

## **Unions – Building Success in Workforce Development**

### **AFL-CIO Working for America Institute Perspective from 2002**

Around the country, unions are active partners in workforce development. From Maine to California, from Florida to Alaska, they are helping workers and their employers prepare for the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work. Unions are leading the way in building career ladders for incumbent workers, in training and placing dislocated workers, in demanding an effective worker-centered approach to training and education, and in negotiating hundreds of million dollars in training funds. The training and education of the workforce is critical to our economy. And unions are in the forefront of making sure workers get the best.

Today's economy is changing rapidly. Globalization of everything from manufacturing to agriculture means employers and workers face intensified competition from their peers around the world. Furthermore, new technology has enhanced the speed of globalization, making it even more possible to export work and import products. These changes require increased skills on the part of workers and their managers and supervisors. In addition, employers have developed new management systems with a mind to keeping their companies productive and competitive. Team-work, self-management, continuous improvement – these systems demand increased training and education. Unions understand that the changing economy leads to changes in the workplace. They realize that workers often must rely on their documented skills to ensure their ability to make a family-sustaining wage. They understand that workers need to participate in life-long learning, update their skills, and sometimes even learn a whole new occupation.

#### **The Working for America Institute**

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute's mission is to assist unions and their allies to create and retain good jobs for America's working families. This work includes training and technical assistance on best practices in *helping individual workers succeed* in their careers, creating and retaining good jobs by *helping employers succeed on the high road*, and *connecting unions and their employers to the public economic and workforce development systems*. These connections with the public system go beyond funding of specific programs to influencing the standards that can determine the winners and losers in today's economy.

These changes in the economy and work systems have a profound impact on training and education for workers, unions, and employers alike.

- Employers are faced with a difficult choice – should they invest in developing and training their workforce and build a high roads strategy or take the low road of low wages and low skills?
- Unions are bargaining for skills training that workers need. They are making a real impact on workers' lives and long-term employability. They are building training programs that give workers portable and transferable skills.
- Workers are pursuing life-long learning both inside and outside the job as they come to understand that their future and the future of their families depend on it.

Many of the most successful worker training and workforce development programs today are contributions of labor unions or of labor-management partnerships. They are products of the unique relationships, structures, and additional resources that unions and cooperating employers bring.

Unions are organizations that connect the world of work with the communities, cities, and states where workers live and jobs are based. Good jobs, union jobs, with decent wages, build strong communities. They strengthen the tax base and create consumers who can buy the products they produce. Organized labor's support for the long term-interests of individual workers and for the rights of working people build education and training programs that go beyond the immediate needs of the employer and address the future needs of the community, the workforce system, and the society as a whole. These relationships with work, with workers, and with the community make unions an excellent partner with employers and the public workforce development system when it comes to training and education. Here are some of the reasons why:

- Unions fight for good benefits and an improved quality of life for workers. These include education and training.
- Union programs are often part of a larger workforce and economic strategy designed to improve the competitiveness of individual firms and industrial sectors.
- They have a deep understanding of job content and the skills of their membership.

- Unions support worker-centered learning, a programmatic approach that leads to success.
- Their understanding of the future needs of their members and their contractual relationships with employers gives them a long-term perspective on training.
- Their structure along industrial lines, with connections to multiple employers, builds a sectoral approach to training, an approach that leads to efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Their relationship to their members creates a base for the supportive services and outreach needed to engage employees' energy and confidence in learning.
- Unions have the experience to make training and education work. Even before the turn of the last century, the skilled trades unions ensured that workers had the knowledge to create and produce the industrial miracle that was the United States; then, as waves of immigrants came to our shores, labor unions reached out to help these workers not only obtain the skills they needed to support their families but also to become effective and participating citizens in their new country.

In this document, we will examine how the involvement of unions in workforce development and occupational skill training and education programs adds value to those programs. We will emphasize union relationships with multiple employers, the contractual relationships between union and employer, and the relationships between the union and its membership. In addition, we will highlight the positive outcomes that result from these relationships.

## **Union Relationships That Create Success**

### **Contractual relationships with employers**

The contract between an employer and a union is a seminal relationship that leads to better wages and working conditions for workers. In the field of training and education, the contract provides an opportunity to create financial resources, formalize institutional commitment, and define joint stakeholder structures to make decisions and implement programs. Contracts between labor and management also provide a model – negotiation –

that helps labor and management resolve problems and develop programs that satisfy the needs of multiple stakeholders.

When conflict between labor and management became so tense that it had a negative impact on the conduct of business, Local 2 of the Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees union (HERE) worked with the hospitality industry to develop the San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project. Together, labor and management developed communication and conflict resolution training for employees on both sides of the conflict. The training had the effect of improving the quality of work as well as the conditions of work. These hotels had less trouble employing and retaining workers and the workers themselves were able to deliver better customer service.

Negotiated agreements bring employer and union dollars to training. These agreements for training and education take a variety of forms. Tuition assistance plans and per capita contributions to a joint fund are the most common contractual agreements. There are others, however. Service Employees International Union (SEIU), District 1199E-DC, a hospital workers' union in Baltimore and Washington, negotiated lump sum contributions to training and education for the duration of each contract. SEIU Local 767 in Massachusetts has a blanket agreement that requires hospitals to pay for career ladder training in healthcare for workers in the bargaining unit, no matter what the cost. Some unions, such as HERE Local 26 in Las Vegas, Nevada, have agreements with employers that provide funding for training both incumbent and new workers for careers in the hospitality industry.

Setting up a career ladder for incumbent workers was one of the goals of District 37 of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) when they first negotiated training and education funding from their employer (the City of New York). For Civil Service workers, obtaining a postsecondary degree is often the road to becoming qualified for promotions. Getting workers into and through college was an integral part of the union's goal to help workers achieve promotions and access career ladders. DC 37's fund supports a comprehensive academic program from basic skills and GED preparation to college preparation, to academic support, and all the way through to a

degree. In the process, thousands of workers have been able to advance into new careers and promotions.

Negotiating for training dollars leads to “greater take-up” of workers in education and training programs. The act of negotiation for training dollars is part of a process that creates a resource including an asset pool. In order to get that money, workers have to make choices. There is only a limited amount of money available at the bargaining table, so workers have to decide how they are going to spend it. Making that decision creates its own incentive for workers to use those funds.

SEIU Local 82 in Washington, D.C. is a union of janitors. Many work in the poorly paid commercial sector and many are immigrants. In the mid nineties, the union leadership built the formal structure of a joint labor/management training fund. But it was up to the workers to decide at contract time if they wanted to fund the program. Choosing to use five cents an hour of their pay for a training fund may not seem a great sacrifice to workers making high wages, but for workers making 7 or 8 dollars an hour, it is a lot of money. Making that decision took discussion and soul searching. Today, the training fund offers GED preparation, English language classes, basic computer skills, and computer repair. The demand for classes continues to grow as more and more workers take advantage of their own investment.

Unions and their employer counterparts have built one of the largest pools of dedicated training dollars for America’s working people. Unions and employers in manufacturing, construction, health care, telecommunications, public services—in virtually every industrial sector—have developed bargained training funds. Today, we estimate the total resources of these funds to be hundreds of millions of dollars and perhaps more, an amount that rivals state job training programs nation-wide.

To demonstrate the magnitude of the funding, the Joint Association for Training and Education Programs shared the following information about several of its members.

The chart below shows the number of eligible members and the amount of funding for 3 of the labor/management partnerships that belong to the Association.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b># Of eligible workers</b>
<i>The Alliance for Employee Growth and Development, Inc. Cooperative Labor/Management Venture</i>	<b>Telecommunications</b>	<b>\$22,400,000 (2000) Year</b>	<b>67,000</b>
<i>Hospital League/1199 Employment, Training, and Job Security Fund</i>	<b>Health Care</b>	<b>\$100,000,000* (2001) Year</b>	<b>200,000</b>
		<b>* Collectively-Bargained Funding &amp; State and Federal Grants</b>	
<i>Upward Mobility Program-A Joint Venture of the State of Illinois and AFSCME - District Council 31</i>	<b>State Sector</b>	<b>\$4,000,000 (2001) Year</b>	<b>45,000</b>

The global market, new technology, and increased competition put pressure on employers to move resources away from training at precisely the time when they need it most. Employers give a lot of lip service to training, but it is one of the first things to go when the times get tight. Union involvement can keep training going through good times and bad. Unions, through negotiated funds, bring resources to the table which helps workers keep their skills current even when the economy is pushing employers to cut back. Contractual agreements help create the will for training and make that training possible.

Joint training and education committees are sometimes written into contracts to provide an organizational structure to help implement training and resolve conflicts and disagreements between the stakeholders. And conflicts do arise because the employer and the union sometimes have very different goals. While workers want training that gives them certification and portability of skills, employers may be concerned that training for portability and certification gives workers too much potential for mobility. Furthermore, employers are more likely to want “just in time” training rather than enough time for training. Looking at their bottom line, employers are often reluctant to put more money into training than that which meets their immediate need. Joint committees and the practice of negotiation helps. Through negotiation, unions and employers can arrive at a mutually agreed upon middle ground, one where the employer gets the training required for the job and workers get the training they want and need.

The backbone of training in the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) (a partnership of primarily manufacturing firms and their unions) is the joint committee with both employer and union representatives. Each company is different, but in each company, the joint process is used to address recruitment and training needs. These are problem-solving committees. It is the joint committee that galvanizes the employee and employer involvement. In many of the WRTP member companies, the joint committees identify necessary classroom training to move the firm and its employees towards new competencies. Training coordinators are now responsible for maintaining a checklist for what people need to know for each job. Depending on the firms, they may provide the training themselves or know who the trainers are for each step. Management has recognized the value of the role, giving it recognition as a formal job description in some of the unions’ bargaining units.

Many times joint programs are able to attract public dollars because of their track record and ability to leverage multiple sources of income to provide a funding match. These commitments of public dollars further strengthen the resolve of employers and help contribute to the economic and workforce health of the community. In fact, “through

collective bargaining, public programs, and private grants, unions have built the largest incumbent worker training system in the country.”<sup>1</sup>

The Farmworkers’ Institute for Education and Leadership and Development (FIELD) is a not-for-profit corporation created by the United Farmworkers of America, AFL-CIO. The purpose of the organization is to improve the economic and social prosperity of workers and their families in rural areas at the same time as it builds the competitiveness of U.S. agribusiness. FIELD has created a partnership with growers in California that provides two levels of training for farmworkers.

- Cross-training so that workers can help grow and harvest several different types of crops, thereby extending the number of weeks that they are employed
- Career ladder training to help workers move into more highly skilled jobs in agribusiness

At the same time, FIELD is helping employers by improving the productivity of the workforce and assisting with marketing quality produce. This innovative project for workforce and economic development has received public funding.

### **Unions and multiple employers**

Bringing multiple employers together for training and education is a good practice for many reasons. It is more efficient and cost effective to develop a training program that meets the needs of more than one employer. Multiple-employer training sets the stage for the development of skill standards and helps train workers for portable and transferable skills. It also creates a pool of skilled workers to fill a number of employers’ workforce needs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Draft AFL-CIO Employment Education and Training Strategy. 1998

For years, healthcare employers in Baltimore were reluctant to train their employees in a multi-employer program. Competition between hospitals and trade secrets made them wary of sharing job descriptions and job qualifications. SEIU District 1199E-DC was the common factor between employers. The union knew that the jobs at each hospital were fundamentally the same despite employer claims that their skill needs were different. Using the opportunity that a national demonstration grant provided, the Union was able to bring the employers together to agree that building workers' skills was an essential aspect of quality care and should not be the subject of competition. Together, the union and employers were able to set a common standard for training for the region. By training for multiple hospitals, workers and employers were able to benefit from the economies of scale and the greater ability to schedule classes at convenient times.

Training and education programs that meet the needs of more than one employer offer economies of scale that benefit public and private funders alike. Individual employers save money when they join forces with other employers for the purpose of training. This principle applies even when workers are being trained in an industry going through wrenching change.

Some of the biggest joint funds, such as those of UAW and the auto industry, were formed precisely at the time of a downturn in the industry. In the 1980s, when the U.S. auto industry was losing market share, technology was reducing the number of workers needed to produce cars, and outsourcing was shrinking the union workforce, the UAW was able to develop a series of training and education funds with the big three car manufacturers, that opened up opportunities to workers in the auto industry (both those about to be laid off and those who remained). These funds allowed workers to upgrade their skills, gain educational certifications and degrees, and learn the skills they needed to meet the changing needs of the economy.

Small and midsize businesses, in particular, benefit from multi-employer based training and education programs. So often these employers lose out because they cannot afford a costly training program for their incumbent workers and do not have a large enough workforce to benefit from the customized training provided by the public system.

The Garment Industry Development Corporation (GIDC) in New York City is a partnership of the garment workers union, UNITE, and hundreds of employers in the industry, that employ over 30,000 workers. By pooling resources, this partnership offers vocational training for labor and management as well as classes for workers on safe and fair working conditions. It also provides job development and placement services along with marketing assistance and technology training.

Furthermore, training for multiple employers simplifies placement for dislocated or otherwise unemployed workers. When the pool of employers is larger, it is easier to place an individual worker who has received a recognized and standard training.

### **Union structures facilitate convening multiple employers**

It is not surprising that labor unions are effective conveners of multiple employers. A single local labor union may have individual contracts with many employers in one industry with language about training and upgrading in each contract. Together with a group of employers, a local union may have developed a master contract creating a local industry approach to labor market planning such as job classifications or wage levels. Or a union may have developed a relationship with an employer association. A union can be the magnet that draws sometimes reluctant employers together to take on a training and education project that serves their long-term, mutual interests.

Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 19 in San Jose, California recognized the need for skilled banquet waiters. Building on the training design used in other cities in successful training programs, the union developed a training program that is now serving three hotels, two convention centers, and a restaurant that caters to special events. As they designed the training program, planners recognized that each employer had different service quality requirements. To resolve the problem, the program trains to the standards of the employers with the highest skill requirements, raising the skill level in the industry as a whole, opening the widest opportunities for all trainees, and creating an industry-wide pool of skilled workers. These six employers each hire separately, using their own procedures, but look to the graduates of the training program for workers to add to their own lists of available, skilled workers.

National or International Unions (organizations composed of many local or district unions, often from the same industry) are also able to convene employers within a single industry. A number of large joint labor/management training and education programs are the result of these efforts. Examples are the Institute for Career Development (ICD) created by the United Steelworkers of America and 13 steel companies and the Enhanced Training Opportunities Program (ETOP) a joint program of IBEW, Lucent Technologies, Avaya, and Agere. In the case of the huge training programs in the auto industry, many local unions (all part of the United Auto Workers) joined with the national management of each of the big three auto manufacturers to create three national funds for training and education.

The Institute for Career Development is a joint labor/management education program composed of thirteen steel companies and the United Steelworkers of America. The Institute's national office develops program models, but the program is implemented locally. While ICD does not support instruction for job-specific skills, it provides background training and preparation for workers who want to bid on new jobs or who need skill upgrades to keep up in the changing workplace.

Apprenticeship programs in the building and construction trades are well known example of joint labor/management training programs that have both national and local manifestations. These organizations serve the long-term needs of workers and employers. That means not just training for now, but investing in the future. The unions are committed to these long-term, high-skill, training principles. It is how the union stays in business.

The apprenticeship model is an example of how training can lead to high road employment that rewards high skills with family sustaining wages. Employers in these joint programs understand that skilled workers are not necessarily the least expensive to employ, but they do the best work. And quality work means a quality product. These are the standards that communities want.

The Plumbing and Pipefitting Apprenticeship of the United Association of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry is the oldest apprenticeship and journeyman training program in the country. The UA spends over \$100 million annually on training programs involving over 100,000 journeymen and apprentices in more than 400 locals throughout the US and Canada. The union runs a five year apprenticeship-training program and continuous education opportunities that include journeymen training and certifications in specializations such as valve repair, welding, backflow prevention, medical gas installation and others. Apprentices receive a strong educational background in the trade and core courses in basics such as mathematics, drawing, etc. They can choose a specific path such as journeyman plumber, pipefitter, sprinklerfitter, service mechanic, and so on. During the training, an apprentice will be paid according to a schedule, which usually begins at a 50% of journeymen pay in the first year and progresses to 90% of journeymen wages in the 5th year. Journeymen wages can exceed \$80,000 per year.

State or Local Labor Councils may also convene employers for the purpose of training. Sometimes these organizations bring employers and unions together to undertake training that benefits more than one industry. These types of programs often involve basic skills needed by workers in many industries, or they may involve placement of dislocated or otherwise unemployed workers.

The Community Services Agency of the Metropolitan Washington Council of the AFL-CIO developed the CareerPath Program in collaboration with the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute and the District of Columbia's Department of Employment Services. CareerPath trains and places workers who were dislocated by the closing of D.C. General Hospital, the last public hospital in the city. By convening unions in healthcare, the building trades, hospitality, and technology, this labor-based program created consortia of employers and unions in several industrial sectors to identify job openings and help create a training program that meets the needs of employers and dislocated workers alike.

Some state and local labor councils have developed a strategy that benefits a particular industry. The Wisconsin State Federation of Labor began the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) with a vision and a mission to save manufacturing in the state by joining with employers to improve quality and performance through training and education. Their results were so successful that the WRTP model has spread to other industries in Wisconsin and beyond.

Unions have also played a leading role in developing the Association of Joint Labor/Management Training and Education Programs. This organization provides technical assistance and research to benefit unions and their partnering employers as well as advocacy for joint training, networking between programs, and information about the availability of funding. They also facilitate the creation of new joint labor/management training and education programs. One of their latest projects, in collaboration with the Upward Mobility Program (State of Illinois and AFSCME District Council 31), and funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, supports the development and implementation of accessible distance learning training for state workers in Illinois.

The Association is also working on a US Department of Labor funded impact study that will identify, document, and disseminate the best practices and key success factors of joint labor/management workplace education and training programs. The project will focus on how joint programs result in value-added impacts in three sectors: Healthcare: (Hospital League/1199 SEIU Employment, Training, and Job Security Program; Information Technology: (The Alliance for Employee Growth and Development, Inc. Cooperative Labor/Management Venture); and Hospitality (to be determined). This project seeks to demonstrate how investments in worker education and training and the skills gained and applied by workers result in economic, organizational, and individual benefits to employers, workers, and unions. The research will be carried out by two research partners, the Conference Board and American Society for Training and Development.

The AFL-CIO Working For America Institute plays a role in fostering excellent practice in occupational training and education. Through its High Roads Partnership Initiative, it convenes sectoral meetings of unions and employers that help them plan effective workforce development projects. It also works with International and National Unions, State and Local Labor Councils, and other union formations to develop their capacity to work with and utilize the public workforce investment system. The Institute has a long record in advising unions on the design of quality programs and recently has also developed a role as a start-up program manager to help local programs institute state-of-the-art training and education models.

Convening multiple employers has a tremendous impact on program quality and effectiveness. It also has other positive affects including an effect on the overall economic climate. By bringing employers together for the purpose of training, unions are able to take employee skills out of the realm of competition. This practice raises quality standards throughout the industry, thereby adding value to the industry as a whole.

### **Relationships between unions and their membership**

The relationship of unions to their members may be the most important relationship of all in creating effective training and workforce development practices. Because unions are democratic organizations with elected leadership, those leaders are sensitive to the needs

of the membership. It was through listening to union membership that union leaders developed the plans for many existing programs.

Unfortunately, many workers currently in the labor market did not have a positive experience with schooling in traditional educational settings. Union sensitivity to its membership has influenced program design. Union programs are primarily non-traditional programs, which put workers in the center of the experience. With the expectation that given the necessary support all can learn, union programs encourage not only participation but also success.

The relationship between union stewards (shop floor leadership) and workers is another factor in program success. One of the building blocks of labor unions, the steward system connects every member to the organization. In many cases, the members themselves select the stewards. Whether paid or volunteer, stewards have a responsibility to the individuals they serve.

Because they know the workers and work side by side with them, stewards are a conduit for information – from the leadership to the membership and vice versa. In many programs, these stewards are responsible for letting workers know about new skill training and education programs. In addition, the support of the stewards reassures workers that the program has the union stamp of approval. For many workers, it is that stamp that gives them the confidence they need to participate. They know if the union approves, the program will help them and not expose them to negative consequences, such as a public exposure of potential skill deficiencies. With union approval, workers trust that the training will not jeopardize their jobs.

Some programs have instituted a peer learning advocate or counselor program. These Peer Advocates are sometimes stewards and sometimes other workers, who are committed to helping their co-workers take advantage of opportunities for life-long learning. Peer Advocates not only inform their co-workers of training opportunities, they also support and counsel those who are participating in training, support that is often needed by workers who may have some anxiety about being in a new and unfamiliar training situation. This practice results in higher “take-up” rates for union-sponsored training and education programs than experienced by other publicly funded programs. The Peer Advocate model has been so successful that training and education programs serving steelworkers in

Baltimore, manufacturing in Wisconsin, and Hospital workers in Pennsylvania (among others) have enthusiastically put it into practice.

Project LEAP (Labor Education and Achievement Program), a partnership of the Maryland State Department of Labor and the Metropolitan Baltimore Council of AFL-CIO Unions, worked with multiple unions and their employers to provide basic skills education to workers in industries that included such diverse sectors as cement manufacturing, healthcare, food processing, and garment manufacturing. In this program, Peer Advocates from each worksite collaborated closely with their unions and project staff to recruit workers and provide peer support and counseling. Their participation in the program was cited by evaluators as a key factor in participant attendance and success.

### **Relationships between stewards and front line managers**

Stewards also play another role. They are the union representatives that have a direct relationship to front line managers and supervisors. Sometimes, despite the best intentions of upper management, these front line supervisors are reluctant to let workers attend training. They may feel that they cannot spare the worker or that training may cause them to lose their best workers through promotion. Sometimes frontline managers may not understand the overall purpose of the training. Stewards play a major role in getting the support of front line managers and in helping them organize work schedules to facilitate the learning program. Sometimes stewards handle the day-to-day planning that allows workers to have equitable access to training and education programs.

Stewards can help managers see how training is in their long-term interest even if it creates short-term difficulties. The relationship between stewards and managers is one of the basic functional units in a labor/management partnership. It is the unit that expedites occupational skill training at its foundation level.

### **Training design**

When unions participate in training and education programs, not only do they bring resources of funding, personnel, and relationships to bear, they also have a positive influence on the design of the program and the teaching methodologies used. Learner-centered instruction is a sound educational principle. Unions take it a step further by promoting

worker-centered learning. “Unions’ education and training programs are rooted in the needs of their members, the learners. They are worker-centered. This means that workers, through their union, have a central role in developing the programs. Their needs determine how the programs are designed, what they offer, and how they are taught.”<sup>2</sup> But workers are not the only ones who benefit from a worker-centered approach to training and education. Employers benefit as well because this approach to learning is more effective and more conducive to workers developing the skills they need for today’s workplace.

The Oscar Meyer plant in Wisconsin, in partnership with United Food and Commercial Workers, has a learning center that includes small classes, individual tutorials, computer assisted instruction, and a drop-in learning center to meet the needs of the workforce. This model of a learning center, staffed by experienced instructors and trained tutors, helps workers whose instructional needs range from basic reading and math skills, to college preparation, and workplace specific skills.

A Working For America Institute publication lists keys to a worker-centered approach to basic skills, which applies broadly to workplace training and education programs. Because unions focus on the needs of their members they are interested in negotiating these approaches to learning thereby fostering better programmatic results. The following keys have been widely recognized and quoted among adult education practitioners.

1. Worker-centered learning builds on what workers already know
2. Worker-centered learning addresses the needs of the whole person
3. Workers and their unions are very active in developing and planning these programs
4. Decision-making is a participatory process
5. Workers have equal access to programs in their workplace
6. Curriculum content and program structure reflect the diverse learning styles and needs of adult workers
7. Workers are involved in helping to design any tests or assessments
8. Classroom records are confidential

---

<sup>2</sup> Sarmiento and Kay – pg 25 first edition

9. Literacy programs may be integrated into a larger strategy for responding to anticipated changes in the workplace<sup>3</sup>

A worker-centered approach not only has an impact on successful training outcomes for the individuals involved, it also attracts more participants to a program that welcomes and values their participation.

1199 New York/Hospital League Education, Training, and Job Security Fund found they were spending a lot of money for remedial classes that were being run by the City University of New York. These remedial classes were gate-keepers that kept many workers from entering college-based training and upgrading programs. When the union made a deal with the colleges that allowed them to teach the remedial classes, there were two immediate benefits. The joint funds spent a lot less on remediation, and secondly workers were passing the college entrance requirements at a faster rate. The Fund's approach to training and education is worker-centered. And the training is delivered in familiar and trusted settings – the union training site. When training is worker-centered, it is the expectation of the instructor that every worker will succeed. In fact, his or her success as an instructor is measured on that basis. In other settings, there is an expectation that a certain percentage of students will not make the grade, an unfortunate self-fulfilling prophecy that is not shared by this joint program.

Instructors can make or break a program. Those that teach in a multi stakeholder program have a challenging job meeting multiple needs. It is not enough to understand the content of occupational training and education; an instructor also must be good at making the connection to workers and understanding the culture of the workplace. A number of union-based programs have addressed this issue. The joint committees in the WRTP find instructors from the workplace whenever possible. The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project trains workers and managers to teach courses and run workshops. The Laborers-AGC Education Fund trains its trainers, current and former laborers, both in content expertise and instructional methodology.

---

<sup>3</sup> Sarmiento and Kay

The Laborers-AGC Education and Training Fund is a joint labor/management trust fund formed by the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) and the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC). Each year it holds an Instructor Development Program for a week in the spring. Experts from around the country gather to train the instructors. Courses range from pouring concrete, to presentation skills, to workplace literacy, to conflict resolution, etc. In order to receive certification, instructors must attend the Program for approximately 5 or 6 years and take required courses, many of which are counted as credit towards a postsecondary degree. The program turns out highly trained instructors who both come from the workforce and can effectively transmit knowledge to that same workforce.

### **Outcomes of union participation in training and education**

We have already mentioned a number of important outcomes of union involvement in training and education. These include greater participation of workers, improved learning outcomes, the involvement of consortia of employers, cost effectiveness, and a pool of funds and resources.

Unions' critical partners in workforce development are employers and the public workforce investment system. Both these cornerstones of the economy are enhanced by the role of unions in building and supporting training and education. To summarize their gains:

- Unions support greater competitiveness for partnering employers. Employers get the skilled workers they need through cost-effective programs
- Unions as an intermediary agency provide a close link for the public Workforce Investment System between the workforce and employers. Unions can help ease placement of new workers, and the labor/management contractual relationship often creates access to career ladders for the incumbent worker

Across widely divergent settings, job training and workforce development practices with union partners create positive outcomes for employers, the public workforce investment system, and individuals alike. Bargained resources and problem solving structures and practices create the capacity for more frequent and more effective training and education as well as a commitment to long-range economic and workforce planning. Worker-centered

programs that promote worker confidence, participation and individual success support employer objectives. Through their commitment to expand the potential of workers, unions are pushing employers and the economy as a whole to greater economic success.