



Connecting Youth to Lifelong Success



MIKAYLA MCLAUGHLIN, FORMER HILLSIDE WORK-SCHOLARSHIP CONNECTION STUDENT

With 360-degree support from Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection, an encouraging father, and a change in attitude, Mikayla McLaughlin went from academically falling short to getting a job, successfully graduating high school, and going to college.

“I wanted to have everything my way.” When Mikayla started high school, she didn’t realize how much her decisions and actions could determine her future. As a freshman at Central High School in Capitol Heights, MD, Mikayla struggled to stay motivated in her classes – leading to failing grades. “At the time, I was only going to school to have fun and didn’t take my education seriously,” she recalled. Mikayla’s father, Thomas McLaughlin, a single parent, recognized that Mikayla needed extra guidance during these formative years and introduced her to Hillside-Work Scholarship Connection. HW-SC’s intervention transformed Mikayla’s attitude and set her on a new path to a brighter future.

When Mikayla first started the program, the top priority was getting her grades up. Mikayla’s Youth Advocate, La-Toya, worked with the school and

Mr. McLaughlin to create daily progress reports to make sure that she was completing all of her assignments and getting additional help in the subjects she was struggling with. Mikayla’s father immediately noticed a drastic change. “Her grades transformed in a short period of time,” said Mr. McLaughlin. “She went from getting 30s and 40s to 80s and 90s.” La-Toya not only helped Mikayla identify subjects where she struggled and develop strategies to improve; she also reinforced how important her grades would be to get into college and achieve her goals.

Above and beyond academic support, La-Toya became a mentor to Mikayla, mediating her relationship with her father at a pivotal time in her life. Like many young people her age, Mikayla wanted to wear makeup to school but Mr. McLaughlin was reluctant to give his permission.

After Mikayla's Youth Advocate explained Mikayla's perspective and how it was a form of expression for many teenage girls, Mikayla's father came around. "It was a lovely milestone to see Mikayla turn sixteen," said La-Toya. "At that age, she wanted to go her own way and figure out her own identity whereas her father was very structured with her, and so I worked to be a bridge of communication between the two." Mr. McLaughlin is grateful to the staff at HW-SC for stepping in to help them find a compromise for this and other situations that arose during Mikayla's high school years: "I trusted them because Mikayla trusted them."

La-Toya also made sure that Mikayla had the tools that she needed to reach her personal goals for her junior and senior years. Mikayla wanted to go to college, so La-Toya encouraged her through the resources that HW-SC provided, including college tours and helping her to complete college and scholarship applications. Mikayla also got a job at Wegmans Food Markets through HW-SC, which offered her the opportunity to take on more responsibilities and learn workplace skills. Through the ups and downs of high school, La-Toya and other HW-SC staff members provided the 360-degree support Mikayla and her family needed. As Mikayla's grades rose, the progress reports were no longer necessary. La-Toya regularly checked in with Mr. McLaughlin, showing him how to keep track of Mikayla's grades on the school's website portal for parents and flagging upcoming parent-teacher conferences to ensure that he attended. HW-SC also worked with Mikayla's teachers to build positive relationships between them and Mikayla, navigating challenges when necessary. Anytime that Mikayla's grades dipped because she didn't like a teacher or wasn't interested in the subject, La-Toya and the HW-SC staff were there to motivate her and get her grades right back up. La-Toya explains that she was always there to encourage Mikayla, saying "Come on, let's get back on track. Let's get you where you want to be. Because I'm not only supporting your dreams, I'm supporting your dreams coming to fruition."

Today, Mikayla's dream of going to college is a reality. She is a freshman at Bowie State University in Maryland. HW-SC helped Mikayla maintain her grades to successfully graduate from Central High School, apply for schools, and perform so well at her job that she earned a \$6,000 scholarship from Wegmans to help pay for college. Mikayla and her father credit HW-SC for helping Mikayla redefine what it means to have everything her way. Now, her way means focusing on her goals and working hard to succeed in college and

"I owe – we owe – everything to Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection. In my opinion, they took her from failing to succeeding. Now, when I think about Mikayla's future, it's not a hope, it's not even a dream anymore. It's an expectation."

**THOMAS
MCLAUGHLIN,
MIKAYLA'S FATHER**



beyond. Mr. McLaughlin expressed his feelings about the role that HW-SC played in their lives: “I owe – we owe – everything to Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection. In my opinion, they took her from failing to succeeding. Now, when I think about Mikayla’s future, it’s not a hope, it’s not even a dream anymore. It’s an expectation.”

The Investment Partner: Hillside Work- Scholarship Connection

Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection is a youth development program that helps at-risk youth stay in school and graduate with the skills and confidence to succeed in college, the workforce, and beyond. HW-SC provides strengths-based academic, career, and wrap-around services to ensure that students are prepared for successful degree attainment and lifelong personal and career success. HW-SC does this by training school-based Youth Advocates to help students develop good habits, acquire interpersonal communication skills and achieve their potential to become contributing, responsible young people at home, in school, and at work.

In 1987, in response to a call to action to address high dropout rates in Rochester, New York, several community-based organizations and Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. created HW-SC (originally named Wegmans Work Scholarship Program). As the size and scope of the organization continued to increase, the program was transferred in 1996 to the Hillside Family of Agencies – a comprehensive social service agency in upstate New York, with over 180 years of expertise in child and youth development.

HW-SC’s headquarters in New York continued to grow with significant private funding from Wegmans and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. EMCF has invested over \$10 million in HW-SC since 2006. One of the Foundation’s investments supported the organization’s goal to build its capacity and replicate the program beyond New York. An enthusiastic response from local school leadership and other community stakeholders drove the organization to select Prince George’s County, Maryland, as its first extension area. HW-SC began operating in Prince George’s County in 2008. Dennis Richardson, President of Hillside Family of



Agencies, recalled the milestone: “The expansion of Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection into Prince George’s County has been an incredibly positive experience.” He continued: “Being in Prince George’s County has even enabled [Hillside Family of Agencies] to identify new business and financial models in our overall planning.”

Since HW-SC began in New York 30 years ago, its

unique emphasis on providing each participant with multiple anchors of support has helped thousands of students graduate from high school. Today, HW-SC in Prince George’s County, is helping over 850 students per year, in nine middle and high schools, stay in school, earn their high school diplomas, and prepare for employment and post-secondary education.

360° SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS: STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

With the support of Youth Advocates, Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection eliminates obstacles to learning by connecting students to the individualized resources that they need to succeed.

Youth Employment

Support – Provide work readiness training, job placement, and mentoring for students.

WORK

Education Planning and

Intervention – Provide academic tutoring and intervention and assist with post-secondary, career planning, and scholarships.

SCHOOL

Family Engagement –

Engage families in meetings, provide students with life and interpersonal communication skills, and provide access to human-services resources.

HOME



HW-SC's 360-Degree Support Model

Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection reaches out to youth with at least two of the following research-based risk factors which increase the likelihood of dropping out of school:

- Low attendance rates
- Low socioeconomic status
- Over-age for grade level
- Failing two or more core subjects
- Multiple school suspensions
- Low standardized test scores

Full-time, school-based Youth Advocates (YAs) help students identify their goals and stay on track at home, school, and on the job. Working in partnership with students, their families, teachers and employers, YAs provide consistent, caring adult support beginning in middle school through two years after high school graduation. Services provided by YAs include targeted academic supports, such as tutoring, test preparation, college readiness, academic skill building, year-round academic enrichment and after-school programming.

Unlike other interventions, which may be limited to out-of-school or episodic meetings during

the week, Youth Advocates have the benefit of working with students, teaching staff, and school administrators during the school day. Like case managers, YAs are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and they work closely with students, parents and guardians, and other adults to make sure that each student is successful. Together, they create an individualized plan for graduation with targeted goals to support high school graduation, job placement, career planning, post-secondary education, and other personal goals.

Youth Advocates also maintain close contact with youth employer partners to ensure appropriate monitoring and support for student employees. YAs support students' success in the program, and it is the combination of their integration into the school community and the relationships that they form with students which enables HW-SC to deliver critical components of the program.

HW-SC also partners with community businesses across a variety of job sectors to offer employment, internships, and career exploration experiences. Through the national organization's Jobs Institute, the local HW-SC affiliate offers training to students via the Youth

Employment Training Academy (YETA), a rigorous 25-hour program that provides students with job readiness skills to succeed in entry-level employment. Students are assessed for their readiness to participate in the program and engage in ongoing employment. The YETA classroom-based curriculum is the first component of job training and focuses on the essential skills that are necessary to succeed in entry-level positions. The YETA curriculum includes training in such skills as:

- Time management
- Decision making
- Job search and application
- Interviewing
- How to build a resume over time

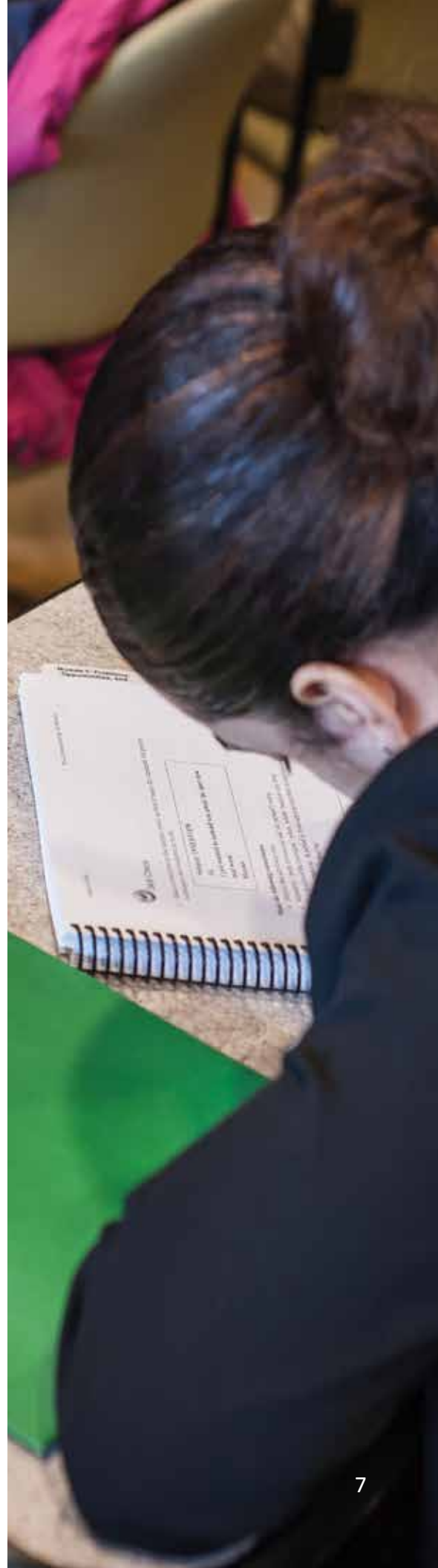
Once students complete the curriculum, they earn the YETA certification, which allows them to apply for entry-level jobs with local employment partners – exposing them to career opportunities and helping them to develop marketable job skills, as well as earn money toward college tuition.

Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP) was attracted to the high graduation rates and other positive outcomes that HW-SC was delivering for students through its 360-degree support model. VPP saw that HW-SC was built on a solid foundation for future growth. HW-SC's committed partnership with Prince George's County government and the school district through the County's Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative, and a strategic and passionate leader with a skilled staff, increased the likelihood that the organization could grow and serve more students in Prince George's County.

The Opportunity

A Significant Need in Prince George's County

In 2012, it was recorded that 1,700 students dropped out of school in Prince George's County per year. There were also 13 high schools in the County with graduation rates under 80 percent. When students drop out of high school, it limits their individual opportunities: these students are more likely to be unemployed, have low socio-economic status, be chronically ill, dependent on social services, incarcerated, and earn hundreds of thousands of



dollars less over their lifetime than graduates. Workforce development experts and employers in the County agree that high dropout rates greatly reduce their ability to identify strong employee candidates to fill entry-level positions. They also know that the labor market in the region requires skills beyond those obtained in high school.

A Strong Track Record and an Opportunity for Greater Reach

Since launching in Prince George's County nearly a decade ago, Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection has demonstrated significant success in supporting students in the community. In 2012, 94 percent of HW-SC seniors graduated, which exceeded Prince George's County Public Schools' graduation rate of 71 percent that same year. Additionally, 84 percent of HW-SC students were promoted to the next grade. HW-SC achieved these results despite being new to the region and sustaining significant growth over a short period of time. HW-SC has been fully embraced by Prince George's County Public Schools, Prince George's County Government, and the local Workforce Investment Council and recognized as an effective youth development program in the County.

With its record of success, broad-based community support and its own aspirations for growth, Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection had the potential to serve more than double the number of students. If HW-SC could reach its goals, it would improve educational outcomes for vulnerable youth throughout Prince George's County, one of the most underserved and under-resourced jurisdictions in Greater Washington. To serve more students with quality, HW-SC needed to strengthen its operational capacity; increase, expand and deepen partnerships with employers; and further strengthen performance management.

VPP's investment partnership with HW-SC in Prince George's County began at a time when the organization was poised to achieve rapid growth. VPP selected HW-SC as an investment partner because of the organization's aspiration to grow and help more students graduate on time; the Executive Director's leadership track record and commitment; demonstrated results of the effectiveness of the program's innovative model; and a remarkable level of community stakeholder ownership and support.

"We knew right away that Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection was a winner. We selected Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection because of its success in serving young people in Prince George's County, but it was the strong leadership and aspirations that ultimately made this investment partnership a success."

CAROL THOMPSON COLE, PRESIDENT AND CEO, VPP

The Action

VPP embarked on a three-year, \$2.2 million investment with Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection. The first step was to develop a business plan during the summer of 2013. The business plan would be critical for HW-SC's growth with quality because it would provide new and different ways to pursue their goals. The business plan, prepared with support from The Bridgespan Group, allowed HW-SC to develop an aggressive yet achievable growth plan which included five strategic priorities that it aspired to meet over a five-year period. Priorities included expanding into new schools in the Prince George's County, developing strong employer partners, strengthening performance management, building strong talent within the local affiliate organization, and cultivating sustainable funding sources.

Investment Breakdown

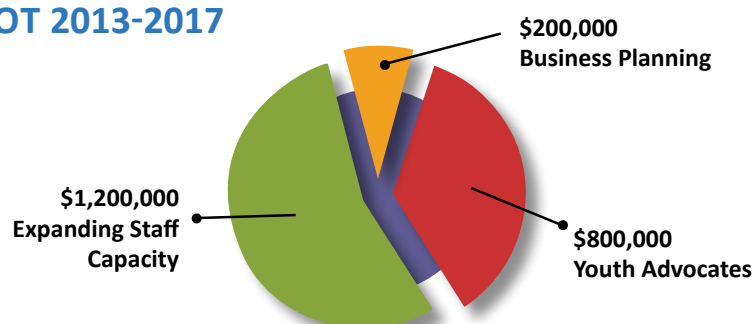
The business planning process and development of the organizational priorities surfaced three important areas where VPP could support HW-SC in achieving its aspiration for growth. These became the focus of funding and strategic assistance for VPP's investment in HW-SC:

- **Building the Organizational Structure:**
As HW-SC in Prince George's County continued to grow, it needed to establish a functional operating structure with local staff unique from the headquarters in New York.
- **Enhancing Programing with New Partnerships:**
As HW-SC served more students through part-time work, the organization needed to identify, cultivate, and maintain partnerships beyond Wegmans Food Markets to additional employer partners.
- **Strengthening Performance Management:**
HW-SC's national office already had a sophisticated data collection and performance infrastructure but needed to build local capacity to enhance data-informed decision making among Youth Advocates.

"We found that our relationship with VPP is different in a positive way because they helped engage us, support us, and give us their thoughts and ideas on how the model could be improved and our services could have even better outcomes in Prince George's County."

**AUGUSTIN MELENDEZ,
PRESIDENT, HILLSIDE
WORK-SCHOLARSHIP
CONNECTION**

INVESTMENT SNAPSHOT 2013-2017 \$2.2 MILLION TOTAL





“Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection has a better vision for how it should work because of VPP’s guidance. VPP has played an extremely important role in convening, encouraging, and nurturing the work in Prince George’s County and we’re so proud of this. VPP has shown us that if we can work together as a community, we can be successful”

DANNY WEGMAN, CHAIRMAN, WEGMANS FOOD MARKETS, INC.

The Results

Rebuilding the Organizational Structure for External Impact

Expanding the Operating Staff

At the start of the VPP investment, HW-SC’s overarching goal was to grow to meet the needs of more students. For HW-SC to sustain its growth while continuing to offer high-quality programming, the organization needed to develop a more robust internal structure. VPP’s investment helped to transform the organizational capacity from a thinly spread operation to a more robust team by funding key staff positions.

By the close of the investment, HW-SC added four key leadership positions. VPP’s investment helped HW-SC hire local staff to fulfill responsibilities that had typically been driven by the headquarters office in Rochester. One of the new positions that HW-SC added to its leadership staff was the Manager of College and Career Services. Creating this function helped HW-SC expand student employment opportunities as defined in the business plan.

The organization also hired a new Human Resources Generalist, which resulted in the ability to streamline processes, including a more streamlined onboarding for a larger YA staff. For example, the average time spent for onboarding has been reduced from 60+ days to 22 days. Having a Human Resources Generalist also allowed the Prince George’s County site to hold local trainings that were

previously offered exclusively in Rochester. A new Director of Operations position supports the growing number of YAs. The Director of Operations also helps the Executive Director to steward relationships with school leaders. In addition, hiring a Business Process Coordinator to focus on performance management for HW-SC in Prince George's County has helped to establish a local high-performance culture that uses data to improve the organization's effectiveness in serving students. The Business Process Coordinator created "Data Fridays" – where she meets with staff at each school on a weekly basis, offers trainings, and facilitates leader board presentations to get staff excited about how they are performing. Data Fridays have also been fundamental to informing business intelligence work for HW-SC affiliates in other regions throughout Upstate New York.

Creating a Pipeline of Talented Youth Advocates

VPP encouraged HW-SC to craft a strategy to retain and recruit regional talent in a competitive market. As a result, HW-SC created new professional advancement opportunities for YAs. The organization created Youth Advocate II and Specialist II roles to promote existing YAs and attract more experienced talent. HW-SC also created a new supervisory role, Youth Advocate III. HW-SC began attending career fairs to position itself as an employer of choice and to recruit top talent as YAs. This enabled HW-SC to continue to provide high-quality services to students as they grew.

Leveraging the Advisory Board

HW-SC benefits from a strong Regional Advisory Board, consisting of business and community leaders, as well as the Chief Executive Officer of Prince George's County Public Schools, President of Prince George's Community College, and other leaders in County government. During VPP's investment, HW-SC engaged with the

advisory board in new and important ways, individually and as a group. HW-SC brought data and information about student performance and growth to the advisory board which informed ways to address strategic matters as they arose and connected them to national issues that were being played out across all organizational affiliates. Dr. Charlene Dukes, HW-SC Advisory Board Member and President of Prince George's County Community College, explains her connection to the HW-SC advisory board and how HW-SC benefits students' future: "K-12 education lays the groundwork for how students move on to higher education," said Dr. Dukes. "Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection helps students who are just a step away from reaching their potential and is committed to providing an avenue for students to be successful in middle school, high school, and higher education." Having a strong board with key community members, such as Dr. Dukes, is essential to HW-SC's future aspirations to serve more young people in the region.

Scaling Up to Serve More Students with Quality

HW-SC had already established strong relationships with businesses and the school system prior to VPP's investment. As HW-SC continued to grow to serve more young people in Prince George's County, it needed to leverage its relationship with the school system and strategically develop new partnerships with local employers.

Tripling the Number of Youth Served

Before VPP's investment, HW-SC aspired to serve more students in Prince George's County but student enrollment capacity had plateaued (serving approximately 240 students in five schools). During the business planning phase of VPP's investment, HW-SC established a goal to increase the number of students served to 870.

To achieve this goal, HW-SC prioritized schools with the greatest needs and strategized which schools to serve and how many students to serve at each.

During the last year of the investment, HW-SC served over 800 students across nine middle and high schools – nearly four times the number of youth that HW-SC served annually prior to VPP’s investment. HW-SC was also successful in sustaining positive academic outcomes for youth over the lifetime of the investment, resulting in 93 percent of HW-SC youth, who started the program as 9th graders, successfully graduating from high school in four years (compared to 81 percent for PGCPs as a whole). In addition, HW-SC identified 109 youth-friendly job placements across 12 employers during the investment, which resulted in 133 youth obtaining employment.

“Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection has exceeded my expectations in terms of their growth in students served. Their work with students has been a contributor to our school system’s growth and graduation rates.”

DR. KEVIN MAXWELL, CEO OF PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Expanding Employer Partnerships

Before VPP’s investment in HW-SC, Wegmans was their primary employer partner. HW-SC recognized that, while Wegmans in Prince George’s County would be a valued anchor partner, it had to secure additional employer partners to sustain the growth of the number of

students served. VPP’s investment enabled HW-SC to devise a strategy and add a new Manager of College and Career Services to its staff. As a result, HW-SC established several new relationships with partners, including Marriot and Target. With 12 new employer partners in total, HW-SC was able to provide employment opportunities for over 100 students during VPP’s investment. At Marriot, students learn practical skills and work in several areas of the hotel. Students, at times, serve as a host in the hotel restaurant or set up the conference rooms for events, as well as work in administrative capacities which tap into their computer skills and creativity. Charles Ewing, the Market Director of Human Resources for Marriot, explains the value of having HW-SC student employees. “The thing that I love about the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection interns is that they come prepared on day one,” said Charles. “They look the part and speak the part, and we see the return on our investment because they are working well with our employees and customers.” Seeing the clear value to its business from working with HW-SC, Marriot now offers more than 10 employment slots and plans to continue its partnership with HW-SC.

Strengthening Data Systems for Stronger Youth Outcomes




Prior to VPP’s investment, HW-SC had a comprehensive data collection and performance management infrastructure but needed to upgrade the data system to provide more information in real-time, enabling YAs to provide more holistic counsel and guide students toward developing and achieving their post-high-school plans. Through this investment, VPP also provided strategic assistance to HW-SC headquarters to strengthen performance management across the organization.

HW-SC transitioned to Efforts to Outcomes



VPP'S INVESTMENT: BEFORE & AFTER

Student enrollment in HW-SC increased by over 300% during the three years of VPP's investment.

BEFORE		AFTER
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HW-SC: 240 in 5 schools		STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HW-SC: 864 in 9 schools
EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS: 1		EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS: 12 <i>(with triple the amount of employment opportunities for students)</i>
FULL-TIME HW-SC EMPLOYEES: 12		FULL-TIME HW-SC EMPLOYEES: 50

Touchpoints, a new data system that allows it to build enhanced reporting to more easily monitor student performance against program metrics. With the new data system, staff can track and report on students' post-high-school goals and activities, including college tours, applications, and acceptances. Team Supervisors can also monitor student progress on each YA's caseload. In addition, the system combines school district data with information that HW-SC collects to determine if students are on track

to advance to the next grade and graduate on time. Thanks to the new data system, YAs are also able to use the data to identify areas where students need additional support (e.g., academics, attendance, attitude, etc.). The improvements in data reporting have, not only improved staff engagement with students, but also enabled HW-SC to develop a dashboard that allows management to monitor its performance compared to the other HW-SC sites.



A Bright Future for More Youth

Today, Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection represents one of the largest and most effective school-based, youth-serving organizations in Prince George's County. Enrollment in HW-SC's program has more than tripled over the past three years, and its reach to additional schools in the County has increased their ability to serve and retain more students. HW-SC hopes to continue to grow and tip the scale on the number of students served by its program. HW-SC continues to engage County leadership for partnership and alignment of vision, value, and approach.

In 2014, VPP integrated its youthCONNECT model, a network of high-performing nonprofits working collectively toward a common set of student success goals, in Suitland High School in Prince George's County. VPP recognized HW-SC as an organization that was already working well within the schools and would be an important partner to include in the youthCONNECT network. Because of its involvement with youthCONNECT, HW-SC has been able to leverage relationships with other nonprofit organizations to ensure that students are connected to resources needed beyond its programmatic scope.

HW-SC has strengthened the quality of its services and put more students on a path to college and career success. Over the course of VPP's three-year investment, HW-SC has more than tripled the number of students served while maintaining strong, positive student outcomes. VPP's investment has helped HW-SC develop a structurally-sound internal staff and operation, expand employer partnerships and collect and use data – all to benefit young people.



VPP is confident that HW-SC's presence in the Greater Washington region will continue to create a better future for young people – helping them to succeed in high school and long after.

“We have learned and grown a lot on this journey with VPP and have appreciated VPP’s encouragement and inspiration to do more and reach our goals. This experience has, both directly and indirectly, been tremendously valuable and will continue to influence our growth in the future.”

KARENE BRODIE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HILLSIDE WORK-SCHOLARSHIP CONNECTION



Venture
Philanthropy
Partners

www.vppartners.org

@vppartners