



Kids Today: What Teens Think about Apprenticeship

Report to Washington State Labor Council:
ANEW's K-12 Research



February 2012

INTRODUCTION

This paper is prepared by Apprenticeship & Non-Traditional Employment for Women (ANEW) as a primary deliverable to the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) and its leadership in galvanizing relationships and marketing for the K-12 community. The paper compiles research conducted using three methodologies:

1. Online and in-person research with firms experienced in marketing to youth, particularly the Millennial Generation;
2. Compilation of 944 surveys targeting high school audiences that express interest and disinterest in apprenticeship, which were distributed and collected at King and Pierce County career days; and
3. Validation of survey findings by conducting two focus groups with high school students interested and disinterested in apprenticeship - particularly trades work.

WSLC will use this information to develop innovative marketing strategies, materials or initiatives involving key influencers. ANEW will support the design and implementation of these strategies. WSLC and ANEW will coordinate a training event aimed at the apprenticeship and/or K-12 community to maximize marketing strategies and lessons learned from this research.

PART ONE: MARKETING TO THE MILLENNIAL

Generational research has become a primary driver in global marketing efforts in the last 30 years. It provides a broad view of how specific age groups share common values and preferences that are typically defined by major events in their formative years. Like any other data, generational research gives a critical piece— but only a piece – of information that is used for targeted marketing campaigns.

What do we know about young people today?

According to US Census data, the **Millennial Generation**, which spans the birth years of the 1978 to 2000, is the second largest generation cohort in the workplace – behind boomers by a slim 3,000,000. In fact, this cohort is sometimes called “Echo Boomers” because of its size, and because many are the children of Boomers – not Generation X. Millennials pose distinct marketing challenges compared to other generations; they literally grew up with rapid technology advances and are savvy to marketing gimmicks. In fact, this savvy vexes marketing experts who have tried – in many cases, unsuccessfully – to sell products to this target demographic. Compound this savvy with the fact that Millennials range from the age of 34 to 12, a span of time that is arguably the most definitive and changing years of a person’s life, and it is easy to see there is no one clear or quick way of marketing to this generation.



Businesses pay attention, and quite a bit of marketing dollars, to reach this audience. What do they know that could be applied to apprenticeship?

Determined to change the world: Millennials sincerely want to contribute to their communities and the world. They pursue work that genuinely makes a difference for people or the environment, and they are not as impressed with dollar signs as preceding generations. They are active in effective voting and social movements, demonstrations, and policy than their Boomer parents would give credit. They are less likely to abandon their goals to accommodate life choices, too: they are marrying later, they are having children later, and they expect to see the world. According to Carol Phillips, blogger and principal with MillennialMarketing.com, this generation realizes that making



a difference lies in the cumulative effect of small decisions, little actions, not necessarily a big career accomplishment.

Millennials expect to be highly educated; data suggests that even dropouts report an expectation to go to college. Their rates of pregnancy, suicide, addictions, and other negative teen data that has plagued previous generations are at all-time low rates. They are incredibly confident in their abilities and fully expect that they will make a difference through smart professional and personal choices.

Every generation, particularly when they are young and not the “establishment,” are subject to criticism for their rebelliousness, opinions, and inexperience. What makes Millennials different? They shape and even control social media, and do not accept criticism lightly. In fact, they can – and do – shape media messages to their demographic advantage.

What does this mean for apprenticeship?

Marketing shouldn't focus entirely on money. Other generations may react favorably to the bottom line paycheck, but it won't be relevant to a Millennial unless it is connected to how a person can positively impact their community or an industry as a result of being an apprentice.

In both the ANEW survey results and focus group, the overwhelming percentage of respondents said wage was the most important consideration for work. However, when both focus groups were questioned further, this response was explained as a direct link to the current economic outlook and the pervading sense that Millennials will not enjoy a better quality of life than their predecessors. These students still expressed a desire to earn a good income while doing meaningful work, and several reported they would trade off wealth for work that empowers their communities.

The story of Unions and how they support the community can be appealing.

Millennials care about supporting their communities, particularly like-minded people who are working towards the same result. Recent efforts like the Occupy Movement are powerful draws for people who want a social forum that ties to their profession. In recent years, the Union message may have become diffuse, but the unity and solidarity of like minded people working together to improve their world is truly powerful to young people.

Not your mother's (or my)

technology: They may not have invented the internet, but this generation did invent Facebook, My Space, and Social Media. It is not enough to know that Millennials use technology – they use it with greater efficiency and integrate it into their relationships. In fact, where other generations view technology as tools to improve work, Millennials view technology as a method to improve life.



To a Millennial, it is not strange or isolated to have “meaningful” relationships virtually; many say it is virtual relationships that grounds and forms their sense of identity, security and community. Millennials are great media multi-taskers, too: what may appear rude to others could be a Millennial texting, checking email, and participating in a meeting. In sum, all media that is appealing to a Millennial is social and mobile; there is a real trend indicating that the personal computer will be obsolete *in less than 2 years*.

What does this mean for apprenticeship?

Forget your website – unless you go mobile. Thanks to smart technology, websites are static. Most smart technology doesn’t require a person to do a “web search” for information – it leads you to it. Websites that do not evolve to accommodate smart phones, tablets, and other mobile technology will be unusable – SOON. Marketers are encouraging even colleges to use applications that satisfy specific needs or provide specific information in nearly skeletal, how-to bytes, and to link to “lifestyle” information. It seems that the equation is accessible + vision of a fulfilled life in every way = usable.

Form a meaningful, virtual relationship. Many of us think social media is a way to avoid real interaction with people. A large part of other generations still misinterprets emails, perceives texts as rude and proof that the education system is failing our kids, and generally thinks cell phones are for calling someone. Millennials do not believe any of these things. They do, however, turn off when they are told their social media is not a legitimate way to convey ideas or communicate.

Take one for the team: Millennials prefer groups, team environments, and shared experiences. After all, they did bring on the advent of a “flash mob” to organize both frivolous and poignant statements among strangers with similar interests or values (!). In the last 20 years, educational trends from group projects to team learning environments reinforced and even transformed how kids learn and work together. They are used to, prefer, and expect teamwork. Despite economic background, gender or race, as a cohort, Millennials have participated in more sports and extracurricular activities than any other generation, and do not view teamwork through a non-traditional or gender-biased lens.

While they understand that teams have leaders, they expect to interact with and influence the leader – they are literally flattening even traditional industries with team mentality. This has impacted marketing tremendously, particularly recruiting: businesses that want to hire young people don’t advertise the ability to “advance” – they say that the desired candidate will be part of decision-making right off the bat.

What does this mean for apprenticeship?

This generation wants to hear about teamwork and mentors. A selling point to Millennials can be a description of how apprenticeship works – the active participation in learning on-the-job with a journey-level mentor. This relationship needs to be “modernized,” however – it needs to be described in an understandable and appealing way.

Distrust blatant marketing: These kids have been marketed to all of their lives. There has not previously been a generation as involved and influential in major family economics and financial decision-making. In the book, “Kids as Customers: A Handbook of Marketing to Children” author James U. McNeal states that manufacturers cannot ignore the child, tween or young adult in marketing. However, experts suggest that marketing should be authentic. McNeal even admits in his handbook that young people reach an age where they believe that advertisements and marketing are generally lies, and that perception doesn’t change.

Despite reality TV, this generation does recognize the difference between outrageous scenarios and genuine situations. Particularly older Millennials, who may be the best target group for apprenticeship, believe even the smallest work or life decision is socially or environmentally significant. Carol Phillips of MillennialMarketing.com says that marketers can leverage this insight by helping them feel like their consumer choices are helping make a difference.

Millennials care just as much about what a brand represents as what a product or service provides. At the same time, experts also say that Millennials generally accept cumulative marketing, such as product placement. This phenomena transcends generations – most people, despite age or background, become accustomed to or prefer an item if exposed to it frequently.



What does this mean for apprenticeship?

Don’t start a Facebook page – start an online community. It’s difficult to manage the content posted on Facebook by “friends” and people who “like” you. An online community is a more deliberate and active way of engaging people. Some online communities are started by a single blogger or a blog following; others are a group of people/members dedicated to a protocol of information sharing and positioning that helps the greater good. Systems like apprenticeship that use an online community does need dedicated FTE to keep the information relevant and ensure members participate.

Be flashy, just not too flashy. Don’t appear to be too good to be true: these young adults feel like society has let them down by not providing them with good work, thanks to our recession. Marketing materials should look polished and legitimate.

Create cumulative experiences. Often, the apprenticeship community only reaches a young person once, and that interaction isn’t measured. Rather than reaching out to many different

young people every year, it may be useful to connect repeatedly, either through service learning, mentoring/tutoring at schools, or in repeated interactions. Some districts are now tracking what students choose and do after attending a career fair; it would be wise to create follow-up outreach with teachers and students and to use district measurements to adjust activities, as needed.

Liberal beliefs, traditional values: Millennials are generally a tolerant, community-focused generation that wants to preserve personal liberties and social fabric at the same time. Even more than Generation X, they've endured more divorce, abuse, and addictions in their immediate families, and reacted to these social and familial dissolutions by embracing traditional values – without traditional judgments. This generation tends to look to their parents and supportive adults for guidance. They acknowledge titles and roles, but want formal mentor relationships with leaders.

What does this mean for apprenticeship?

Parents matter. As proven in our surveys and focus groups, today's young people seek out their parent, a trusted relative or mentor for advice and decision-making. Parents are a key ingredient in improving marketing to Millennials. And, because parents are a different generation – typically Boomers – it is important that marketing targets this group, too. A winning marketing tool or strategy will integrate each generation's distinct preferences into an appealing message and brand.



The history of Apprenticeship has merit. The Labor movement, the milestones of increasing diversity in the workplace, and the green movement is a story worth telling, particularly if it threads together the Millennial's sense of tradition with social evolution and environmental contributions. The key to using the story of Apprenticeship is to attach it to service learning, so its sense of unity and community-driven support is clearly linked with doing good.

In sum, the Millennial generation information is commensurate with the responses ANEW received in both its surveys and focus groups. This marketing advice appears to match common patterns in young people's choices and behaviors. As with any generalized data, this is a broadly consistent and may not be a perfect correlation for target groups, such as young women or people of color. Taking their demographic experiences into account helps create customized messages and outreach.

There are great resources for marketers to determine how Millennial-savvy their staff and materials truly are. We recommend utilizing these tools to improve overall marketing skills and messages:

Google's brand new **Go Mobile** (GoMo) initiative helps businesses and agencies optimize their sites for mobility. Using HowToGoMo.com, apprenticeships can enter in their current website's URL to see what the site looks like on mobile. GoMo will then make suggestions and recommendations on how the site could be mobile-optimized, and even provide a free, customized report. Google even offers a free way to create or convert websites for mobility.

The **Pew Research Center** has a fun and quick quiz for any person to see how “millennial” their opinions, capabilities and preferences are. This is great way for individuals who take part in outreach efforts to self-evaluate how they connect to young people. <http://pewresearch.org/millennials/quiz/index.php>

Building an online community takes time and expertise. There are many online consultants that provide great tips on their blogs about establishing and managing virtual communities. Online communities require consistent participation from “members” who post content, write blogs, use bulletin boards, chat rooms or avatars. For many, the online community supplements existing relationships; to use it as a marketing tool, an online community establishes protocols and streamlines as much outreach through the community as a single source or “destination” for marketing activities.

It initially may take time to build, but the ritual and “pointing” of content to a single source creates a reliable and known spot to gather information, participate in online discussions, and to engage people across age groups. Online communities are also called “social networks” and can use existing platforms like Facebook; no matter what platform is used, controlling content and usage is critical. Bloggers like communityspark.com and growingsuccessfulonlinecommunities.com provide practical information.

Sources:

Phillips, Carol. President of consulting firm, Brand Amplitude, LLC and adjunct professor of marketing at The University of Notre Dame. Various research documents. www.millennialmarketing.org

Pew Research Center. “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next.” Web published in February 2010. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>

Teixeira, Ruy. Research expert for Center for American Progress. Web published in March 2010. <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/03/snapshot030810.html>

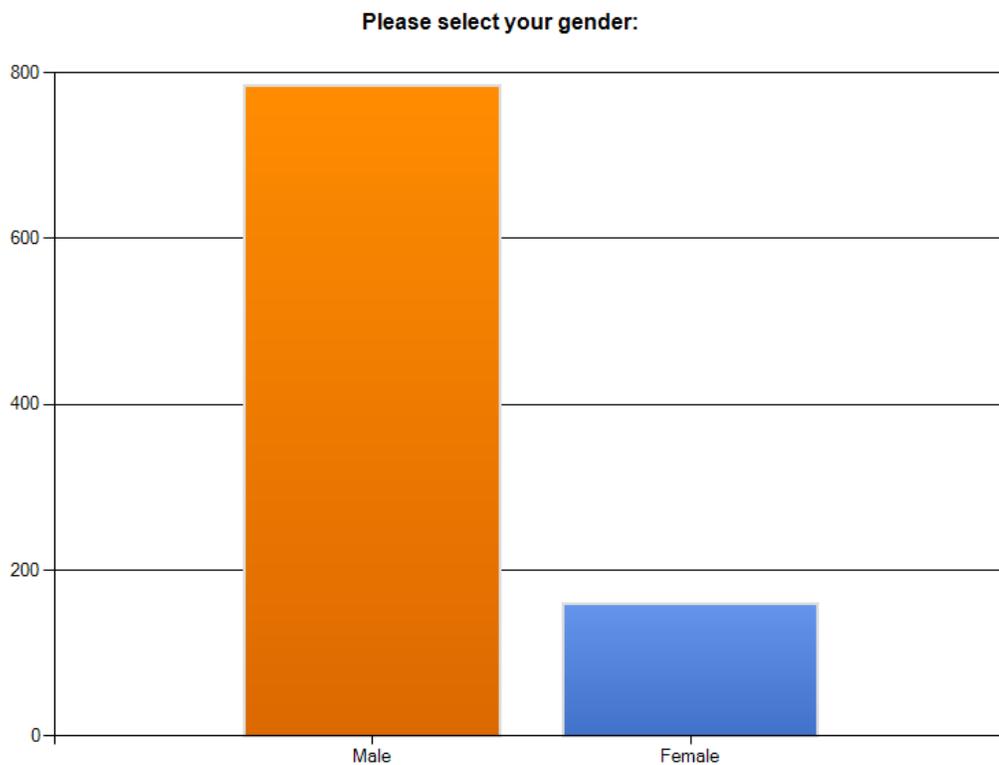
PART TWO: SURVEY RESULTS – INTERPRETING TRENDS

ANEW received **944 completed surveys** from teenagers who attended the King County Construction Career Fair in October 2011 and the Pierce County Construction Career Fair in November 2011. Only completed surveys were reviewed. The survey is provided in **Appendix A**.

Questions selected for the survey were derived from generational trends reported in Part One of this report. They were written to be easily read and quickly answered with little or no questions. Students completed the survey in a large, public environment; however, the ANEW team did work to ensure students responded to questions with minimal peer input. Students were motivated to complete surveys entirely in order to be entered in a drawing for a \$50 iTunes card.

The following 17 charts compile the aggregate data of the surveys; this section notes findings that should be considered for marketing purposes or are commensurate with Millennial research.

Question 1: Gender



- **83.1%** of completed surveys were collected from males
- **16.9%** of completed surveys were collected from females

The gender composition of survey respondents was extremely close to the demographics of the Construction Trades class from Puget Sound Skills Center (81% male, 19% female)

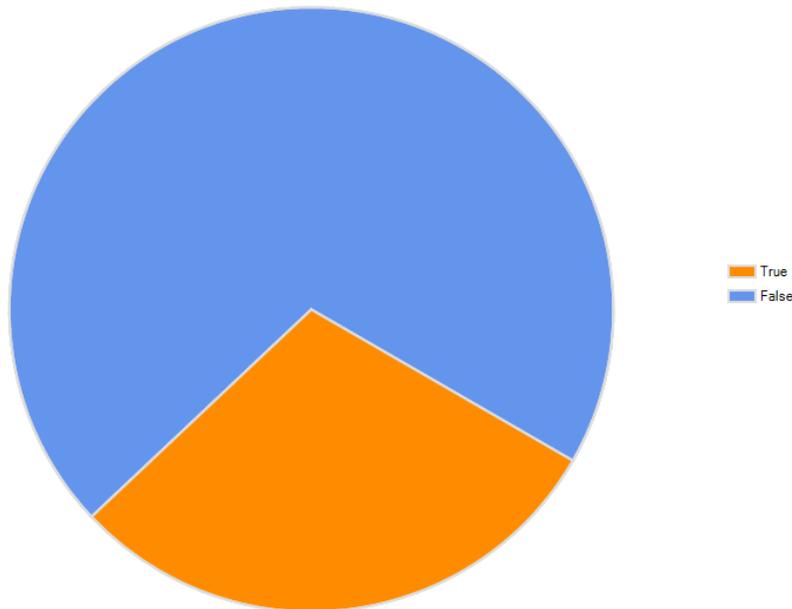
What could this mean?

- Schools participating in these career fairs may be sending only students who self-identify interest in construction, and could be encouraged to expand the students they send.
- If schools are not selecting students who self-identify interest in construction to attend these fairs, then it may be worthwhile to find out how the students who do attend these activities are chosen.

Charts for Questions 2 – 7 show responses to True/False statements (pages 7 – 12 of this report).

Question 2: True/False – Math & Science Skills

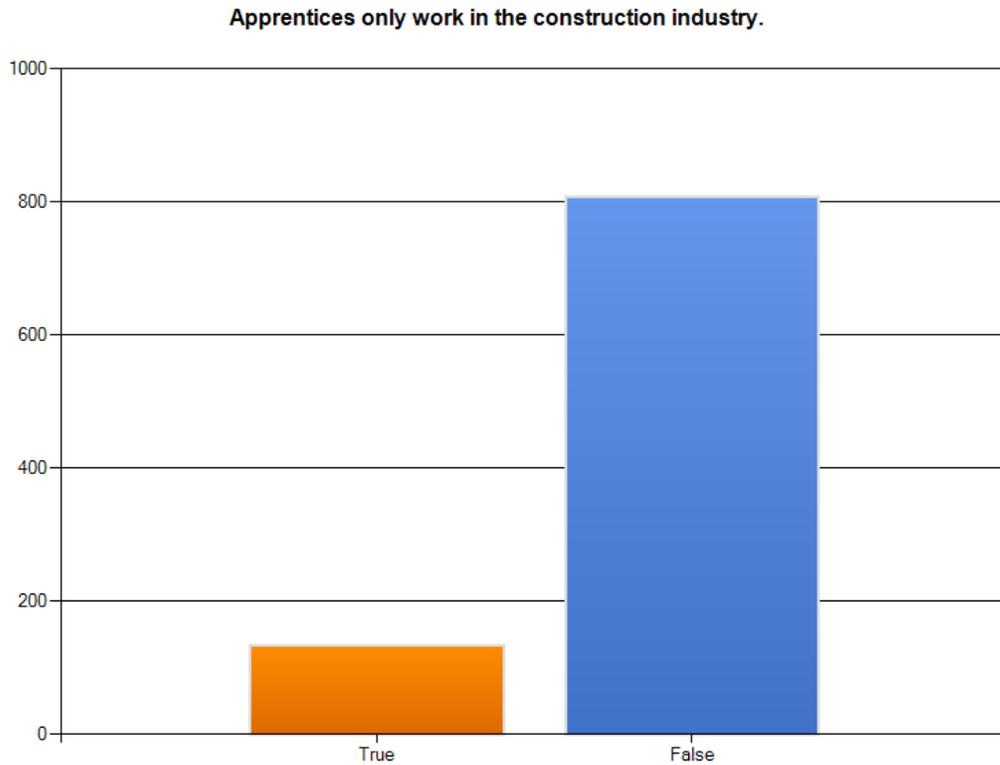
You do not need good math or science skills to be an apprentice.



- 29.6% believed that apprentices do not need good math or science skills
- 70.4% believed that apprentices do need good math or science skills

Note: The responses to this question imply that students understand the importance of math and science for their future careers. What it does not indicate is whether or not the students are therefore working harder in these subjects. This question was explored with focus groups and is reported in Part Three of this report.

Question 3: True/False – Apprenticeship Sectors

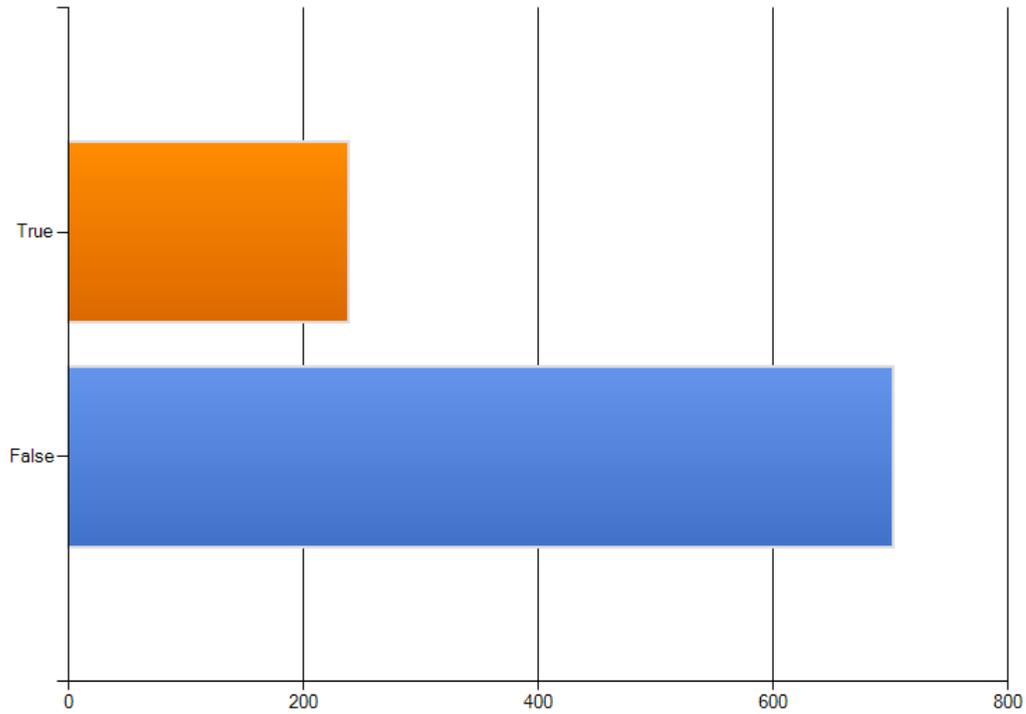


- 14.1% believed apprenticeships exist only in the Construction Sector
- 85.9% believed apprenticeships were available in other sectors

Note: Responses to Question 3 show an overwhelming knowledge of apprenticeship; however, most marketing for young people is concentrated on construction trades apprenticeship.

Question 4: True/False – Lifetime Professions

Apprentices generally stay in jobs like carpenters or plumbers.



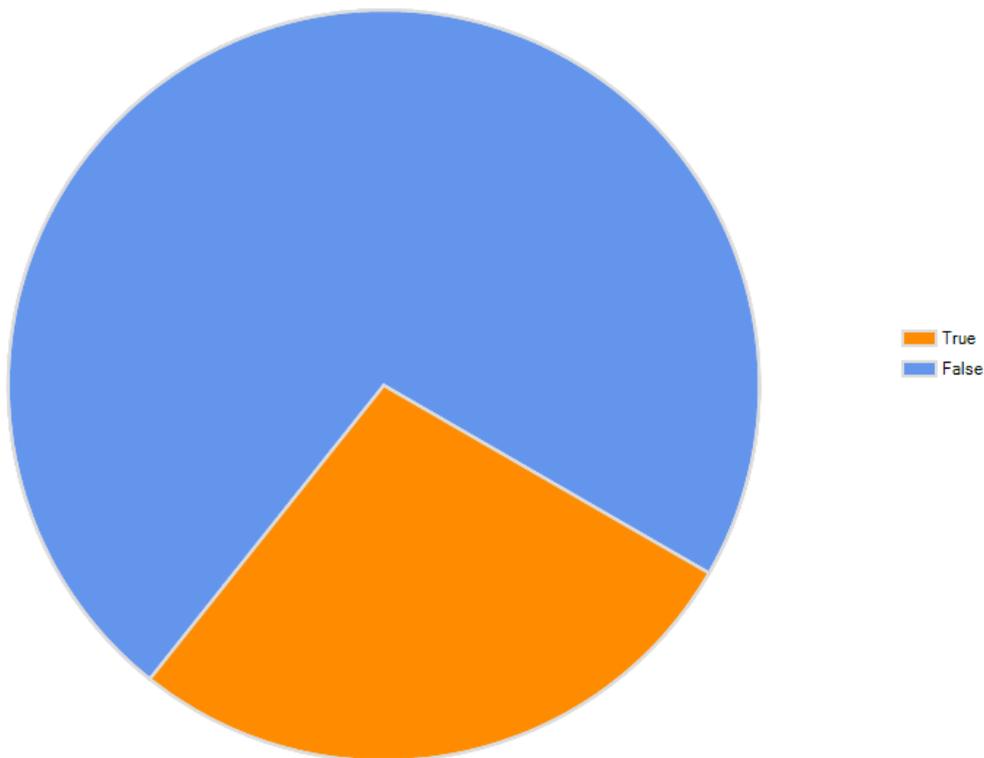
■ 25.3%

■ 74.7%

Note: Responses to Question 4 reflect the social notion that few people remain in a single occupation over their professional lifetime.

Question 5: True/False – Pre-requisites

Apprentices don't have to have a high school diploma or GED.

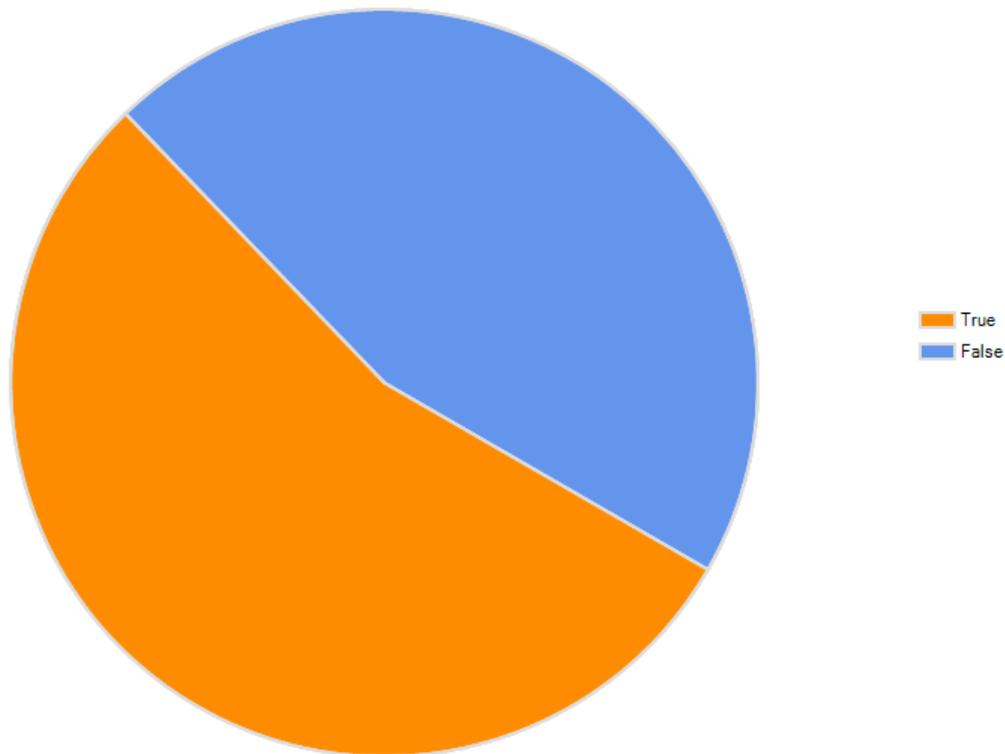


- 27.4% believed that apprenticeships don't require a GED or high school diploma as prerequisite to entering a program
- 72.6% believed that apprenticeships do require a GED or high school diploma as prerequisite to entering a program

Note: This data reflects the general sentiment and known/accepted message to all young people that they must have a GED or high school diploma to be professionally successful later in life. These numbers are interestingly commensurate with current national drop out statistics.

Question 6: True/False – Master’s Degree

Construction workers make more money than most people with a master’s degree.

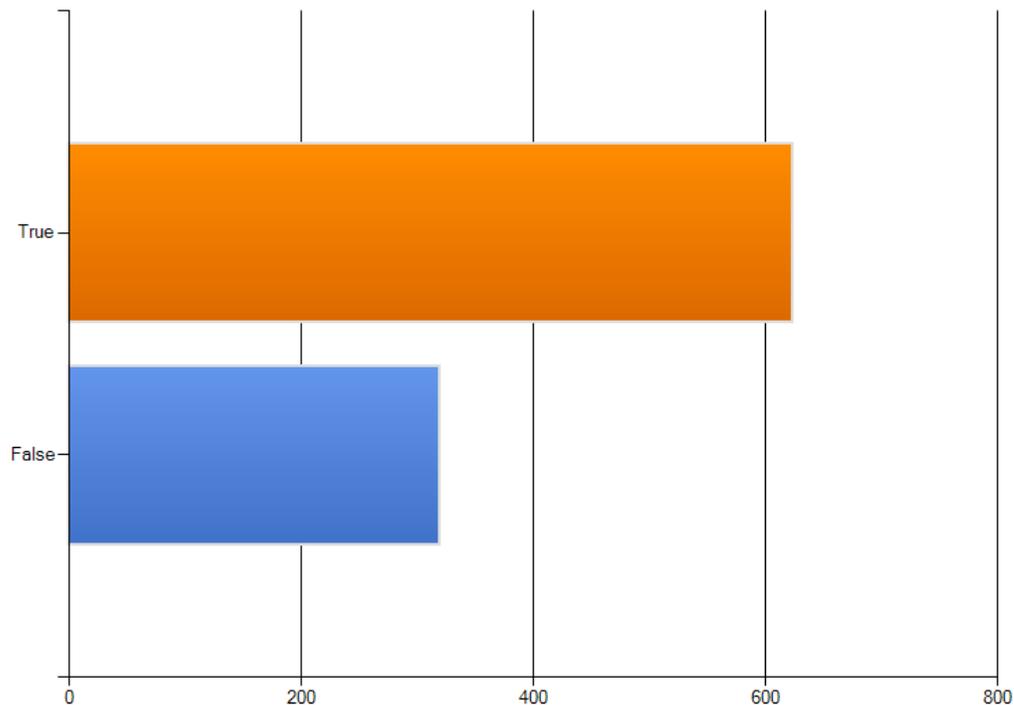


- 54.5% believed that construction workers do make more money than a person who earns a master’s degree
- 45.5 believed that construction workers do not make more money than a person who earns a master’s degree

Note: If survey participants were individuals that self-identify interest in construction and therefore attend the career fairs, then this data reflects what message the students in construction technology courses at high schools generally receive: that a construction worker can earn a wage competitive and even better than a white collar job. However, if the survey participants were selected by a school to attend these fairs, and they had no prior knowledge or interest in apprenticeship, then this statistic may reflect the general feeling that college graduates are not getting jobs.

Question 7: True/False – Dirtier Jobs

Construction work is dirtier than child care, health care, or hospitality jobs.



- 66.2% believed construction work is dirtier than jobs in other industries
- 33.8% did not believe construction work is dirtier than jobs in other industries

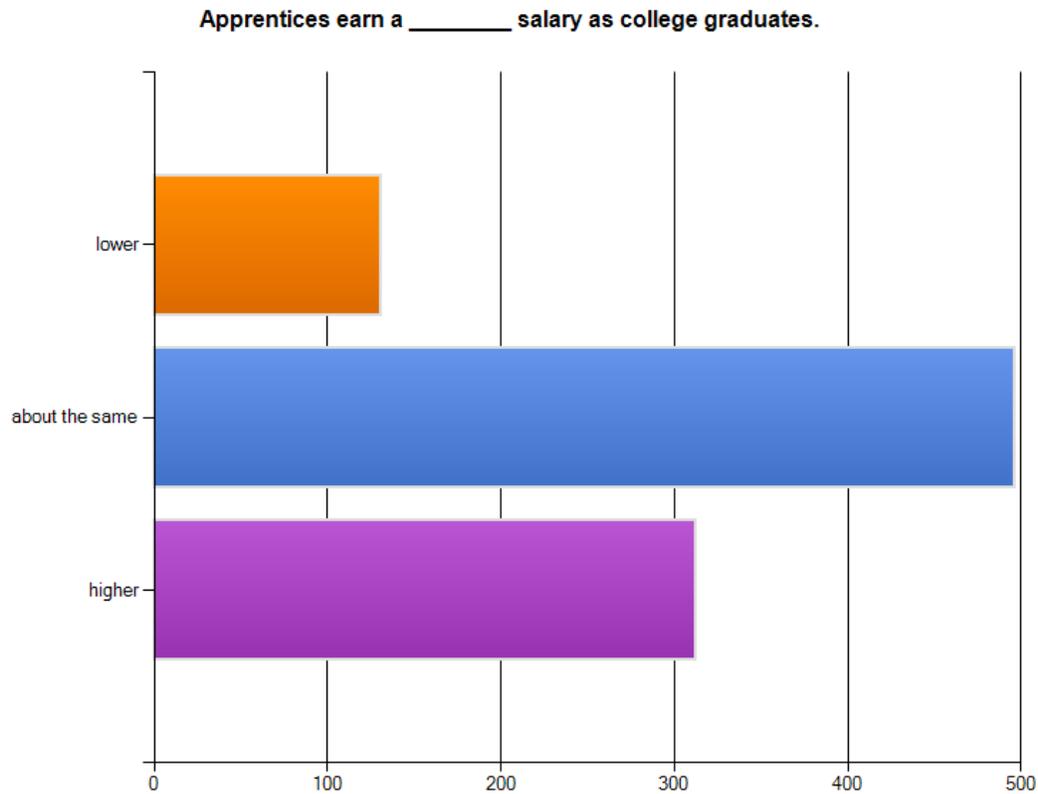
Note: The response rates to this question could be most helpful to construction trades, particularly in marketing to females. Data over the years has shown that a percentage of women don't select apprenticeship because they do not understand or like the work conditions: outside, all weather, dirty, and physically demanding. However, the two industries specifically cited in this question – health care and hospitality – are physically demanding and certain tasks, particularly in care taking, can be “dirty” or “gross” (as explained in Part Three/Focus Group feedback). This could be an area where additional education about sectors in general would broaden the perspective of potential job candidates.

What does the results of these true/false questions mean?

Generally, survey responses to Questions 2 – 7 show a fair understanding of apprenticeship, particularly in comparison to other post-secondary options. This could further indicate that young people who attend the career fairs self-identified interest in construction or are enrolled in construction technology courses at their high schools. In this case, the student would most likely learn basics about apprenticeship from their instructors. The data could also indicate that students understand college/ university options are equivalent to apprenticeship, and that apprenticeships do have pre-requisites.

Charts for Questions 8 - 10 show responses to “fill in the blank” statements (pages 13 – 15 of this report)

Question 8: Fill in the Blank – Salary Levels

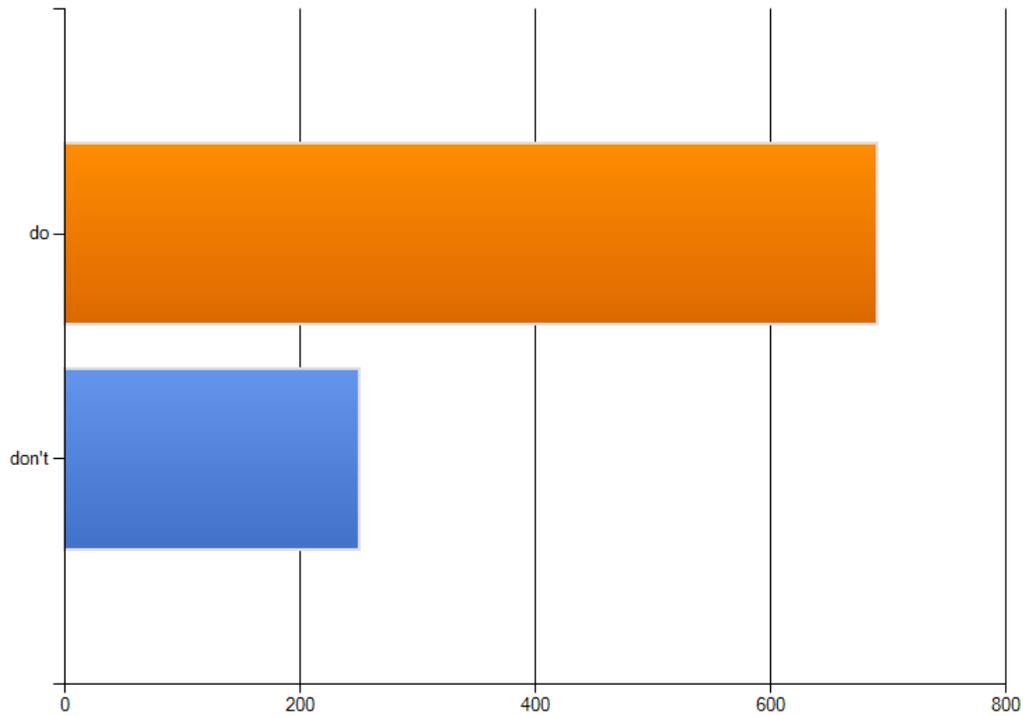


- 13.9% believe apprentices earn a lower salary than a college graduate
- 52.9% believe apprentices earn about the same salary as a college graduate
- 33.3% believe apprentices earn a higher salary than a college graduate

Note: Question 8 responses reflect a basic misunderstanding about the career level a person achieves when he or she is an apprentice versus a college graduate. Both focus groups reported that marketing should compare how an apprentice is considered a mid-level, trained professional when she or he completes a program, in contrast to a graduate, who without work experience is hunting for her or his first “real job.”

Question 9: Fill in the Blank – Courses

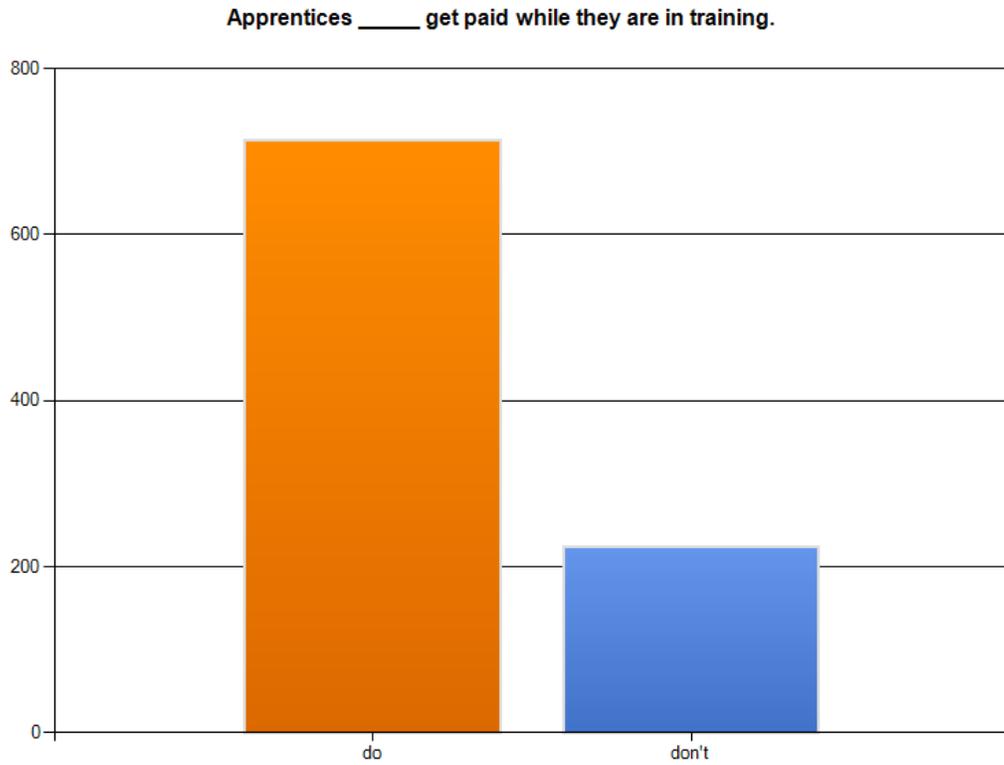
Apprentices _____ take college level courses.



- 73.5% believe apprentices take college level courses
- 26.5% believe apprentices do not take college level courses

Note: Like other responses to this survey, these percentages may reflect what students who are enrolled in construction trades courses already understand about apprenticeship.

Question 10: Fill in the Blank – Getting Paid

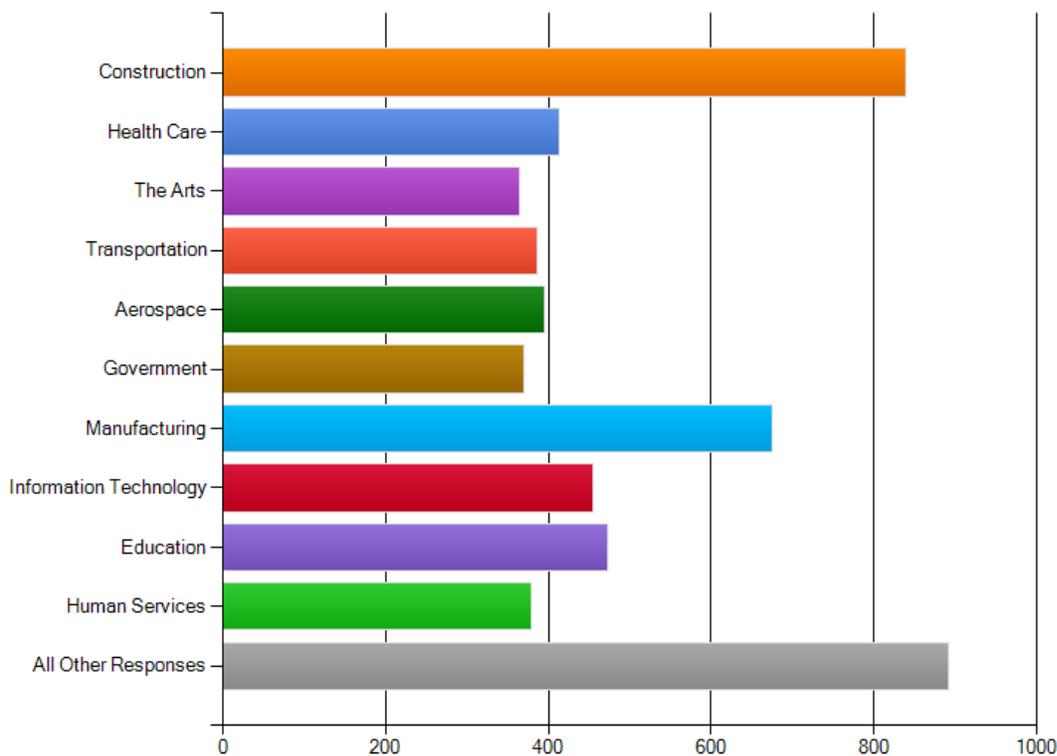


- 76.2% understood that apprentices get paid while they are in training
- 23.8% did not understand that apprentices get paid while they are in training

Note: Like other responses to this survey, these percentages may reflect what students who are enrolled in construction trades courses already understand about apprenticeship.

Question 11: Check all that apply – Industries

There are apprenticeships in these industries (Check all that you know):



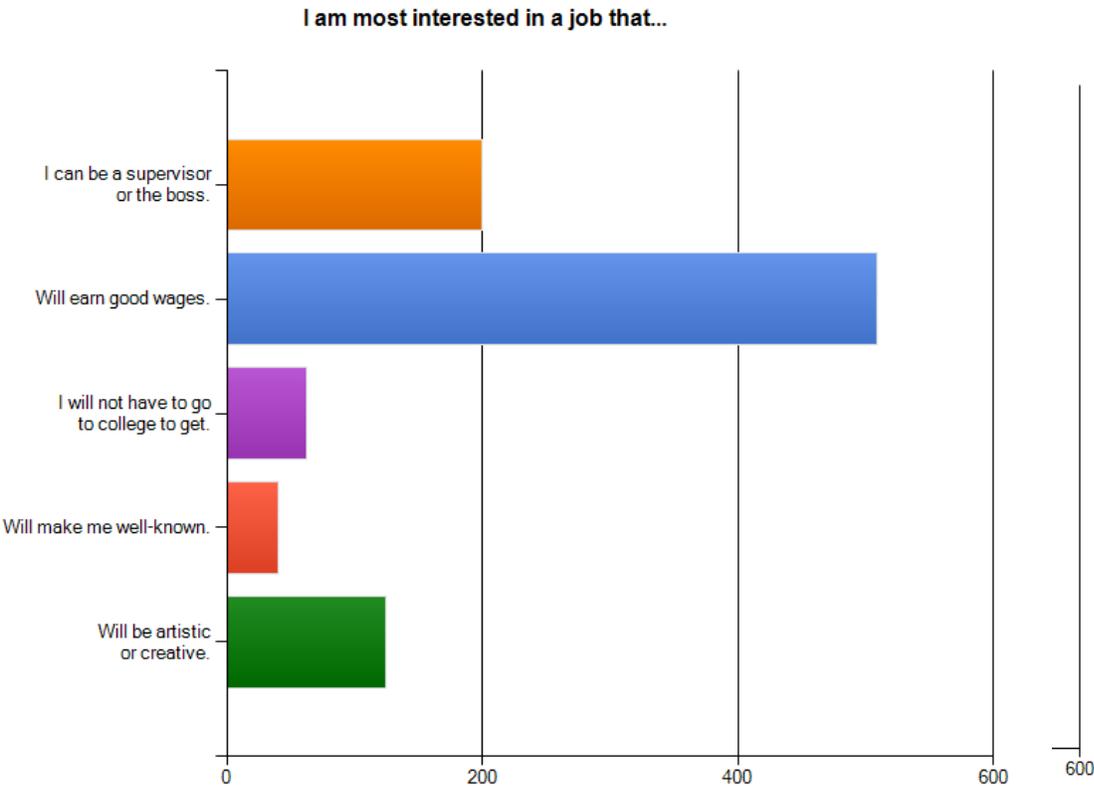
- 90.7% identified apprenticeship in the Construction sector
- 44.7% identified apprenticeship in the Health Care sector
- 39.4% identified apprenticeship in the Arts sector
- 41.8% identified apprenticeship in the Transportation sector
- 42.0% identified apprenticeship in the Aerospace sector
- 40.0% identified apprenticeship in the Government sector
- 73.0% identified apprenticeship in the Manufacturing sector
- 49.1% identified apprenticeship in the Information Technology sector
- 51.1% identified apprenticeship in the Education sector
- 41.0% identified apprenticeship in the Human Services sector
- 53.0% identified apprenticeship in Law Enforcement
- 43.3% identified apprenticeship in Emergency Management

Note: There are three potential reasons for these responses to Question 11:

1. Survey participants generally understand the apprenticeship system, thanks to career technical education choices/instructors and self-identified interest in construction and/or apprenticeship;
2. Because the question encouraged students to “check all that apply,” the survey respondents assumed that apprenticeship is an option in more than one sector; or
3. Survey respondents literally checked all boxes.

Charts for Questions 12 - 17 show responses to “finish the statement with response that best fits your preference or opinion.”

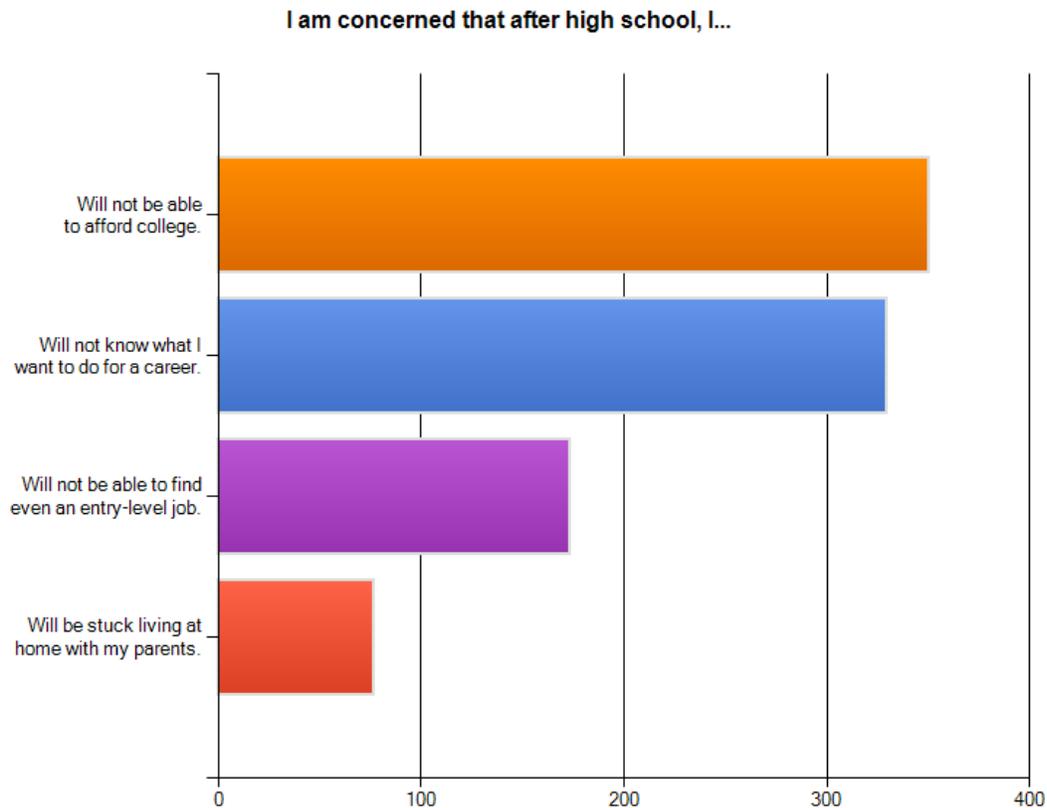
Question 12: Finish the statement – Job Interests



- 21.4% reported interest in a job that they could be a supervisor or boss
- 54.5% reported interest in a job that they will earn good wages
- 6.7% reported interest in a job that they would not have to go to college to obtain
- 4.3% reported interest in a job that would make them well known
- 13.4% reported interest in a job that would allow them to be artistic or creative

Note: Part Three of this report will expand on these results further; however, it is important to note that both focus groups stated earning good wages was the most appropriate answer to this question socially, and because there wasn't a response that allowed a person to say “I am most interested in a job that I will enjoy” or “I am most interested in a job where I can contribute to my community.” These explanations validate millennial research and the current feeling that many Millennials will struggle to find work with a livable wage, even with post-secondary education.

Question 13: Finish the statement – Concerns

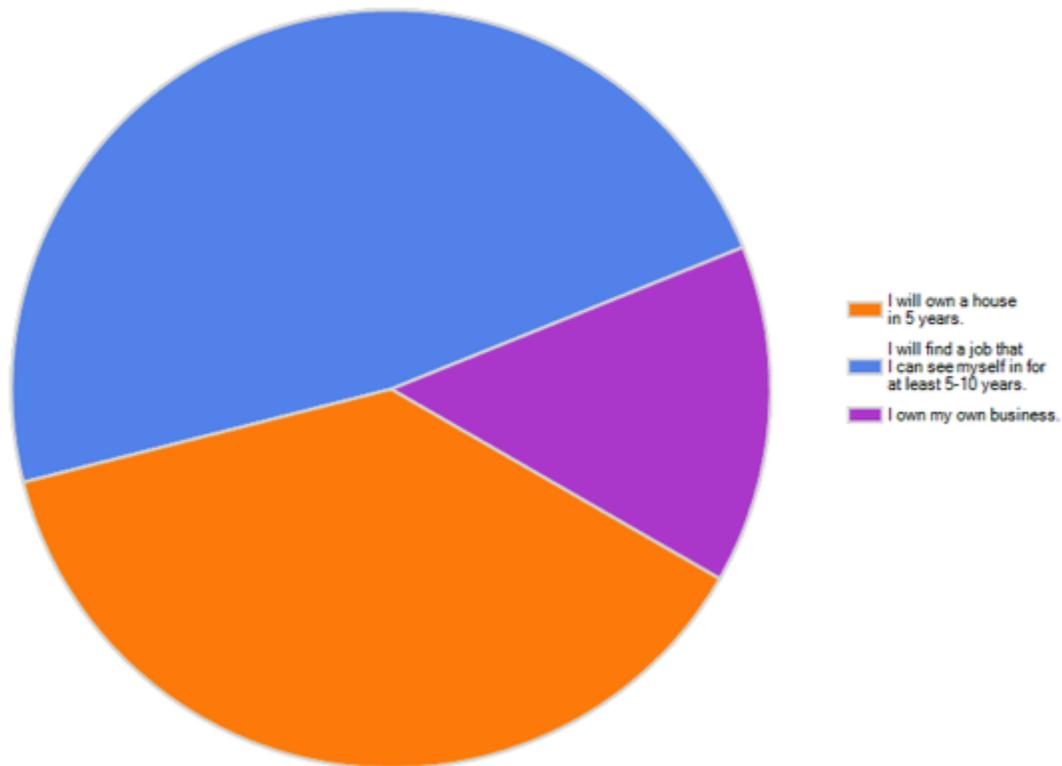


- 37.7% reported concern with being able to afford college
- 35.5% reported concern with not knowing what kind of career to pursue
- 18.6% reported concern with not being able to find an entry-level job
- 8.2% reported concern with being stuck at home with their parents

Note: The survey responses for this particular question generated quite a bit of discussion with both focus groups, which is further explained in Part Three of this report. In sum, the focus group participants felt these responses further validated the responses in Question 12 regarding wages, and current social concern about economic prospects.

Question 14: Finish the statement – 5-year Plans

The kind of life I envision for myself when I graduate is...

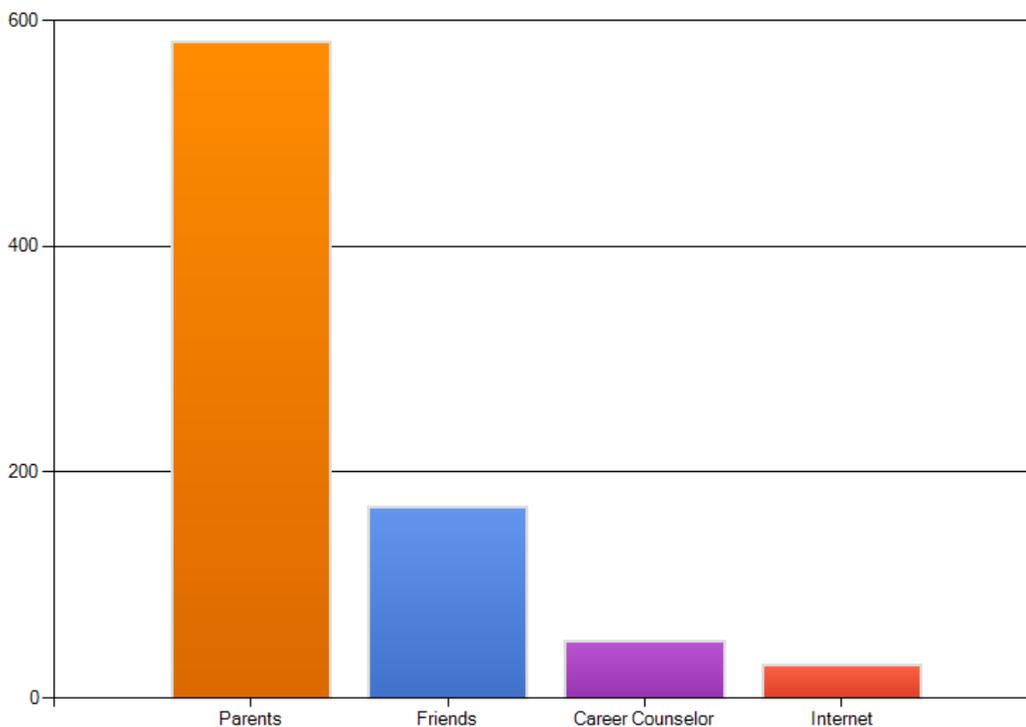


- 37.8% reported wanting to own a home in 5 years after graduation
- 47.9% reported wanting to find a job that they could see themselves doing for the next 5-10 years
- 14.5% reported wanting to own a business in 5 years after graduation

Note: This response set reflects what Millennial research indicates: young people today have traditional values, and want to follow a course to home ownership and career progression. Interestingly, some Millennial data suggests that more young people prefer to be their own boss or in charge of a company and will forgo stable job prospects to freelance or contract work; students in both focus groups disagreed with this data and felt that young people today want assurance that they can have an economically stable future.

Question 15: Finish the statement – Influence

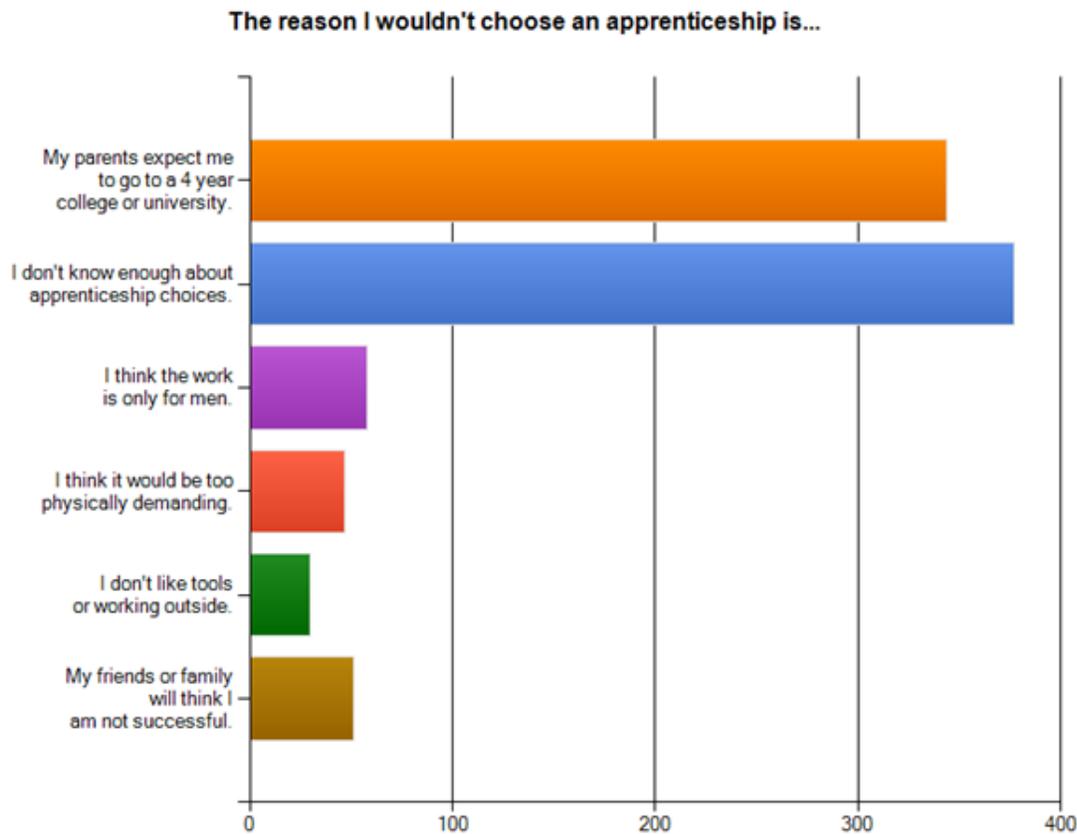
The people who influence my decisions the most are...



- 61.5% reported that parents are the most influential on their decisions
 - 17.7% reported that friends are the most influential on their decisions
 - 5.1% reported that a career counselor is the most influential on their decisions
 - 3.0% reported that the internet is most influential on their decisions
- 12.7% wrote in a separate response

Note: This is one of the most interesting response sets in the survey. 12.7% of all survey respondents wrote in additional feedback; the overwhelming additional response was “Myself” or “I influence my own decisions.” The other interesting trend, which is validated by Millennial research, is that young people seek out advice and make decisions with their parents’ support more than any other identified group. This is a critical validation for suggested marketing tools outlined in the final section of this report.

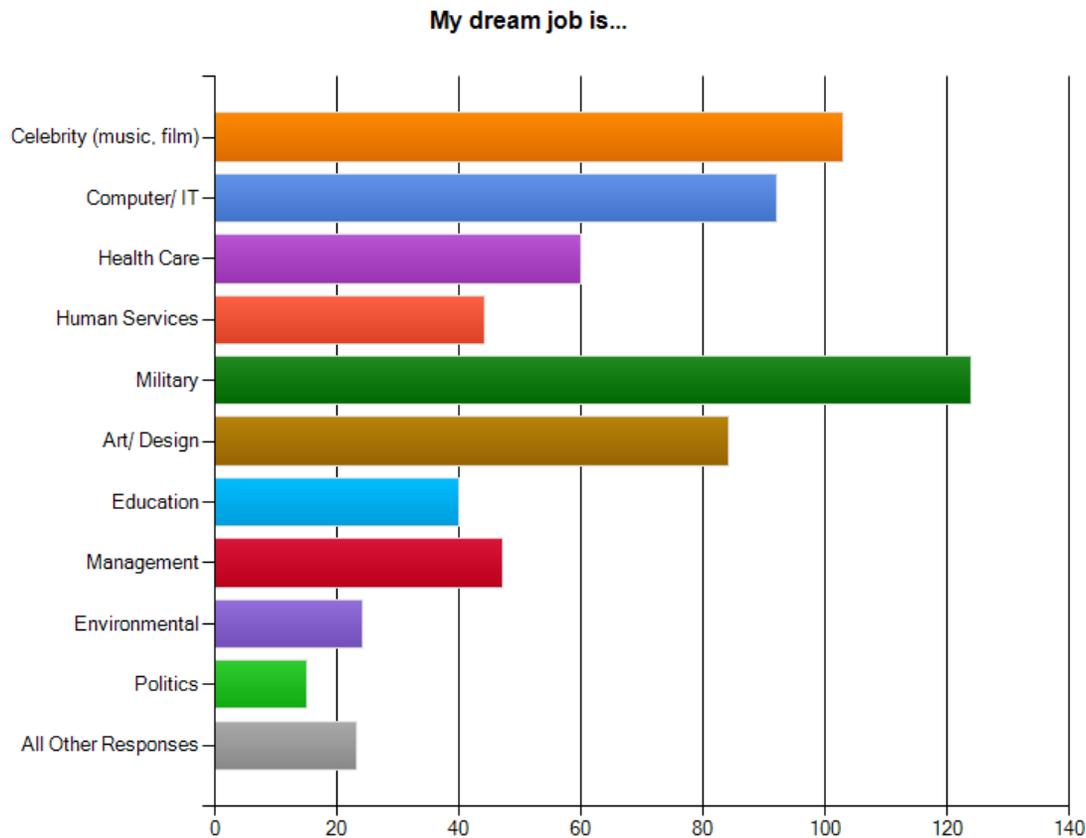
Question 16: Finish the statement – Reasons



- 37.9% said they would not choose apprenticeship because their parents expect them to go to a 4 year college or university
- 41.6% said they would not choose apprenticeship because they don't know enough about their choices
- 6.4% said they wouldn't choose apprenticeship because they thought the work was only for men
- 5.2% said they wouldn't choose apprenticeship because they thought the work would be too physically demanding
- 3.3% said they wouldn't choose apprenticeship because they don't like tools or working outside
- 5.6% said they wouldn't choose apprenticeship because they thought their friends or family wouldn't consider them successful

Note: Like the responses in Question 15, this is a particularly interesting data set. If the survey respondents had self-identified construction careers before attending these fairs and participating in this survey, then the two highest data points raise concerns. If the assumption that survey participants did want to pursue careers in construction is true, then the data implies a significant disconnect between understanding pathways to careers in construction and apprenticeship. If the responses in Question 15 are accurate, then parents' influence and how parents perceive apprenticeship could be negative, and needs to be changed (as a known and/or viable option, and fairly compared to college). Finally, this data may show that students know apprenticeships are available in many careers, but they also know that apprenticeship, at least in Washington State, is predominantly construction or manufacturing. If these students did not self-identify to come to a construction career fair, then this data shows that they don't see a pathway fitting their interest or goals inside the apprenticeship model.

Question 17: Finish the statement – Dream Job



- 10.9% said their dream job was being a Celebrity
- 9.7% said their dream job was being in Information Technology
- 6.3% said their dream job was in Health Care
- 4.6% said their dream job was in Human Services
- 13.2% said their dream job was in the Military
- 8.8% said their dream job was in Art/Design
- 4.2% said their dream job was in Education
- 4.9% said their dream job was in Management
- 2.5% said their dream job was in Environmental work
- 1.5% said their dream job was in Politics
- 2.4% said their dream job was in Green Building
- 31% said their dream job was in an Other category (see responses below)

Note: This question was designed to specifically test the overall “thoughtfulness” of the responses gathered. In the other category, the overwhelming responses were construction or occupations specifically related to construction, which was deliberately not offered as a “dream job.” This helps us conclude that the participants were reading and responding to questions, and bolsters the assumption that the majority of the students who were attended the construction career fairs are self-identified in construction career pathways, or are enrolled in a construction program at their schools.

What this data also tells us is a percentage of the students may have short-term or little interest in a construction career that would span their professional lifetimes. This could be a retention issue for construction apprenticeships if our programs cannot show students how they can professionally advance or laterally move across the industry.

The other interesting data set, purposefully called out in this question, was to see if students related environmental or green building to an interest in construction. If the students were self-identified as construction pathways, then clearly few understand the correlation between green building and construction; moreover, this data does imply that environmental or green building messages as part of a marketing strategy for construction apprenticeships are not understood or appealing. This is contradictory to Millennial data that says this generation is interested in giving back to their community or environment; it could also mean that the connection has not been fully or consistently made.

PART THREE: FOCUS GROUP CONCLUSIONS - KEY FINDINGS

Two focus groups were conducted to validate and expand on survey results. These focus groups were held at the Puget Sound Skills Center in Burien, Washington with the Construction Trades Technology and Digital Media programs.

Focus Group composition:

Students were juniors and seniors from five school districts: Tukwila, Federal Way, Highline, Tahoma and Fife.

- Construction Trades program: 81% male, 19% female
- Digital Media program: 73% male, 27% female

Participants in focus groups were not asked to self-identify race or ethnicity. It was observed that the Construction Trades program was less diverse than the Digital Media program, especially in the numbers of African American and Asian participants.

As noted in Part Two of this report, the construction trades focus group gender composition was nearly identical to the percentages of complete survey responses. The percentage of young women who participated in a survey or a focus group was about 10 points higher than the current percentage of women in active apprenticeships.

This data points to two critical marketing assumptions: first, there could be a positive and upward trend of overall female participation rates in apprenticeship that are currently called “non-traditional,” and time will tell us if this possibility is true. The second assumption is we may be sharply losing self-identified, interested young women between the time of graduation and employment. This is an assumption that is worth acting upon: it may be considered a “retention” issue because we know that participation in construction/apprenticeship outreach or secondary programs is not measured consistently statewide, and we are not maintaining a consistent connection to the young people we encounter at career fairs, in construction trades programs, and so on. This is not to say it doesn’t occur at all; however, other industries and post-secondary training options deliberately offer many “connections” to the same cohort and they do track that cohort as they leave or graduate from school.

Focus Group Process

Students were asked to respond to each question of the survey and their responses were tabulated. Next, the students were asked to elaborate on survey responses ANEW had tabulated prior to the focus group, compare findings with their own responses, and to share their insights. The focus groups were then asked, as experts, how outreach and marketing should be conducted with young people. Finally, the groups were asked if they would volunteer to help create and/or validate finished marketing products.

Key Findings

- 1. Importance of Math and Science:** Individuals in both focus groups stated that they had been “told” by teachers and parents that they must do well in math and science to be successful. Students also reported a level of dissatisfaction in understanding why they must do well in these subjects. One student eloquently told the ANEW team that “I will be more likely to try harder and use math later in life if someone will tell me why it really matters, maybe even how it’s used in different industries or in real life.”

No student in either focus group made a connection to their specific CTE program and with how math is used in their classroom; however, both groups were adamant that it was in their CTE program that they first learned applicable uses for math and science. One student told the ANEW team that “All students should have to take a class like this so they get why their math classes are important!”
- 2. Wages:** The focus groups were split between understanding the earning potential of someone who pursues apprenticeship versus a person who pursues a baccalaureate or master’s degree. The Construction Trades program focus group was in agreement that a person was as likely to achieve or exceed a livable wage in an apprenticeship pathway as he or she would in a 4-year college program. In contrast, the students in the Digital Media focus group reported they did not know enough about apprenticeship to make a comparison, but assumed, based on feedback from educators and parents, that a person with a college degree, particularly a master’s degree, would make a far greater wage/lifetime earnings than someone who pursued apprenticeship.
- 3. Construction vs. Other Industries – Define “Dirty”:** Both focus groups had rousing conversations about “dirty” jobs across industries. One student in the Construction Trades focus group pointed out that media and television personalities focused on construction as a dirty job in nasty working conditions, almost like a point of honor – in fact, he asked rhetorically, “Doesn’t Mike Rowe make a living on calling Construction Dirty?” The construction focus group also pointed out that other pathways do market the “bad stuff” about their occupations like construction does, and some of the female students suggested that the initial negative connotations could be a reason why some people are turned off.

Likewise, the Digital Media students pointed out that “dirty” and “gross” tasks in different industries were “natural selections” (real term used!) for why a student may or may not choose a career, and that should be considered a good thing. One female student said, “I don’t like blood and guts and I don’t want to change diapers and sheets. I also don’t like being outside in bad weather. It’s not a bad thing that I know in advance that I don’t want to do this kind of work.”

This cohort did agree with the construction focus group in saying that they felt most of their experiences/encounters with marketing for construction were negative. One young man compared it to military recruiting: “I’ve been to a construction fair and the guys there just told me how rough it would be. I wasn’t impressed.”

4. **Apprentices versus College Graduates – Where does my career begin?:**

The Construction Trades cohort understood that they would be earning a wage while in an apprenticeship, and once completed, would obtain a journey-worker or “mid-level professional” status. They also understood that they would not be earning a wage specifically from a college for the virtue of being a college student (we had a couple of “duhs” from this clarification), and that they would most likely hold entry-level or dead-end jobs to pay for college (they identified baristas, grocery, clothing retail, restaurants as “dead end”). The construction focus group did say that a strong comparison between giving 4 years of time as a young adult with a mid-level job guaranteed versus the prospect of an entry-level or no job at all should be marketed. “People don’t get it,” one young man told us. “I will leave an apprenticeship and make more than kids in college. That matters right now because I want to buy nice stuff and own a home and not worry about bills.”

In contrast, the Digital Media students, who reported prior to the focus group little or no understanding of the apprenticeship model or system, said they had been “told” or thought that apprenticeship was only like an internship, which a person does for little or no pay, and only as a requirement to getting a degree. We did spend time explaining the difference between the apprenticeship system and college system, which generated quite a bit of excitement. Many students wanted to know if they could pursue an apprenticeship in design or digital arts, and if they couldn’t, how could they start an apprenticeship program. Several used their phones to look at LNI’s apprenticeship pages as we were discussing available programs; most of these students suggested that we “optimize” the LNI website for mobility, because it “sucks for reading” on their mobile devices. This was directly in line with what we understand about the direction mobility is taking decision-making and the internet. Several students offered to help.

5. **Understanding the Range of Apprenticeships:** In general, the construction focus group said they understood there were “options” and other “career pathways” in apprenticeship because their CTE instructor had told them so. These students did say that because most apprenticeships were in construction, they felt their instructor would have a better understanding of apprenticeships than other teachers.

The digital media focus group not only wanted to know what other apprenticeships they could pursue besides construction, they also wanted to know if these programs were unionized (one student had a parent in a state employee union) and where the programs were located. This cohort said that cross-industry marketing of apprenticeship as a system would have more excitement than industry-specific marketing, and suggested that we coordinate apprenticeship “fairs” that cover many industries. One student said “I would like to see all my options just like a college fair and maybe I would end up choosing a career in a field I didn’t think I would like because all my options were presented to me.”

6. **Fears about the Future:** In both cohorts, the students expressed concerns about the quality of life they would reach in comparison to previous generations. Both groups elaborated on the survey responses that indicated a strong desire for decent wages as “dependent” on the current economy.

One young person said “If our country wasn’t in the hole I wouldn’t be worried about how much money I was going to make, but all we hear is that we won’t get anywhere with a college degree and there are no jobs waiting for us when we finish school. Of course I’m worried!” Another said that she felt the responses meant “that we (young people) have no guarantees that you had about getting a good job. If you asked these questions when the economy was good you may have had different answers from kids my age...but there is uncertainty and it sounds like it’s not going to improve.”

Students in the construction focus group said they would “change their mind” about construction and apprenticeship if the economy doesn’t improve. One young man said “all you hear is that it is its (construction) fault for the reason we are in a depression...and that housing foreclosures means no jobs in construction. I know there is more to construction than building houses but if that is what I wanted to do and now I may not be able to, I will probably go to college and study something else.”

Both cohorts expressed fear about affording college or any post-secondary program. Several students said they hear “in the news all the time, college graduates are moving back with their parents or can’t find work.” Many said they were skeptical they could afford school without loans or financial assistance, and many said they didn’t think it would be helpful if “they racked up loans and couldn’t pay them off.”

Interestingly, it was financial fears that launched bigger conversations that were commensurate with Millennial data. Many made generalized/political statements about getting the country “back on track” and getting people to “care.” The students did conclude that if people and businesses understood how apprenticeship worked it would be better for them and for the economy: one student said “can’t it all just be apprenticeship?”

7. **Influential People:** Both groups did say that parents were major influences in their decision making. Some of the construction focus group students said their parents wanted them to go to college to study “construction” and not take an apprenticeship, which was “lower class” than college. These same students said they had parents or relatives in construction and some that went into apprenticeships, so they wanted “better” for their kids. Some of the students disagreed and said their parents were supportive of going into an apprenticeship “if it is what I want to do” and “if I make a lot of money.” Other students said their parents didn’t care either way, and that they didn’t believe their parents understood apprenticeship. One young man said “my mom only knows what college means.” The ANEW team asked him to define college, and he shrugged, saying “I don’t know really. College is like a word used for everything you do after high school.”

In contrast, the Digital Media students were adamant that they were their own primary influence. One young man said “I always make up my own mind” and when asked to explain how he learned about post-secondary choices, he said “I just know about them, the same way everyone else does.” A peer sitting next to this young man said “we all are told that we will go to college, it’s a given. We just decide what college we are going to go to and our parents don’t influence that.” When asked how their parents would influence their decisions, several students said “they are part of the decisions I make.” This is commensurate with the responses on the survey and with Millennial data – students are confident that they are shaping their own decisions (or decisions which they feel they have some measure of control over the situation).

Both groups said it was more important to market apprenticeship to parents than to schools. The rationale was they “expected” teachers would know or understand that apprenticeship was an

option, and as one young lady aptly stated, “my parents will be the ones signing the check for me to go to school.” Both groups said that a broader education of parents may have other positive social impacts, too: if more people understood apprenticeship in general, it wouldn’t be thought of as a lesser option or alternative to college. Others said that it may make businesses more interested in hiring apprentices because “parents were attuned to the potential employer relationship, and reiterated that it was “really important” that businesses were involved in marketing because “people pay attention to what businesses do.”

8. **Social media:** Both focus groups stressed the importance of using social media to connect to young people. In particular, the Digital Media cohort offered several ideas for marketing, stressing that marketing had to be appealing to people their age. Their ideas included:

- Street teams of apprentices near their age to be at special events
- Commercials that had hooks or stories that were funny
- Incentivizing “likes” with Facebook (earning points or certificates if you “friend” or “like” a service or company)
- Using Twitter or other immediate networks (some said they are not using Facebook anymore, but connecting directly in online message boards and communities they create, or that are attached to games, music, etc)
- Creating a video with young people in it (they offered to help) and posting it on YouTube

We also discussed more traditional outreach activities, and the groups made these recommendations:

- Instead of career fairs or “try a trade,” have students spend a day or two helping build a house for low-income people with trades people
- Hold apprenticeship fairs instead of career fairs, and do it at night/on weekends so parents could come
- Talk to people about apprenticeship using terms they understand – instead of “related supplemental instruction” call it “college classes,” and so on. Both cohorts said words that sounded “like college” would make apprenticeship better understood and more universally appealing.
- Help all teachers explain why certain subjects, like math, are important to apprenticeship so the teachers don’t think apprenticeship is just for “drop outs or losers” (a quote).
- For parents, answer the questions that matter to them:
 - Will I have to pay for apprenticeship?
 - How does it compare to college?
 - What are my options?
 - Is it like the military (am I stuck/committed if I enroll)

In sum, both focus groups were engaged and willing to participate in the creation of marketing materials or campaigns. In fact, the Digital Media students suggested that we work with them on videos and other social platforms. Both groups validated the findings of the survey, and in most cases, their responses matched what research has identified about general Millennial characteristics and preferences.

Recommendations to the Washington State Labor Council

Based on the research conducted for the Washington State Labor Council, ANEW proposes this data be used in presentations to educators and parents. Further, we recommend and will support the content creation of these marketing tools:

The Parent’s Guide to Apprenticeship: We propose a brochure that can be made into easily modified web pages that explains apprenticeship using college-friendly terms and comparisons, and includes quotes from notable businesses and educators who endorse apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship/Educator Exchange: We propose sharing findings from this research as a joint presentation to educators and apprenticeship coordinators in conjunction with a quarterly Washington State Apprenticeship Training Council meeting. We propose securing clock hours and other incentives for teachers from both academic and CTE programs to attend.

Presentation to Apprenticeships on “tweaking” their career fairs and materials: We recommend sharing the research and ideas from this report to the Apprenticeship Coordinators who help produce/promote career fairs with workforce partners, and explore how events and materials could be tweaked rather than re-developed.

Developing a social media platform with students: We recommend using the relationships with the Construction Trades and Digital Media class volunteers from Puget Sound Skills Center to create student-focused and student-friendly marketing. We recommend identifying with these classes two-three projects, such as a video for YouTube and a social media community site, to launch a knowledge campaign about apprenticeship. We recommend these items link with existing tools, such as exploreapprenticeship.com. We recommend setting a timeline and deliverables with the students and working to ensure the students receive credit for their work as a culminating project or community service graduation requirement.



The Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO is the largest labor organization in the Evergreen State. A state federation of the AFL-CIO, the WSLC is a voluntary non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and strengthening the rights and conditions of working people and their families. www.wlsc.org



Founded in 1980, Apprenticeship & Non-Traditional Employment for Women (ANEW) is among the oldest of pre-apprenticeship programs for women in the country. ANEW prepares women for apprentice-able and/or livable wage careers in construction, utilities, aerospace and manufacturing, and supports their retention and advancement in non-traditional pathways. ANEW also advocates for workplace equity through policy work, employer education and extensive partnerships statewide and nationally. ANEW manages many technical assistance and research projects for a variety of workforce and apprenticeship partners. www.anewaop.org

APPENDIX A: SURVEY



Construction Career Day Survey

Instructions: Complete this survey on your way to the Construction Career Day. There is no right or wrong answer – your honest responses and feedback help us design better programs and marketing.

Finish BOTH SIDES and return it at lunch to be entered to win a \$50 iTunes Card! Drawing will be held at end of career day. *You do not need to be present to win.*

Name:
Instructor:
School:

1. What is your gender? **Male** **Female**

True or False?

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 2. You do not need good math or science skills to be an apprentice. | T F |
| 3. Apprentices only work in the construction industry. | T F |
| 4. Apprentices generally stay in jobs like carpenters or plumbers. | T F |
| 5. Apprentices don't have to have a high school diploma or GED. | T F |
| 6. Construction workers make more money than most people with a master's degree. | T F |
| 7. Construction work is dirtier than child care, health care, or hospitality jobs. | T F |

Circle the word that you think best completes these statements:

8. Apprentices earn a _____ salary as college graduates.

lower about the same higher

9. Apprentice's _____ take college level courses.

do don't

10. Apprentice's _____ get paid while they are in training.

do don't

Check the boxes that apply:

11. There are apprenticeships in these industries (**check ALL that you know**):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerospace | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Management |

Tell us about your preferences and opinions (choose your TOP answer only):

12. I am most interested in a job that....

- I can be a supervisor or the boss.
- Will earn good wages.
- I will not have to go to college to get.
- Will make me well-known.
- Will be artistic or creative.

13. I am concerned that after high school, I....

- Will not be able to afford college.
- Will not know what I want to do for a career.
- Will not be able to find even an entry-level job.
- Will be stuck living at home with my parents.

14. The kind of life I envision for myself when I graduate is...

- I will own a house in 5 years.
- I will find a job that I can see myself in for at least 5 – 10 years.
- I own my own business.

15. The people who influence my decisions the most are...

- Parents
- Friends
- Career Counselor
- Internet
- Other: _____

16. The reason I wouldn't choose an apprenticeship is...

- My parents expect me to go to a 4 year college or university.
- I don't know enough about apprenticeship choices.
- I think the work is only for men.
- I think it would be too physically demanding.
- I don't like tools or working outside.
- My friends or family will think I am not successful.

17. My dream job is...

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrity (music, film) | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer IT | <input type="checkbox"/> Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Green Building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |