

MEMBERSHIP INSIDER

OUR IMPACT IN WORKFORCE & EDUCATION



Into The Unknown

To Read or Not To Read



**The Science of
YouScience®: Filling
the Talent Pipeline with
Quality and Quantity**



**Developing Soft Skills for
Workplace Success**



The Power of Convening



Ready for Anything

Into the Unknown

For the Daytona Regional Chamber, ensuring a thriving business community requires a robust workforce. Clearly, without workers to perform daily functions of providing goods or services, companies falter and the economy slows. As an organization dedicated to economic prosperity for the region, the Daytona Regional Chamber has invested significant time and organizational resources to supporting a strong workforce. Legacy programs include Leadership Daytona that cultivates future community leaders, while newer initiatives like offering YouScience® in partnership with CareerSource Flagler Volusia and Volusia County Schools take workforce development initiatives in new directions. But taking a comprehensive approach to workforce development can be riddled with challenges. Principal among them, how can a region readily equip workers to deal with the demands of an unknown future? With workforce and innovation as a center of influence for the Daytona Regional Chamber, the pursuit of answers to this question guides efforts for a more resilient, growing talent pipeline.

To Read or Not To Read

Workers must be versatile with at least the basic tools to succeed. This means having some level of reading comprehension skills, or put plainly, the ability to read. Sadly, only half of Florida's third graders can read at grade level, a drop of 3% compared to 2022 according to the Florida Chamber Foundation. Volusia County's scores are only slightly better at 53%. Third grade is significant, said to be the time when a child transitions from learning to read to reading to learn. So, difficulty reading in third grade greatly diminishes a child's learning process moving forward.

Spurred by these facts, the Florida Chamber Foundation launched the Florida Business Alliance for Early Learning Project. The project stands as an ever-growing collective of business and community leaders dedicated to securing the future of Florida's youngest. The Daytona Regional Chamber is this alliance at a local level with programs such as the prestigious Leadership Daytona program. Each year the Chamber's Chairperson presents a community challenge to the Leadership Daytona Class. This year, Chairperson Nellie Lupoli challenged the class to raise awareness about third grade reading levels and why it matters to business.

Leadership Daytona Class XLIII met the challenge by developing a media campaign that identifies community influencers and an approach to assisting with this important initiative. From there, current reading scores of third graders are shared



Chris Lewis of Leadership Daytona Class XLIII presents with his colleagues for Chair Challenge

with the influencers to distribute amongst their networks. The variety of initiatives that people and companies already are doing to encourage children to read are also promoted. Community awareness, Class XLIII discovered, was an important aspect in the overall effort to address improved reading levels of third grade students.

The Science of YouScience®: Filling the Talent Pipeline with Quality and Quantity

Launched in 2021 through a funding partnership with CareerSource Flagler Volusia, the Daytona Regional Chamber provides Volusia County Schools with YouScience®, a web-based aptitude assessment to help students uncover their natural skills and align them with in-demand career fields. More than 11,000 students have completed the assessment and discovered promising career possibilities in advanced manufacturing, architecture and construction, distribution and logistics, health science, and other career clusters.

Businesses can support these future workers and connect with this talent earlier and with more precision. Career Connections on the YouScience® platform allows companies to upload information about their organization including the career areas for which they hire. When students complete their assessment, their results include local companies whose hiring needs match the student's aptitudes, allowing students to envision a fulfilling future in the greater Daytona Beach region.

Leveraging the power of the student aptitude data and feedback from the local business community on future hiring needs, Volusia County Schools has begun developing career pathways that originate in middle school. These pathways include all potential tracks for students from those planning to enter the workforce directly after graduation to those who will pursue postsecondary education and certifications. The early career planning and exploration make a student's middle school and high school careers more effective and efficient.

Developing Soft Skills for Workplace Success

Conversations with local business leaders repeatedly uncover a common skills gap surrounding the workforce regardless of industry. A lack of soft skills, or employability skills, prevents employers from engaging in industry-specific skills training to support business productivity and profitability. In response to this glaring need, the Daytona Regional Chamber launched the Soft Skills Youth Summit.

Collaborating with Volusia County Schools' Career and Technical Education (CTE) team, this program introduces student participants to five skill topics that will support their future career success: attire, communication, etiquette, punctuality, and work ethic. Students learn about these topics in conversation with regional business leaders who leverage their experience to invest in these future workers. Additionally, the students can take advantage of these connections to lay the foundational pieces of building their professional network.

Juniors and seniors from each of the district's 10 high schools have participated in the Soft Skills Youth Summit giving the event a truly regional impact. Student engagement in the program has grown each year, increasing the power of the investment of those involved.



Soft Skills Youth Summit 2023

The Power of Convening

Sometimes in our day-to-day work activities, it can become easy to slip back into silos. Yet the coordination required for effective workforce development is an ongoing need. Somewhere in this community an entity is addressing one or more pieces of the overall workforce puzzle. Communication between these entities could result in leveraging limited resources or partnering on similar goals, which are important synergies for long-term success. To be a convenor not a replicator, the Daytona Regional Chamber first brought together all these agencies and organizations involved in bolstering our workforce to a meeting on February 28, 2023, as the Workforce and Education Task Force.

This powerhouse group was chaired by past Daytona Regional Chamber Board Chairperson Len Marinaccio. The list of workforce development dynamos was extensive from early learning to the public school system to higher education and everything this spectrum impacts.

During the summer, the Workforce and Education Task Force evolved into a standing committee continuing to meet on a monthly basis. To maximize the brain trust, agendas are intentionally structured for information sharing among these key stakeholders. This includes reporting on current state of affairs with presentations of data and trends. The September meeting ensured all parties were made aware of the U.S. Chamber Foundation and the Florida Chamber Foundation's release of a joint report, *Untapped Potential in FL – How Childcare Impacts Florida's Workforce Productivity and the State's Economy*.

According to the report, Florida's economy loses \$5.38 billion annually due to childcare related issues. The loss is calculated in lost productivity from the disruption to workers in their work or education in securing reliable childcare. The loss was also measured in the amount of turnover and training costs as workers who cannot secure childcare choose to leave the labor force. The report shines a light on yet another component of supporting a flourishing workforce – access to childcare. While the report states there is a significant gap between the demand for childcare and the availability of it, recent policy developments are beginning to deliver significant resources to safeguard the future of childcare in Florida. This creates new reasons for optimism, states the report.

The opportunity to update fellow committee members along with time for feedback and discussion of current workforce issues are core to successful collaborations and have remained consistent items of the agenda. Bringing these agencies together helps facilitate information sharing while providing a forum for coordination.

Ready for Anything

Fortune-telling is one ability the Daytona Regional Chamber cannot attest to. What it can claim is its ability to remain nimble in the face of ever-changing workforce and education trends. From hosting the Leadership Daytona program, to convening partners, to providing YouScience®, the Daytona Regional Chamber has spent more than a century concerned with business matters. Pivotal to the success of any company is the workforce it must rely on, whether self-employed or employing thousands. Workforce and education are integral to one another and core to achieving the vision of the Daytona Regional Chamber.



WORKFORCE ISSUE I

ABOUT

Membership Insider is a publication of the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce. Featured articles tell the story of how your membership investment has an even greater return for you and all the business community in our region.



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