13, 2007, and included in the report to the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board Strategic Planning Team, *Customer, Partner and Key Stakeholder—Focus Group Results*, Conducted August 1, 2007, and September 3, 2007. Please note that these observations only relate to the experiences of employers and job seekers in Virginia. The experiences of employers and jobseekers in Caswell County may differ significantly because of the co-location of the education, job training, and One Stop job placement services on the PCC campus.

centage of the entry-level workers sourced through the system also do not possess the flexible skill sets required to work and succeed in a high performance workplace. Although the local community colleges heavily market their customized training programs, the system is still not as demand-driven as it needs to be. One business manager stated: “*Too often they tell me (the business) what training they are offering as opposed to coming and asking me what I need and designing/customizing to meet my needs.*”

- ***The Supply Side***—Job seekers report confusion about how to enter the network of One-Stops and training providers that exists beyond the state employment office. Many job seekers describe a system that is not user-friendly and is often hostile to long-term individual career aspirations considered out of reach by local job placement counselors. Job seekers are sometimes redirected away from the more promising entry-level employment opportunities because of a lack of skills with little direction about how to acquire them. Some job seekers report greater success by circumventing the state employment office and going directly to job training providers and/or employers and finding an individual (or mentor) who believes in them. Finally, there are few worker supports available in the region, particularly for the needs of special populations such as ex-offenders, the disabled, and drug abusers.

The reported experiences of both customers (employers and job seekers) with the region’s workforce development system point to serious gaps in the type and delivery of programmatic services. In the absence of a comprehensive plan to address the specific needs of the area’s low-skilled workers, employment training and service providers also report that they have difficulty maneuvering through the system. Service providers and employment professionals report the following systems gaps:

- ***Turf Protection***—While service providers work with each other, true collaboration that involves the sharing of resources and service consolidation is rare. Thus, despite the best efforts of the system’s stakeholders, the region’s workforce development resources remain misaligned;
- ***The Absence of a Trusted Broker***—Despite numerous ongoing attempts to convene and engage segments of the region’s workforce development stakeholders, no stakeholder has assumed a recognized coordinating and brokering function on behalf of all of the core systemic stakeholders—employer, job seekers, and service providers;
- ***No Real Sector Strategies***—Despite a range of industry-focused, customized training opportunities offered through the region’s community college systems, none constitute a true sector-based training strategy for targeting a particular industry and providing training and services based on the aggregated demand and input of multiple employers across an industry sector;¹³ and
- ***No Career Ladder/Career Advancement Strategies***—All of the system’s entry-level training, screening and placement programs and services are focused on securing the job-seeker the job. Once hired, the system offers no formal post employment counseling, does not track retention, and does not offer any opportunities for non-firm sponsored career lad-

¹³ The Danville/Pittsylvania Chamber of Commerce is about to begin a Neighborhood Initiative, which may be the region’s first real sector initiative involving nine manufacturing employers who were engaged in program design and implementation. The training will not be company specific but industry sector specific. Recruitment and training are being provided in partnership with DCC and community-based organizations, primarily churches.

der progression beyond the initial job placement. For low-skilled workers, career and skill advancement can be a lifelong process that requires a diverse cross section of programmatic interventions along the way.

Worker Supports

The availability of basic support services—such as transportation, childcare, coaching/counseling, and support groups, as well as career ladder coaching and mentoring—can positively impact the ability of a low-skilled worker to maintain and grow in a job. Basic worker support services in the region are spotty at best. The immediate employment options available to the *Lost Generation*—sales, food preparation, and low-end services—generally do not offer wages that will lift workers above the poverty level. To build the skilled workforce needed to support the region’s economic transformation, the *Lost Generation* must have access to information, career counseling, and services and supports that will direct them on the path to advancement. Likewise, access to affordable childcare is a concern for all working families as are the transportation barriers that create a spatial mismatch between jobs and job seekers in rural regions similar to Danville. Those few support services that are available originate from multiple sources and require a high degree of maneuverability and coordination on the part of entry-level workers/job seekers. Beyond these problems, there is also a lack of regional coordination among the existing programs, resulting in some redundancies and a level of ineffectiveness.

A Workforce Development Stakeholder

I was involved in the early days of the Workforce Investment Board when many of us had no idea what it was that we were supposed to be doing. We spent a lot of time trying to set up a system of cross-agency planning and implementation. Quite honestly, the systems changes we were trying to make were met with a lot of resistance and pushback from the various regional agencies involved in the workforce developments... Real collaboration became a problem. While everyone spoke the language of collaboration, when it came time for real collaboration and resource sharing, all of the individual parties became very protective of their turf... Everyone wanted to get new resources, but there was no willingness to share resources. To this day, I am still pretty sure that most of the agencies involved don't really understand what a demand-drive workforce development system is supposed to look like.

The Critical Need for Intervention

Without significant strategic interventions, the low-skilled *Lost Generation* is in danger of becoming a permanent casualty of the region’s economic transformation. Full realization of the region’s high-tech future embodied in the IALR’s mission requires the implementation of strategies to literally deconstruct the traditional social, economic, political, and cultural norms that created and continue to repopulate the *Lost Generation*. This is the region’s most critical economic development imperative. Our overriding recommendation is that the Danville Regional Foundation focus its workforce development resources on the needs of this group. While the existence of a permanent under-class of low-skilled workers may have been acceptable and even beneficial to the region’s traditional economic culture, it is a long-term relocation disincentive for the new knowledge-based firms that the region is trying to attract. In the past, heavy investment in the formal education of the low-skilled workforce may not have seemed essential, but the knowledge-based industries of the future require a strong, regional educational infrastructure not only as a source for skilled workers but to educate the children of its managers. The management of the region’s firms and the region’s new generation of stakeholders will be younger, less male, less white, and more broadly diverse. The region’s leadership will inevitably have to engage and ultimately reflect the interests of this new, growing cohort of stakeholders.

III. Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to provide broad guidance for the Danville Regional Foundation to begin to frame its workforce development funding strategies. While tremendous strides have been made in the development of effective, strategic workforce-development models in urban areas of the United States in recent years, the effective translation and application of these models in rural areas such as the Danville region is still very much a work in progress. Comprehensive, best-rural practices are still being formulated. The replication of well tested, workforce-development strategies in rural areas similar to the Danville region face immediate challenges emanating from reduced funding capacity, limited community-based capacity, the logistics of service delivery across a broad geographic space, and the difficulty of defining and achieving scale. Therefore, the following recommendations are made within the context of building on existing porous but stable regional, institutional frameworks and networks as opposed to the creation of totally new entities that may be neither successful nor sustainable over the long term.

Recommendation 1

Support the Expansion of Workforce Intermediary Strategies Focused on the Needs of Employers and the Entry-Level Workers of the Region

Stakeholders in the Danville region have constructed an impressive workforce training and placement system over a relatively short period of time. But the gaps in the system reported by low-skilled job seekers and employers point to the need to expand the functional range of the region's workforce system to fill an identified workforce intermediary void. Workforce intermediaries embody a set of organic, flexible strategies capable of responding to the absence of local labor-market institutions that can adequately serve the specific needs of low-skilled workers and employers.

The region's public workforce system is having difficulty adapting to and supporting the rapidly shifting, comprehensive workforce needs of the area's transitional economy. DCC and PCC, the primary default providers of education and training for the region's low-skilled population, must serve multiple missions and programs. Efforts to address the interests and needs of the area's lowest-skilled population, beyond the acquisition of the "first job," are generally under resourced. Likewise, despite the growing need for trainable, job-ready entry-level workers, the region's employer-based and employer-financed, skills-training programs are disproportionately weighted in favor of higher skilled, paid workers. Regional employers report being frustrated by the effort and patience required to knit together the various educational, training, and support services required to train, hire, and promote the region's lowest skilled workers. The region's low-skilled workers also report confusion about navigating the maze of resources and services that are hard to identify and difficult to put together.

Understanding areas of confusion on the part of the public workforce system, service providers, employers, and job seekers is the purpose of effective workforce intermediary approaches. Because of the confusion, the Danville Regional Foundation should support expansion of workforce intermediary strategies focused on needs of employers and entry-level workers. Workforce intermediaries perform some or all of the following five functions:

1. Providing or brokering labor market services that go beyond job matching and encompass a range of advancement services, such as occupational training and career coaching;
2. Organizing funding streams so that services for individuals and employers operate simultaneously without interruption; aggregating employer demand so that employers in a particular sector, industry, or occupational cluster can collectively define and secure the services they need to access, retain, and advance a highly skilled workforce;
3. Performing ongoing research on the local labor markets and employer needs in order to inform service delivery; and
4. Advocating for public policies that support worker advancement, such as funding priorities based on demonstrated outcomes, improvements in higher education's workforce development services, and blending of important funding streams and service providers.¹⁴

Workforce intermediaries operate in a range of organizational settings already present in the Danville region: community colleges, community-based organizations, employer associations, and public workforce boards. As such, the workforce intermediary recommendation has less to do with the creation of a brand new set of organizations and more to do with:

- Expanding the capacity of the region's existing workforce development stakeholders to begin to fill specific systems gaps;
- Promoting cross-institution cooperation and resource sharing and more effectively addressing employer and jobseeker needs;
- Building sector strategies; and
- Expanding the availability of worker supports.

A leveraged workforce intermediary strategy based on adding elements and functions to existing programs is essential in rural settings similar to the Danville region. Fortunately, out of necessity, there are already some local institutions that are attempting to adopt these strategies. The Danville/Pittsylvania Chamber of Commerce's Neighborhood Initiative is a current attempt to replicate national demand-driven manufacturing sector programs in partnership with nine manufacturing employers, the United Way, DCC, and local churches. The Danville Regional Foundation should support the construction and expansion of these types of workforce intermediary strategies across the region. A key workforce funding strategy that the foundation could pursue would be to facilitate the linkages between existing programs by providing "gray area" funding for the "wrap around" and "dropdown" initiatives that will fill in the gaps in the region's workforce intermediary structure. These projects could involve multiple service providers or even new third party organizations that are willing to implement innovative strategies.

¹⁴ Heath Prince & Jerry Rubin, *Building New Labor Market Institutions: State Policies that Support Workforce Intermediaries*, Jobs for the Future, November 2006.

Central Texas Workforce Intermediary Initiative (CTWII)

Similar to many other cities, Austin, Texas, experienced rapid growth in the 1990s that did not reach its low-income and minority populations. In response to this challenge, a core group of the city workforce board, county government, two workforce intermediaries, Austin Community College, and the Ray Marshall Center, a policy research organization, is collaborating to create cluster-based advancement strategies in health care, construction, and technology. CTWII engages employer groups, community organizations, and philanthropic institutions to support a regional workforce intermediary initiative that will train disadvantaged workers for high-skill jobs offering high wages in industries linked to long-term economic growth and regional vitality. These intermediaries are providing rapid employment support for low-skill workers, remedial education and advancement-oriented skill training, wraparound support services, and career ladder support to workers. <http://www.jff.org/Documents/IWIaustin.pdf>

Recommendation 2

Support the Organization of a Regional Workforce Development Funders Collaborative

For a region of its size and demographics, the Danville region has significant philanthropic resources. In addition to the Danville Regional Foundation, the region has the Danville Community Foundation, the Carrington Trust, the Womack Foundation, and the United Way. Neighboring Martinsville/Henry County has the Harvest Foundation, another larger foundation endowed through the sale of a health services entity. While the Danville region has a long tradition of individual and institutional charitable giving, strategic philanthropic investment made in the interest of long-term systems change is a relatively new concept.

The Danville Community Foundation

We are a relatively new foundation (created in 1996) with assets of about \$18.5 million, and we are growing. We annually average over \$1 million in grants and scholarships. As with a lot of community foundations, most of our grant-making strategy is donor-driven. So far we have not established any broad initiatives or established any strategic programmatic parameters. We have open grant application periods in which we let the community tell us what it needs... We get a lot of health- and human services-related requests. The Volunteer Fire Departments eat us alive—there are 50 to 60 in our service area alone. We also get a lot of requests from governmental agencies with requests to step in (and we do) to provide enhancement grants to tax-supported organizations and programs that are short of money. There is an anti-tax tradition in this state. Some in the city and county see the role of foundations as providing funding in lieu of raising taxes. A major reason that our giving is so undefined is that we are still so young. We are excited about the Danville Regional Foundation's initiative to define strategic philanthropic focus areas for the region, because it is critical work that will definitely inform the direction of our future grant making as well. I don't anticipate any problems following the leader of the Danville Regional Foundation. Conflict of interest is a way of life in a small southern town—we have many of the same board members and interests in common.

Designing effective workforce intermediary strategies is a first step toward supporting the workforce interests of the region's low-skilled workforce. Institutionalizing the approach and establishing a funding stream to support these strategies is a more difficult task. Because of the needs in intermediary strategies, the Danville Regional Foundation should assume a civic leadership role by convening a regional workforce funder collaborative and advocating for policies that support the economic development needs of the region's low-skilled workers. In recent years, a number of these funder collaboratives have been formed across the country representing a variety of programmatic areas. The power of this type of collaboration comes not just from the dollars they bring to programs but more important, from the alignment of civic leadership around a common vision for the region.

We believe that the issues surrounding the needs of the region's low-skilled workers are so critical and beyond the scale of any single organization to address effectively that they require jointly committed private philanthropy, corporate resources, and public sector funders. Because there are fewer players in the Danville region and existing players wear multiple hats, true collaboration may be easier to achieve. Partnerships in rural locations such as Danville face fewer turf issues. There are several models for funder collaboration, ranging from loosely aligned groups that agree to support a common set of projects, to highly structured groups that pool their resources into mutual funds to carry out a detailed strategic plan. Given the variety of funders that would comprise a Danville Regional Workforce Funders Collaborative, a looser model seems more appropriate at this time. Whatever the model, a Danville Region Workforce Funders Collaborative should be a durable, multi-year relationship with moderate levels of shared resources and targeted investment, all focused on supporting workforce intermediary strategies that advance the interests of the region's low-skilled workers. This funders collaborative should be built gradually, adding members, formalizing investment priorities, and developing accountability standards. The Danville Regional Foundation should become involved with the new National Fund for Workforce Solutions' current efforts to engage regional and national foundations in the development of regional funding collaboratives to support innovative, multi-stakeholder workforce intermediary strategies across the country.

The Baltimore Workforce Intermediary Project

The Baltimore Workforce Intermediary Project is a loosely aligned group of private and public funders supporting sector-based, workforce intermediaries. The funders are collaborating to improve the city's economic health by developing a workforce system that prepares residents for skilled positions with employers who are experiencing critical workforce shortages. By creating a climate of collaboration among public and private stakeholders, the ultimate goal is to improve the city's approach to workforce development. The collaborating funders support the formation and expansion of intermediaries that coordinate financial resources and service providers in key sectors to help low-income residents find and keep jobs with employers who need skilled workers. The project is the work of seven regional and national foundations in conjunction with the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board and the Mayor's Office of Employment Development. Together with key educational institutions and nonprofit organizations, the public and private funders form project-specific steering committees to plan and implement strategically aligned investments. These committees help the intermediaries they support with selecting sectors to target, analyzing the skills and competencies needed by employers in an industry sector, facilitating the development of curricula and program designs by service providers, and raising program support by aligning grants from multiple sources. The Baltimore funder collaborative is nurturing intermediaries in three sectors: health care, construction, and biotechnology.

<http://www.nfwsolutions.org/downloads/publications/FunderCollab.pdf>

Recommendation 3

Support the Development of a Generation of New Leaders and Community-Based Capacity

The Danville region's capacity to address its most critical workforce development challenges is contingent upon its ability to engage and build consensus among a true cross section of the region's traditional and non-traditional stakeholders. Despite progressive attempts to get beyond the region's history of social and racial inequality, the leadership legacy of the area's mill town roots is still very much in place. Although the mills are closing and there have been high profile attempts at leadership integration, there is an almost universal perception (even among traditional leaders) that the region is still controlled by an exclusive leadership structure: an aging, white male oligarchy comprised of remnants of the mill town establishment. Even the new generation of business investors and man-

agers who have been recruited to the area by the region’s aggressive economic developers are not invited into the region’s inner circles of power and leadership, no matter how many jobs they are creating in the area—it can take decades to lose an “outsider carpetbagger” perception.

Because of the present perception about the area’s leadership structure, the Danville Regional Foundation should support efforts to engage and incorporate a new generation of community leaders. The region’s strategies for economic transition and workforce development must be accompanied by strategies to expand the participatory leadership base of the area to include a broader representation of age, race, gender, and class. The area’s new employers present a unique opportunity that may be slipping away. In interviews stakeholders report that the new business owners and managers are not invited to participate in the region’s civic leadership because many of them are choosing not to live in the Danville region, opting instead for suburban Raleigh/Durham. Although it would be preferable if the community’s business leaders lived within community boundaries, it is not essential and increasingly unlikely in a global business environment, where it is increasingly likely that the businesses that are creating jobs in a region may be headquartered and managed in another country. This new, spatial reality should not be an obstacle to engaging even absentee owners and managers from participating in the leadership and design of the communities in which they invest.

A Potential Community Leader

Some of the community’s stakeholder institutions are welcoming to newcomers and some block their doors. There are some key organizations in our community that, at least according to perception, are closed. For the most part they are comprised of “Good Old Boys” and the people who are acceptable to them... No one under age 30 and they are mostly male. What’s strange is that these groups pride themselves on being a visionary reflection of the needs of the community, yet they have few women, only token minorities, and no one under the age of 30.

Another legacy of the mill town culture and its isolated, low-skilled workers is a lack of community-based institutional and leadership capacity, particularly within the region’s African-American community. The Danville region did not experience the magnitude of racial and class turmoil that created community empowerment movements in other regions of the country in the 1960s. Today, there are few strong community-based organizations and leaders equipped to even begin to engage in a regional change process. The need for DCC to create Neighborhood Opportunity Centers emerged out of this void. Stakeholders report that the strongest African-American community-based institutions that they have been able to identify are the black churches. Most simply do not have a real institutional or mature cooperative leadership capacity.

To fully realize the region’s future workforce development potential, the Danville Regional Foundation should support strategies to identify, nurture, and engage a new generation of community-based leaders. Beyond these strategies, the DRF should support the capacity building and expansion of a core of promising faith-based and non-faith-based community-based organizations. Combined, these efforts will lead to a shift in the region’s leadership paradigm, offering opportunities for power and influence to those groups that have been historically marginalized by the traditional economic and social base.

The *IWAY*– A Code of Conduct for IKEA Suppliers

“IKEA products shall be manufactured under acceptable working conditions by suppliers who take responsibility for the environment.” In 2000 IKEA established a code of conduct “The IKEA Way on Purchasing Home Furnishing Products” (*IWAY*). *IWAY* specifies the minimum criteria for suppliers and what suppliers can expect of IKEA. IKEA suppliers are themselves responsible for ensuring that their own suppliers also fulfill *IWAY* criteria. There are rules for working conditions, minimum wages, overtime rates, trade union representation rights, waste management, chemical management, and emissions to air and water. IKEA will not tolerate child labor, discrimination, or the use of timber from intact natural forests. IKEA has few factories of its own. Instead, production takes place at approximately 1,600 suppliers in Europe, Asia, and North America, frequently in low-cost countries. By helping suppliers to live up to the *IWAY* criteria, IKEA also helps to raise standards and increase prosperity in developing countries. IKEA has specially trained inspectors who visit suppliers all over the world. They continually check that *IWAY* criteria are met and help suppliers who are experiencing difficulties. IKEA also employs independent auditors to carry out random checks and verify working methods and results. IKEA’s work with social and environmental issues is an ongoing process. The many small steps forward are an expression of our aspiration for continuous improvement. <http://www.ikea-group.ikea.com/corporate/PDF/Brochure.pdf>

III. An Opportunity for Civic Leadership

Danville Regional Foundation is a relatively recent player in a region that tracks time in generations. Yet, the foundation has an opportunity for impact not relative to its “years” by assuming a position of civic leadership beyond the two sets of investments outlined in this report.

While the realities of the region have changed, the hearts and minds—attitudes and behaviors—of the residents of the region have not changed as drastically. For a community of adults whose only employment history was the mill and students whose goals for educational attainment remain low, an exhortation from the foundation, educators, and/or employers to take education to the next level will not alone change beliefs, behaviors, and benefits for the community. Wherever the foundation chooses to make its educational and workforce investments, the change the foundation seeks will require community support and ownership to have a truly transformational impact.

The Danville region is not alone in these challenges of changing times and the difficult, sometimes painful, need for a community to change itself and individuals to adapt to an unknown future. Other states and regions facing similar challenges have developed campaigns that push the community to re-evaluate educational attainment—and the individual and public investments necessary to set and achieve new heights. The Danville region is poised for this push.

Recommendation 1

Develop and Launch a Campaign to Mobilize Community Engagement in Education and Workforce Development for the Future of the Region

Nevada, which often ranks first on lists of the “worst” in education, is plagued with low educational attainment rates: low high school graduation, low college attendance, and low college attainment (certificate, degree). In response to the dropout rate, the Nevada Public Education Foundation launched a campaign to help “Nevada’s young people get READY FOR LIFE, because a high

school diploma matters.” (www.readyforlifenv.org). The collaborative work began in Las Vegas with community forums (youth, families, community leaders) to gain consensus on the issue that a high school diploma matters and mobilize support from community agencies, schools, and youth service providers to push toward the high school diploma. NPEF secured a state investment to spread the work. Similarly, Portland, Oregon, has a community campaign to promote young people becoming “Connected by 25” to college and employment (www.connectedby25.org). San Jose’s Alternative Education Collaboration is engaging youth in a campaign to “Get back to school.” (www.getbacktoschool.org).

This work is not just limited to youth. Kentucky’s level of educational attainment is below the national average for youth and adults. State leaders see the perfect storm brewing—knowledge economy, retiring baby boomers, and the continued emergence of a low-skilled, low-education population. To avoid a catastrophic decline in the state’s economy, there has been a coordinated educational campaign to encourage the state’s residents to “go higher.” The simple objective of the campaign is for all residents to increase their individual level of educational attainment so that ultimately the state’s attainment for youth and adults will be equal to the national average.

In all of these cases, the goals are to encourage and support a major change in attitude and individual action by engaging the participation of young people, adults, and the community as a whole. Danville Regional Foundation could launch a similar initiative that addresses the importance of education and workforce development for the region.

The foundation could play a catalytic role in mobilizing other area funders to support the campaign. A number of funders, notably the Harvest Foundation, support education and/or workforce development. Engaging other funders in civic leadership on this issue could create a shared message and strategies for change across the region. In a similar case, the Youth Transitions Funders Group, a collaboration of regional and national funders, came together to raise the national visibility of disconnected youth in foster care, juvenile justice, and dropouts and near dropouts. Through coordinated investments, publications, and dissemination of best practices for improving outcomes for these young people, this funder collaborative has created momentum for reforms on behalf of disconnected youth (www.ytfg.org). Similarly, a collaborative of foundations in the Dan River region could make the challenges facing disconnected youth and displaced workers visible and actionable for the community.

Recommendation 2

Build a Practice of Multi-racial Collaboration and Encourage Diverse Civic Leadership

The foundation could also bring more voices to a new message of diversity in the region. Segregation has a tragic history in the region, but it is clear the community is ready to change the past. This is seen in the web pages of schools in the region: explicit anti-discrimination statements stand in stark contrast to the previous designation of these schools as “Black” or “White.” Yet African-American students are not well represented in higher level courses, less likely to graduate, and are underrepresented at college. Leadership on education and workforce is not inclusive—representation from the African-American community is not often visible.

Increasingly, the communities with the competitive economic advantage and those rising to the top of the list of “best towns to live in” can boast a community where diversity is seen in power and lea-

dership. Corporations that relocate their companies also have a diverse workforce of professionals—people with families—who are looking for a community with a place for them and schools with records of diverse student populations performing well. The foundation could play a role in making diversity and multi-racial collaboration a community practice. By engaging the participation and leadership of communities of color in education and workforce development strategies, community-wide campaigns begin to open doors of access and power that bring white and African-American communities together as equal partners for action.