

Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia

● **Assessment Report 2008**



Workforce Development

Produced for Troup County and the
Cities of LaGrange, West Point, and Hogansville

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE IN TROUP COUNTY, GEORGIA

Workforce Development Assessment

Produced for

Troup County and the Cities of LaGrange, West Point, and Hogansville

With sponsorship by

U.S. Economic Development Administration

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

In June 2007, leaders in Troup County and the cities of LaGrange, West Point, and Hogansville kicked off a two-year strategic planning initiative to create a framework for sustainable development. The goal of the effort is to develop innovative strategies for promoting quality growth, fostering healthy economic development, enhancing the quality of life of residents, and protecting Troup County's natural environment, sense of place, and community. Troup County leadership wants to preserve and enhance places for area residents and businesses by proactively, progressively and fairly directing the community's growth and development to shape its future.

Georgia Tech - through its Enterprise Innovation Institute and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development - conducted research, assessments, and strategy development in support of this initiative. This report is one in a series of reports entitled *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia* produced by Georgia Tech.

Development of this particular report - the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Troup County Workforce Development Assessment* - and the associated assessment activities also benefitted from sponsorship provided by the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

OVERVIEW

At the heart of sustainable development is the desire to make better or to improve, rather than to simply grow - thus, the difference between development and growth. When considering Troup County's workforce, the sustainable development question is how to enable current and future residents to develop better, higher performing skills and aptitudes for a knowledge-based economy. This question is a concern for communities worldwide; and there is room for ongoing improvement even among the best. Therefore, workforce development is not an end in itself, but a continual process. The purpose of this assessment is to identify key workforce development needs and opportunities for Troup County given the economic development dynamics affecting the region. This assessment is based on several informational inputs, including:

- one-on-one interviews with 154 community stakeholders
- one-on-one interviews with 30 external partners
- a review of dozens of performance metrics
- survey of more than two dozen local employers located within Troup County
- a survey of 1,352 high school youth
- one-on-one interviews with more than two dozen workforce development professionals serving Troup County
- case study research on four comparable auto plant communities
- a review of recent job openings
- a review of economic growth needs in the region and the occupational considerations
- a review of existing workforce development initiatives

To serve as the basis for the region's strategic planning framework, the Leadership Team steering Troup County's efforts adopted 10 strategic goals. The subject of this assessment, workforce development, is very germane to two of these goals: The Knowledge Driven Community and The Prosperous Community.

Acknowledgements

This assessment would not have been possible without the insights provided by leadership at the following organizations:

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 Duracell - Proctor & Gamble
 Express Personnel Services
 ExxonMobil
 ExxonMobil Chemical Company
 Freudenberg-NOK
 Georgia Department of Labor
 Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
 Georgia Quick Start Program
 Governor's Office of Workforce Development
 Interface FLOR
 ITC Holdings
 Junior Achievement of East Alabama / West Georgia

Kelly Services
 LaGrange College
 LaGrange Employer Committee
 LaGrange Industrial Development Authority
 LaGrange Plant Managers Roundtable
 LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce
 Literacy Volunteers Troup County Inc.
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 Wal-Mart Logistics
 Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
 West Georgia Education & Career Partnership
 West Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency
 West Georgia Society for Human Resource Management
 West Georgia Technical College
 West Georgia Youth Apprenticeship Program Consortium

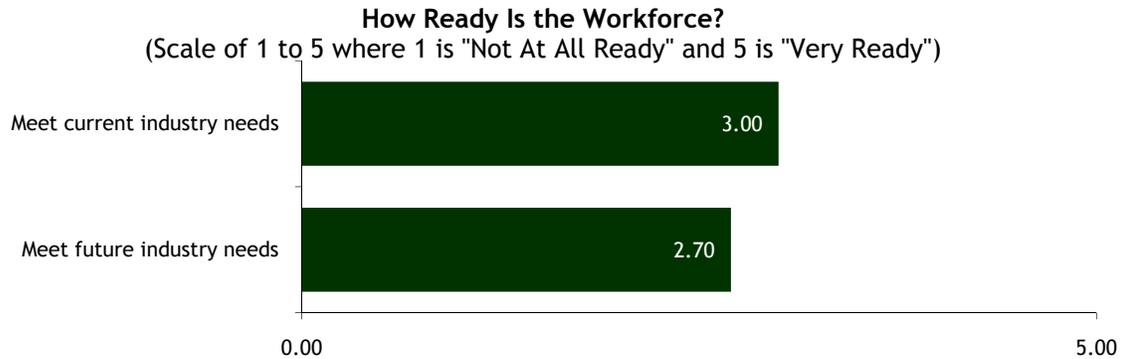
THE VIEW FROM COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS¹

Community Stakeholders

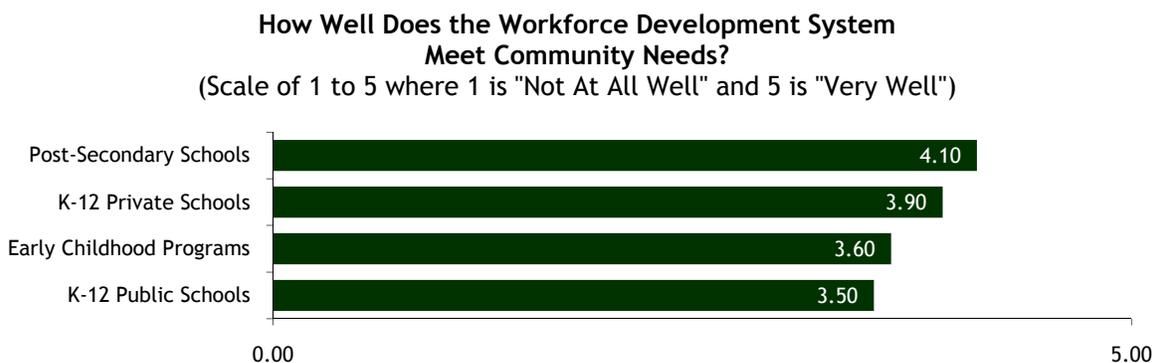
From June to August 2007, interviews were conducted with 154 community stakeholders. The quality of the workforce was top-of-mind.

- When asked to identify the most serious issue affecting Troup County's ability to prepare for the future, the quality of the workforce was mentioned by community stakeholders more frequently than any other.
- Workforce development received the second highest mention among stakeholders when asked "what to improve." And, improving the workforce development system was seen as a leading opportunity (third highest) by Troup County stakeholders when asked to identify key opportunities for community betterment. Specifically, the stakeholders provided top importance billing to the need to "provide more job training and adult education" and the third highest billing to "improving the quality of the school system."
- Troup County stakeholders recognized area colleges (LaGrange College and West Georgia Technical College) as key assets for the region - these together ranked second among the most frequently cited strengths for fostering desirable community development.
- While the stakeholders saw some positive features associated with the K-12 education, they identified challenges associated with the system. While the K-12 education was the sixth top mentioned strength, it was the third most frequently mentioned challenge. When asked why they saw the K-12 as a challenge, several stakeholders pointed to the high school dropout rate and to the need to improve graduation rates. Many cited the need to provide better help for kids lagging behind. While some stakeholders talked about how the school system was effective at addressing the needs of the top five percent and not the remaining student body, others expressed concerns about efforts that would lead to a reduction in advanced placement or other similar programs. Some stakeholders also discussed how the school system needs to improve in helping young people develop a greater interest in learning and a stronger work ethic. Beyond this, stakeholders discussed the need to improve the handling of discipline matters, the need to increase the diversity of teachers, and the challenges associated with recruiting young teaching professionals to want to live and work in Troup County. The lack of a high school in West Point was also cited as a problem.
- The stakeholders were asked to share their views on how "ready" the workforce is for industry. They were asked to provide a rating on a scale of one to five where one meant "not all ready" and five meant "very ready." The stakeholders gave generally low marks for the readiness of the Troup County workforce to meet future needs and an average mark when considering today's needs.

¹ Information for this section has been extracted from the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: The View from Community Stakeholders* and the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: The View from External Partners* reports.



- To assess their views on the workforce development system, the stakeholders were asked to share their views on how well the system meets the community's needs on a scale of one to five where one meant "not at all well" and five meant "very well." They were asked to provide a rating on types of institutions, serving the needs of those from infancy through adulthood, a scale of one to five where one means "not all well" and five means "very well." Top billing was provided to the post-secondary institutions, with West Georgia Technical College and LaGrange College receiving a high degree of mention. Of note, K-12 Public Schools received an above average rating, but one not as high as the other institutional support resources. (An average above 3.0 denotes that positive ratings outweighed negative ratings for each type of institution within the workforce development system.)



External Partners

Following the internal stakeholder interviews, Georgia Tech launched an external stakeholder input process. Specifically, from September through November, 2007, interviews were held with 30 statewide and regional community development partners of Troup County who also have a vested interest in the community's future development.

- Similar to the community stakeholders, external partners identified the lack of a quality workforce as a top three threat.
- The need to improve education as the second most frequently mentioned critical issue by the partners. In agreement with the community stakeholders, the county's external partners identified the higher education assets in the community as a key strength. K-12 education was the second most frequently identified weakness by Troup's external partners.
- The partners saw the development of a quality workforce as very important to the future economic prosperity of Troup County.

STATE OF THE CURRENT WORKFORCE²

A review of key performance metrics for Troup County’s workforce reveals that the community is doing okay in some areas but could use improvement in other areas.

Troup County’s workforce grew significantly during the 1990s, but to a much lesser extent since then. The workforce grew 14.1 percent from 26,403 to 30,213 members during that decade and exceeded its population growth of 5.8 percent. However, this rate of growth did not keep pace with the rate of growth of its peers, the West Georgia region, and Georgia. And, since 2000, there was almost no growth in the county’s workforce.

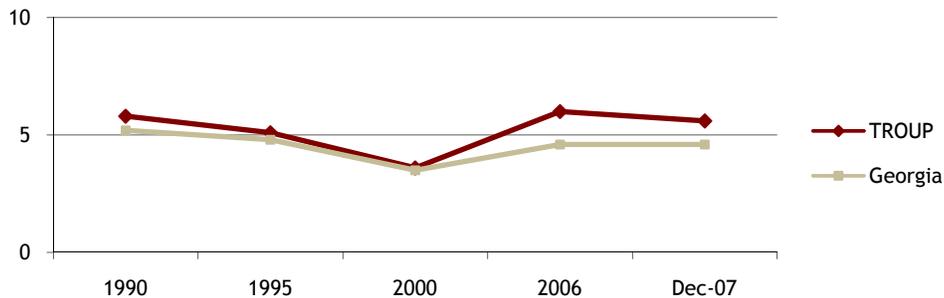
Civilian Labor Force

	1990	2000	1990-2000 Growth	2006	2000-2006 Growth
TROUP	26,403	30,213	14.4%	30,559	1.1%
Peer A	26,776	28,237	5.5%	29,057	2.9%
Peer B	19,679	27,411	39.3%	31,674	15.5%
Peer C	15,266	25,254	65.4%	31,655	25.3%
West GA	161,307	204,832	27.0%	222,529	8.6%
Georgia	3,300,158	4,242,889	28.6%	4,741,860	11.8%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

- Troup County’s unemployment rate has been comparatively high.** Its 2006 rate exceeded that of two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state and the same was true in 1990. In 2000, the county posted a rate that was relatively low. This corresponds with the observed job loss for the county and signals an available workforce. As of December 2007, Troup County’s unemployment rate was 5.6 percent, which was higher than the rate for Georgia (4.6 percent). Consistent with the state, Troup’s unemployment rate dropped from 1990 to 2000 and has risen since then. At each interval, the county posted a rate that was consistently higher than the state.

Unemployment Rate



Source: Georgia Department of Labor

² Information for this section has been extracted from the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Sustainable Development Report Card* report. The peers referenced in this section are Barrow, Bulloch, and Spalding counties, each chosen due to their relative similarities to Troup County in terms of population, proximity to the interstate, percentage of citizens in incorporated and unincorporated areas, etc

- **Troup County's labor force participation rate has been consistently above the norm for its peer group and region.** Labor force participation rate is the civilian labor force (employed and unemployed persons) divided by the population of working age residents (for this purpose, such residents were defined as those 17 years and older). Excluded from this calculation are institutionalized individuals. It represents the share of able-bodied persons who are either employed or who are actively seeking employment. It can be inferred that the higher the labor force participation rate, the higher the willingness to work among those legally able. A low labor force participation rate can be indicative of a community with a large number of people who want to work but effectively drop out of the labor force because there is a lack of jobs which match their skill sets or their desired earnings. Based on this data, Troup County's workforce appears to have a willingness to work that exceeds two of its peers and its region but not that of Georgia. While Troup County's rate increased from 1990 to 2000, it decreased from 2000 to 2006. It remained below the state average during both periods.
- **Troup County appears to have an above average share of residents with some college education.** The county's combined share of those with some college or an Associate's Degree or a Bachelor's Degree or higher equated to 39.3 percent of its population and, while lagging behind the state, it exceeded that of two of its peers and its region in 2000 (the year of the most recent data available). Troup County appeared to have a higher proportion of residents who did not complete high school when compared to two of its peers and state, but its share was lower than the average for West Georgia, indicating this has been a regional trend.
- **The largest share of Troup County residents has held management and professional occupations, consistent with trends elsewhere.** From 1990 to 2000, the timeframe of the most recent available data, the county saw an increase in its proportion of residents holding such occupations. During the same time, it decreased its share of workers in construction and production-related occupations. Troup County's share of residents holding office-type positions (65.3 percent) was above that of two of its peers and the average for West Georgia (60.6 percent) but below that of the state (72.9 percent). The community's share of management and professional occupations exceeded that of two of its peers and the average for West Georgia. In 2000, Troup had a higher proportion of residents holding production, transportation and material moving occupations than two of its peers and the state.
- **The vast majority of Troup County residents appear to work inside the county.** Based on the 2000 Census "journey to work" data, which is the most recent data available on commuting patterns, an estimated 83.8 percent did so in 2000. Top destinations for Troup residents who commuted outside the county were Chambers County, Alabama; Coweta County; and Fulton County. These are the same top three destinations that could be observed in 1990. Beyond the top three, there were some differences. While in 1990, Meriwether and Harris counties rounded out the top five, in 2000, it was Harris and Muscogee counties that did so.
- **Troup County employers have also had some success drawing in workers who live outside the county.** Almost a third (30.1 percent) of the Troup County workforce lived outside the county in 2000. This represents a sharp increase from 1990, when 16.2 percent of the county's workers lived outside the county. When comparing 1990 and 2000, Chambers County continued to be the lead source for non-resident workers; Harris and Meriwether swapped for second and third place; Randolph County remained the fourth greatest source; and Lee County, Alabama replaced Heard County to round out the top five.

From 1990 to 2000, Troup County saw both an increase in the percentage of its residents leave the county for work and in the percentage of its workers who commute to Troup County for work from somewhere else. The latter is most notable as nearly one-third of the county's workforce in 2000 was a non-resident, signaling Troup County's increased dependence on a regional labor market.

- **The majority of Troup County’s job applicants are seeking non-production oriented positions (excluding those in the miscellaneous category).** As of January 2008, Troup County housed 2,551 active applicants looking for work, according to the Georgia Department of Labor. Outside of the miscellaneous category, the largest share (12.8 percent) of applicants sought clerical and sales positions. Another 8.8 percent sought service related positions. The third highest share (6.8 percent) of applicants sought machine trades positions.

The View from Employers

Approximately two dozen major employers, representing a total of 10,998 jobs, participated in a survey conducted from December 2007 through February 2008.

For assessing their employees, the employers were asked to provide a rating on a scale of one to five where one meant “not at all good” and five meant “very good.” On this scale, the median mark is 3.0 so the higher the rating above 3.0, the more positive of a rating it represents. The opposite is true for ratings provided below 3.0.

In terms of skills, employers provided top ratings for their employees’ ability to read for information, to follow instructions, and to fill out a job application. Notably, no skill area received an average rating below 3.0 reflecting a fairly positive view the employers had about their company’s employees. The areas receiving lowest marks included computer skills, critical thinking and problem solving, and vocational and technical skills.

Employer Ratings of Employee Skills	
Skill	Average Rating
Ability to Read for Information	3.79
Ability to Follow Instructions	3.71
Ability to Fill Out a Job Application	3.57
Interpersonal	3.43
Locating Information	3.32
Listening for Information	3.26
Communications	3.18
Applied Math	3.17
Vocational / Technical	3.11
Critical Thinking / Problem Solving	3.00
Computer	3.00

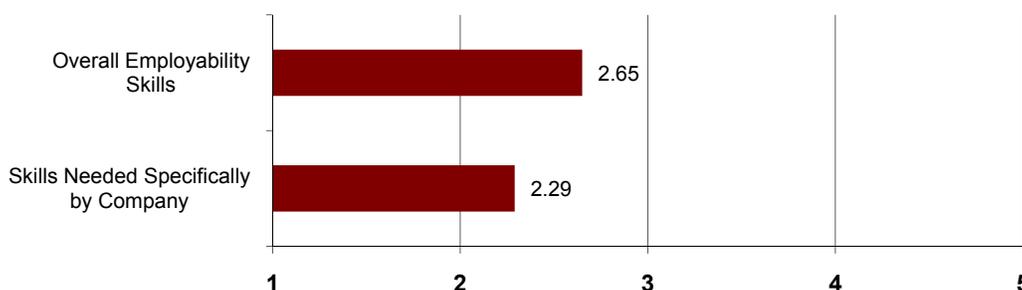
In terms of attributes, the employers provided top marks to their employees for stability and low turnover, productivity, and work ethic. Almost all employee attributes received an average rating of above 3.0 reflecting a fairly positive assessment by their employers. Employees received the lowest mark for their level of creativity, followed by their absenteeism and show of initiative.

When asked to sum up their assessment of their employees, employers provided relatively high marks to their employees for their overall employability (resulting in an average of 3.75) and even higher marks for the skills they had that were needed by the company.

Employer Ratings of Employee Attributes

Attribute	Average Rating
Stability / Low Turnover	3.87
Productivity	3.63
Work Ethic	3.58
Motivation	3.29
Timeliness (Attention to Deadlines)	3.27
Initiative	3.21
Absenteeism	3.21
Creativity	2.95

**Employer Ratings of Company Employee Employability
(Scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all good" to 5 being "very good")**



The View from Workforce Development Professionals

As part of this effort, more than two dozen workforce development professionals serving Troup County were interviewed for their insights regarding the community’s youth.

Reinforcing the views shared by major employers, when discussing Troup County’s existing workforce, workforce developers pointed to challenges which are fairly universal in Georgia and beyond, such as adult illiteracy, lack of desirable work habits (e.g., showing up at work on time and consistently, dressing appropriately, showing respect, being professional, having work ethic), and deficiencies with basic skills such as reading, writing, and math. Beyond this, it was also noted that the workforce lacks essential skills in showing initiative, and in critical thinking and problem solving. In addition, the workforce developers described an adult workforce that could be better trained in the occupational areas that fit current industrial needs as well as anticipated industrial growth in the region. Area employers were reported to have to recruit from outside Troup County to fill their employment needs. The surveyed employers confirmed that they do experience some difficulty in hiring for key positions such as those in industrial maintenance. It was shared that some employers have difficulty keeping employees beyond two-to-three years and how this may be a generational issue with today’s culture. Others shared that those employers that appear to have difficulty retaining and recruiting workers may also tend to be those who do not have proper offerings in compensation and benefits or a work-friendly atmosphere.

Attributed to a possible remnant of the older industrial economy, it was shared how many members of the adult workforce does not value education as some did not have to have a high educational attainment in order to be successful in their job pursuits. The concern expressed here was an apparent lack of recognition among these workers that the economy has changed and will continue to do so, and as it does, the importance of educational attainment and continual education for entry level to the most seasoned workers will only grow. This was voiced as a concern not only for the adult workforce but also for their children. However, with this said, the workforce developers described the workforce as full of “honest, hardworking folks who want to better themselves and their children.”

STATE OF THE FUTURE WORKFORCE^{3,4}

Youth Development

A review of youth development in Troup County reveals that the county is doing poorly in most areas. There is a significant opportunity for enhancing the community's performance and such opportunities should be given urgent consideration.

- **Troup County appears to have a relatively high rate of child neglect in recent years.** In 2005, Troup County's rate of substantiated incidences of child neglect was 33.6 cases per 1,000 children under age 18. While this appears to represent more than two-fold increase over 2000 (15 cases per 1,000 children), some of the difference may be related to how incidences of neglect are reported in different areas. Still, it speaks to the need to address neglect prevention measures and strong children support networks in Troup County. Troup County's 2005 rate was higher than two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state as a whole.

While child neglect has been on the rise, Troup County has apparently seen some decrease in its child abuse rate. While in 2000, its rate was 4.9 substantiated incidents of abuse per 1,000 children under the age of 18, in 2005, it was 4.6. Still, the county's rate in 2005 was higher than that of two of its peers and Georgia, though lower than the average for its region.

- **Troup County's number of students eligible for free lunch has grown in recent years, corresponding with trends elsewhere.** It increased from 48.9 percent of all students in 2000 to 58.5 percent in 2006. Troup County's 2006 rate exceeds that of two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state.
- **Troup County appears to have an above average percentage of economically disadvantaged students.** During the 2006 to 2007 school year, these students accounted for 59 percent of the student body. This was a higher percentage than what was seen in two of Troup County's peers and what had been the average for West Georgia.
- **Troup County has seen a steady increase in its juvenile arrest rate (for ages 10 to 17).** Its rate appears to have consistently exceeded the average for West Georgia and the rate for the state. Georgia has also seen a steady increase, but to a lesser degree than Troup. Two of the county's peers posted 2004 rates largely above Troup County. However, Troup's region and two of its peers saw a decrease in its average rate from 2000 to 2004.
- **Corresponding with trends elsewhere, Troup County's teenage pregnancy rate has been steadily decreasing. However, its rate has consistently remained above average for its region and state.** The rate was 46.1 pregnancies per 1,000 female teenagers in 2005, shifting slightly downward from its rate in 2000 (48.8 births to teenagers aged 10-19) and significantly lower than the rate in 1990 (66.8). It is however still significantly higher than that of each of its peers, the average for the West Georgia region (37.4), and the rate for the state (37.6). Important to note, the teenage pregnancy rate decreased on average within West Georgia and within the state overall.

³ Information for this section has been extracted from the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Sustainable Development Report Card* report. The peers referenced in this section are Barrow, Bulloch, and Spalding counties, each chosen due to their relative similarities to Troup County in terms of population, proximity to the interstate, percentage of citizens in incorporated and unincorporated areas, etc.

⁴ Much of the data for this section was derived from the Georgia Department of Education's Report Card as available on its Web site (www.doe.k12.ga.us) unless otherwise noted.

The repeat teenage pregnancy rate in Troup County has been on the rise. From 2000 to 2005, Troup County saw a sharp spike in its repeat teenage pregnancy rate, with 33.3 percent of repeat pregnancies among females aged 15-17. This appeared to buck trends for the most part. During the same period, two of Troup County's peers saw a decrease while one saw an ever slight increase. The average for West Georgia and the rate for the state also dropped. The county's rate in 2005 exceeded that of two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state.

- **Troup County's high school dropout rate has been slowly rising in recent years.** The dropout rate refers to the percentage of children who drop out during any given year. During the 2006 to 2007 school year, Troup's rate (5.7 percent) exceeded the rate for two of its peers, the average for West Georgia (5.2 percent), and the rate for the state (4.1 percent). While Troup County saw a slight increase in its rate from the 1999 to 2000 to the 2006 to 2007 school years, the opposite was true for its peers, region, and state.

Troup County's has seen a reduction in its high school graduation rate. While for the 1999 to 2000 school year, its rate was higher than that of the state, the opposite was true for the 2006 to 2007 school year. Troup County saw its rate go from 75.7 percent to 70.1 percent. Still, its 2006 to 2007 rate was higher than that for two of its peers and the average for its region.

- **On a positive front that should bode well for future graduation rates, Troup County has posted a below-average chronic absenteeism rate.** Students absent for more than 15 days during the school year are considered to have chronic absenteeism. Troup County's rate during the 2006 to 2007 school year was lower than that of each of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state.

Educational Preparation

A review of key performance metrics for Troup County's workforce reveals that the community is doing okay in some areas but could use improvement in other areas.

POSITIVE INDICATORS

- **Troup County Schools received its Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation in 2007 to recognize its efforts in quality management and continual improvement.** In addition, LaGrange High School has been repeatedly recognized as among the nation's best.
- **Troup County's has seen a steady improvement in the performance of students on the Georgia High School Graduation Test in all subjects.** Troup students have especially excelled in the areas of English / language arts and mathematics. When reviewing performance on English / language arts test specifically, the county has seen a steady and notable increase in its students who achieve a "pass plus" score. While its percentage of students who have failed has always been fractional, it has also decreased over time.

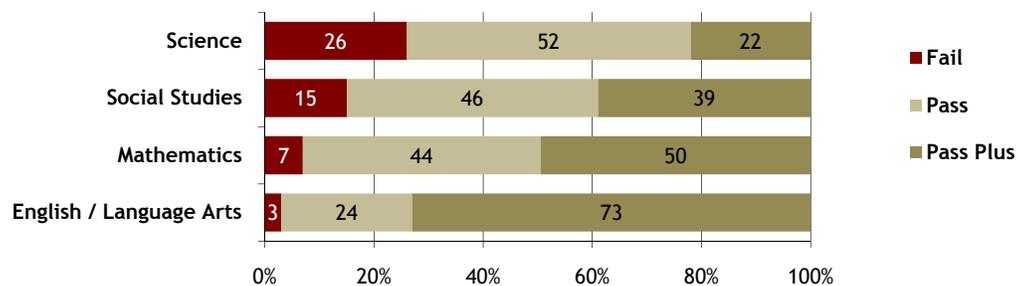
Two of Troup County's peers, its region, and state also declined somewhat in their percentage of students failing the English / language arts test. In the 2006 to 2007 school year, Troup County's percentage of students doing so was less than that of one peer, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state.

Troup County shifted slightly toward better performance among its students on the mathematics test. While Troup County saw less students fail on the mathematics test over the past three years, the opposite was true for two of its peers and the average county in its region. For the 2006 to 2007 school year, the county's fail rate was less than that of two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state.

Troup County saw significant improvement among the performance of its students on the social studies test. The percentage of students failing the test dropped 8 percent over the past three years. Troup County has also seen significant improvement in the performance of its students on the science test. The failure rate among students on this test also dropped during the past three years. Troup County’s trend toward better performance on the science test was also evident when reviewing the performance of one of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state, though none saw quite as much of a drop in the failure rate as Troup. While for the 2004 to 2005 and 2005 to 2006 school years the county had a failure rate that exceeded two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the state’s rate, its rate for the 2006 to 2007 school year was lower than one peer and the West Georgia average and on par with another peer and the state’s rate.

When reviewing the performance of Troup County’s students on the four subjects tested by the graduation test, almost three quarters (73 percent) achieved a “pass plus” on their English / language arts test and half (50 percent) did so on their mathematics test. Social studies appear to be their next strongest subject and science is their subject with the most opportunity for improvement.

Troup County Performance on the Georgia High School Graduation Test, 2006-2007



- **Troup County has had an above average percentage of gifted students.** The county saw its percentage of such students increase from the 1999 to 2000 to the 2006 to 2007 school years. During both school years, Troup County’s share of gifted students greatly surpassed that of its peers and the average for its region, and also exceeded the rate for the state.
- **Almost half of Troup County students have earned college prep diplomas.** The share of graduates earning such diplomas increased substantially from 2000 to 2007 while it decreased among peers and Georgia. Vocational diplomas accounted for the second highest share of graduates, however, corresponding with the trends in its peer group, region and state, such diplomas accounted for a lesser share of Troup’s diplomas in 2007 than it did in 2000. Also, there was a drop in Troup County students earning special education diplomas as well as diplomas with dual seals.⁵
- **Troup County has seen a higher percentage of students go to a Georgia technical college than has the state as a whole.** Approximately 29.8 percent of the county’s 2006 graduates entered a Georgia public college in the 2006-to-2007 school year - while this reflects a higher percentage than what was observed for the 2005 graduates, it is notably lower than the 41.6 percent for the state as a whole. However, this does not mean that Troup County is seeing fewer of its graduates go on to college, as this data only pertains to public colleges in Georgia and does not account for

⁵ The State of Georgia is implementing a one-diploma system. This data precedes the implementation of this system.

students who attend private college or a non-Georgia public college. What is notable is that 15.3 percent of Troup County's 2006 graduates entered a Georgia technical college, exceeding the state rate of 10.1 percent.

- **The vast majority of graduates from West Georgia Technical College find employment.** In 2005, the college reported that 84.4 percent of its graduates were employed, exceeding the state average among technical colleges (not including the jointly affiliated colleges with the Board of Regents) of 73.6 percent. Of those employed, 73.7 percent were employed within their field, surpassing the state average of 63.1 percent and 10.7 percent were employed out of field which was comparable to the state's rate of 10.5 percent. Notably, West Georgia Tech ranked 7th among the state's 34 technical colleges in 2005 for its percentage of graduates who were employed.⁶ For the year 2007, West Georgia Tech reported an even higher placement rate of 98.6 percent in its annual report.
- **Troup County has a smaller share of students who attend Georgia public colleges and require learning support than the state norm.** Of the 2006 graduates, 17.8 percent of Troup's graduates required such support compared to 21.8 percent for the state. The percentage of such students did increase some both for the county and Georgia, up from their 2005 rates of 15.5 percent and 19.6 percent, respectively.
- **The vast majority of Troup County's high school graduates are "work ready."** In 2008, Troup County initiated an effort through which all graduating high school seniors took the Georgia Certified Work Ready assessment administered under the auspices of the Governor's Office of Workforce Development. Of the 521 students that took the exam, 91 percent were certified to be "work ready." Troup County's high school graduates received 11 Platinum awards, 117 Gold awards, 253 Silver awards, and 140 Bronze awards.⁷

MIXED INDICATORS

- **Troup County first graders appear to be close to on par with the performance of first graders statewide.** The county had just a slightly higher share of students not meeting standards in reading and English / language arts, according to the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT).⁸
- **Troup County's fourth graders appear to be comparably strong in terms of their math performance, near average in reading comprehension, and below average with regards to science.** This is according to performance on the CRCT when comparing the county to school districts in its peer counties, West Georgia, and the state. Troup County's fourth graders scores exceeded that of two of its peer counties, the average for its region, and the overall performance seen in the state.⁹
- **While the vast majority of Troup County's eighth graders met or exceeded standards, their performance appears to not be on par with most of its counterparts.** Eighth graders appear to be notably below average in math according to their CRCT scores when compared to those in two peers, the average for West Georgia, and Georgia. While the vast majority of Troup County's eighth graders met or exceeded expectations in terms of their performance in reading comprehension, this, too, is an area where the county's performance has lagged slightly the average for its region and the rate for the state. Where Troup County's eighth graders appear to

⁶ Source: Technical College System of Georgia (www.dtae.org), 2005 Annual Report.

⁷ Source: West Georgia Education and Career Partnership.

⁸ Due to a change in test content, comparable year-to-year data is not available.

⁹ Due to a change in test content, comparable year-to-year data is not available.

really lag behind is science performance. While the majority of the county's students have met or exceeded standards, this has happened to a lesser degree than two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state. Troup County's eighth grader performance in science lagged behind their performance in math and reading comprehension, as was the case elsewhere.

- **Troup County's SAT performance has consistently lagged behind Georgia and the U.S., but has exceeded the average for its region.** The county's performance has also consistently lagged behind one of its peers. In 2006-2007, a total of 301 students took the SAT exam, which is slightly up from 1999-2000 when a total of 288 students took the exam.

When looking at the composite score with the addition of the writing test for the 2006 to 2007 school year, similar observations can be found regarding Troup County's performance. Regarding math, verbal, and writing scores separately, Troup County exceeded one of its peers and the average for its region in math and verbal, and two of its peers and the average for its region in writing. Troup County students had the same average score for math and verbal, which exceeded their average score for writing.

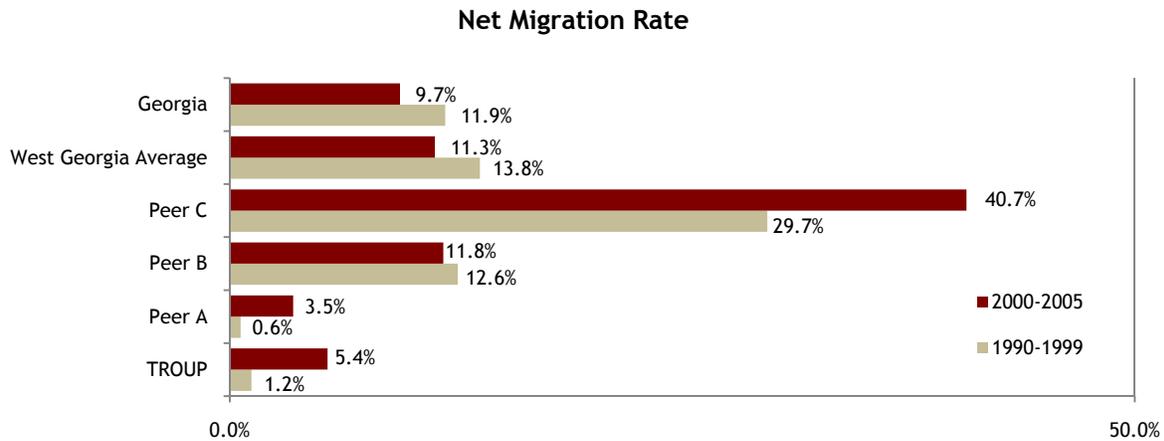
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

- **The Troup County School System did not meet the state's adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements.** While 18 out of its 20 schools did meet AYP for the 2006 to 2007 school year, two of its high schools - Callaway High School and Troup County High School - did not, on account of not meeting academic performance standards. Likewise, none of the school systems in Troup County's peer counties achieved AYP and only three of the school systems in its region met state standards.
- **Troup County percentage of high school students participating in vocational labs has dropped and been generally below average.** The county's vocational lab participation rate dropped from 54.4 percent in the 1999 to 2000 school year to 46.6 percent in the 2006 to 2007 school year. During both periods, Troup County's participation rate was lower than that of two of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state.
- **Troup County's percent of high school students requiring remedial education has increased significantly.** While for the 1999 to 2000 school year, there were 9.4 percent of such students, for the 2006 to 2007 school year, there were 13.6 percent. This growth in the need for remedial education bucks the trends seen by the county's peers, region and state. Troup County's 2006 to 2007 rate exceeded that of its peers, the average for West Georgia, and the rate for the state.
- **Troup County's student performance on the ACT has barely shifted in recent years.** The county's ACT performance has lagged behind that of its peers, region, and state.
- **Troup County's HOPE scholarship eligibility appears to be below average.** While for 2006 to 2007, the county's rate of eligibility exceeded the rate for two of its peers; it lagged behind the average for West Georgia and the rate for Georgia.

Workforce Attraction

Troup County has seemingly become more attractive to newcomers over time. The county's net migration rate has been positive and reflective of more residents moving in than moving out. From 1990 to 1999, Troup's net migration rate was marginal at 1.2 percent. However, this rate increased notably to 5.4 percent from 2000 to 2005. During the same period of time, the net migration rate for the West Georgia region and Georgia decreased some. Still, Troup's net migration rate has been comparably much lower than that of its region and state.

When comparing Troup County to its peers, two of its peers far exceeded Troup in terms of their net migration rate during both periods with one of them experiencing a significant increase in its rate during the 2000 to 2005 period.

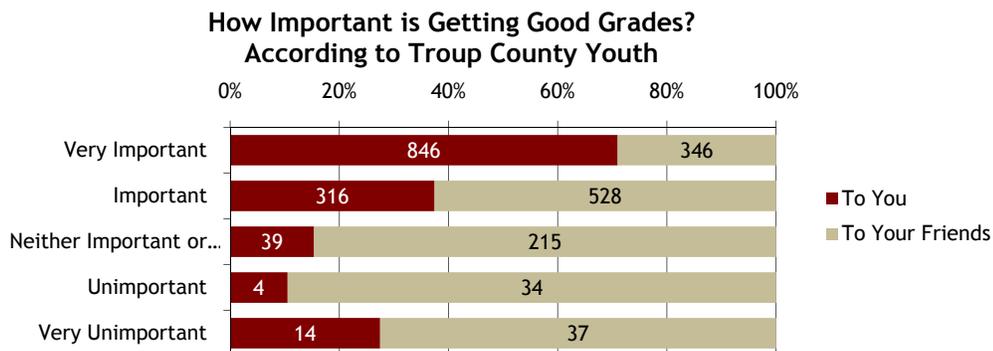


Source: University of Georgia, Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development

The View from Youth

A survey of Troup County’s high school youth was conducted from December 2007 to January 2008. Thanks to the strong encouragement provided by Troup County Schools, 1,352 students completed the survey.¹⁰

Overall, Troup County’s youth appear to be very focused on doing well. To help measure this, they were asked to indicate how important it was to them to get good grades. The vast majority (95.3 percent) of the youth shared that it was important or very important. Interestingly, when asked about whether getting good grades was important to their friends, while the majority (75.3 percent) replied affirmatively, more clearly saw this as more important to themselves than their friends. Taken together, what this may indicate is that young people may consider getting grades as an important value for themselves but, for some reason, they don’t reveal how important this is for them to their peers.



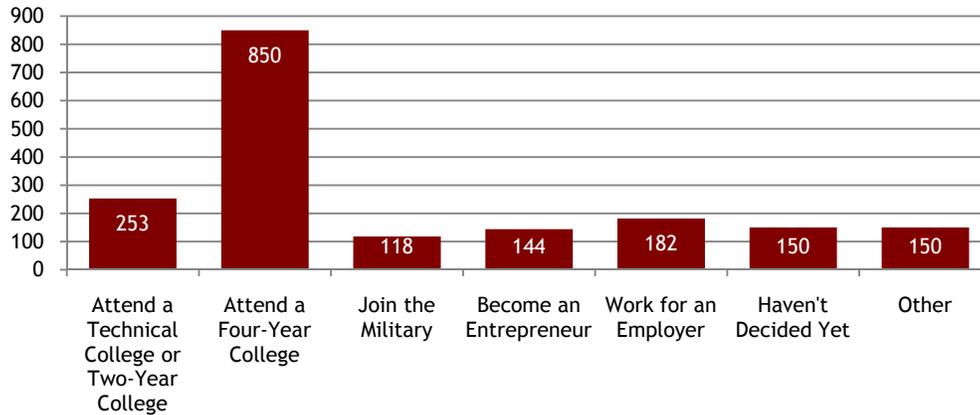
¹⁰ While 1,352 high school youth completed the survey, answers provided by a small number (63) were excluded from analysis due to the irrelevance of such answers.

The majority (72.4 percent) of the respondents were not currently employed at the time of this survey. While some of this is attributable to a more than a third (35 percent) of the participants being under legal working age, some of this is attributable to other reasons. High school youth were also asked to indicate whether they were active in any volunteer work at the time of the survey - more than two-thirds (67 percent) responded that they were not.

When asked whether they had any work experience in the career they'd like to pursue after graduation, the largest share of participants (42 percent) responded that they did not while another 19 percent indicated they didn't know. However, more than one third (39 percent) of the youth indicated that they did have work-related experience, signaling that some have had exposure through non-work and non-volunteer-related opportunities. Job shadowing, technical school classes and internships were most frequently mentioned as sources for this exposure. For those students who reported to not have received work-related experience, nearly half (47.1 percent) indicated it was because they were not aware of the options available and more than one-third (35.3 percent) indicated that there were no options available for them at school.

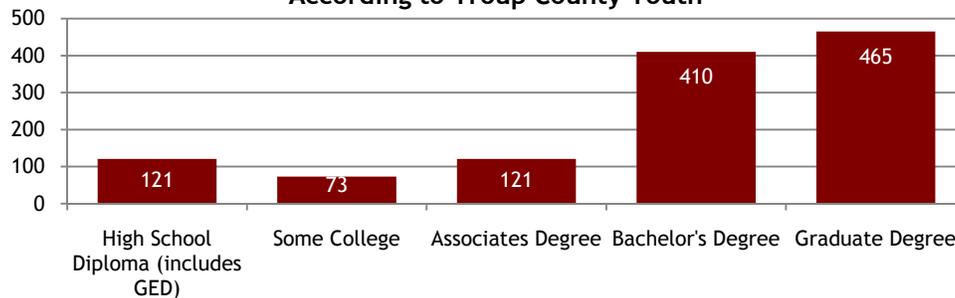
When asked about their plans after high school, many students identified more than one goal suggesting they planned to pursue some of these goals simultaneously. In reviewing their responses, pursuing further education featured prominently among these goals, accounting for 59.7 percent of all responses.

**Life After High School
According to Troup County Youth**



Regarding further their education, Troup County youth appear to have fairly high aspirations. The highest share (36.1 percent) of students responding to this question indicated they planned to pursue a graduate degree. Another 31.8 percent indicated they planned to attain a four-year degree. Less than one-tenth (9.4 percent) indicated that their high school degree would be their highest educational pursuit.

**Highest Level of Educational Achievement Sought
According to Troup County Youth**



In terms of overall career goals, more than one-fourth (26.5 percent) shared aspirations related to the medical field. Professional occupations in the business, banking, legal, and sales fields accounted for the second highest share (20.3 percent). Rounding out the top three identified career areas were arts-related occupations.

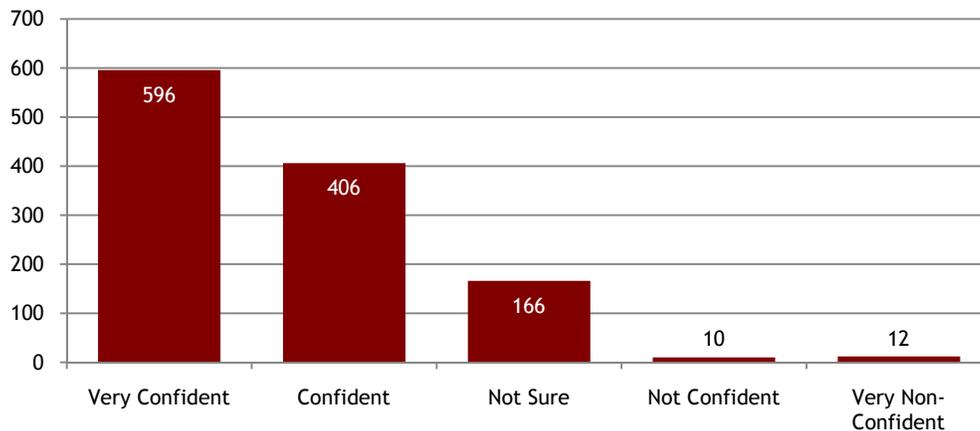
Career Goals by High School Youth

Occupational Area	Number	Percent
Medicine Related	204	26.5%
Business/Bank/Law/Sales	156	20.3%
Arts Related	70	9.1%
Teaching	64	8.3%
Sports	48	6.2%
Public Service	22	2.9%
Student	19	2.5%
Social Work	18	2.3%
Military	15	2.0%
Engineer	13	1.7%
Computer Related	12	1.6%
Manufacturing/Mechanic	12	1.6%
Cosmetology	12	1.6%
Architect	11	1.4%
Writer	8	1.0%
Religious	5	0.7%
Social Science	5	0.7%
Agriculture/Landscaping	4	0.5%
Construction	3	0.4%
Other	68	8.8%
Total	769	100.0%

Source: Georgia Tech 2008 Survey of Troup County Youth

Boding quite well for their potential for future success, Troup County’s high school youth appear to be quite confident that they will be able to reach their educational and career goals. Of the 1,190 students who answered this question, half (50.1 percent) indicated that they are very confident. Another 34.1 percent indicated they were confident. Less than one percent indicated that they were not confident.

**Confidence in Reaching Career Goals
According to Troup County Youth**



Of note, however, is that there appears to be a great interest among youth in leaving Troup County, confirming that the sense that community stakeholders have of a continuing “brain drain” is a valid one. When asked about whether they planned to stay within Troup County following graduation, the majority (71.4 percent) of the youth surveyed responded saying they planned to leave the county. This is not a trend unique to Troup County or something that can be tied to what’s going on in Troup County, specifically. As a few workforce development professionals pointed out, young people reach an age when they want something different from what they’ve experienced for the last 18 or 19 years of their life, even if it means going to a community 60 miles away.

Of the more than 900 students who provided this answer, just over one-fourth (25.7 percent) indicated that they planned to leave Troup County while a higher share, more than one third (36.6 percent), indicated they planned to seek that ‘something different’ outside of Georgia but stay within the United States. While this may seem problematic, it is common and natural. It was also shared by workforce developers that Troup County is seeing a number of “come-backs,” that is, adults who lived in Troup County during their youth and are returning in the later 20s, 30s, 40s, and so on. In addition, it is notable that nearly 30 percent of the youth, that is, several hundred, indicated plans to stay in the county.

The View from Employers

Generally, employers were less positive about the future workforce (e.g., high school students) than they were about the current workforce (e.g., their employees).

Troup County high school students were mostly considered moderate or just below moderate in most skill areas by major employers. On a scale of one to five where, one meant “not at all good” and five meant “very good,” very few employers provided top ratings for the skills possessed by high school students and average ratings ranged from 2.69 to 3.25 for the various skill areas. Students received the highest average rating for computer and interpersonal skills, both receiving average ratings above the median mark of 3.0. The remaining skill areas received an average rating of 3.0 or below. Areas for which they were deemed to be most lacking included critical thinking and problem solving, communications skills, and ability to read for information or reading comprehension.

Employer Rating of Skills by High School Students

Skill	Average Rating
Computer	3.25
Interpersonal	3.13
Applied Math	3.00
Ability to Fill Out a Job Application	2.94
Listening for Information	2.93
Ability to Follow Instructions	2.87
Vocational / Technical	2.87
Locating Information	2.86
Ability to Read for Information	2.81
Communications	2.81
Critical Thinking / Problem Solving	2.69

Source: Georgia Tech 2008 Survey of Troup County Employers

Employers were less enthusiastic about the work place related attributes possessed by high school students. Average ratings for various attribute areas ranged from 2.38 to 3.17. The attribute receiving the highest average rating was productivity and was the only attribute to have had an average rating above the median mark of 3.0. Students received the lowest marks for absenteeism, show of initiative, and work ethic. Regarding the absenteeism, Troup County school officials

recognized this as a key challenge a few years ago and enacted initiatives to curb absenteeism. Those initiatives have already yielded positive results, as reflected in the recent absenteeism rates.

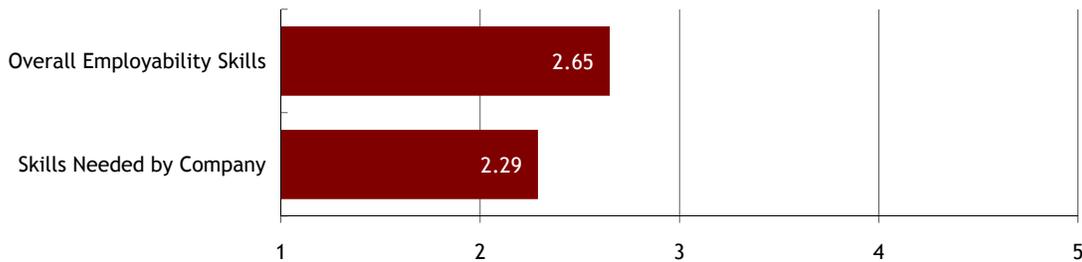
Employer Rating of Attributes by High School Students

Attribute	Average Rating
Productivity	3.17
Motivation	3.00
Creativity	2.91
Timeliness (Attention to Deadlines)	2.73
Work Ethic	2.50
Initiative	2.46
Absenteeism	2.38

Source: Georgia Tech 2008 Survey of Troup County Employers

When asked about the overall employability of Troup County’s high school graduates, employers provided low ratings. On a scale of 1 to 5, they provided a 2.65 average rating for high school graduates overall employability, from a skills standpoint, well below the median mark of 3.0. They provided an even lower average rating (2.29) for the ability of high school graduates to meet their company’s specific needs.

Employer Ratings of High School Student Employability
(Scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Not At All Good" to 5 being "Very Good")



The View from Workforce Development Professionals

Troup County’s youth were unanimously described by local workforce development professionals as unprepared for the workplace. Their insights were especially valuable for substantiating and providing further explanatory background for some of the data observations about the future workforce. Following is a summation of their input. Of note, Troup County has many programs in place to address these challenges, but area workforce developers explained how the demand for their services far exceeds their program capacities.

- Many At-Risk Youth.** Several workforce developers voiced concerns over high school completion and the need to put greater focus on those who are at-risk for not graduating. It was shared that students who are economically disadvantaged or of a minority background experience higher challenges than others in being successful in high school. For example, those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds were reported to have challenges with regards to being able to afford a computer at home and the necessary school supplies and aids. While the school system provides transportation for school-sanctioned activities, the at-risk youth were also reported to have less reliable transportation for non-school-based productive and recreational outlets. In addition, those students with financial hardships were also observed to drop out of school due to their sense of need to start earning money to support their families, particularly within single-parent households. Said one workforce developer, “The impoverished want their children to do well just as much as the more well-to-do families. They just do not have the means to make it happen. They lack the

money to get there. For them, \$200 for books is a huge deal.” Still, it was also noted that many of these disadvantaged students have illustrated to be successful in other areas whether it be sports, arts, or some other outlet, signaling that they have a drive to succeed that could bode well for them if the factors that might influence them to disengage can be mitigated.

The notion of students being “at-risk” was not merely an observation for those with backgrounds of a disadvantaged nature. It was also shared that students who are characterized as “bright” are often also at-risk for losing interest in school and in learning due to boredom, and turn to other, more negative influences. Some of this was linked to the degree of having a positive adult influence.

- **“Little Chief” syndrome.** Many of Troup County’s youth were described as having made life-altering choices for a variety of reasons such as lack of parental involvement, lack of positive role models, and lack of knowledge about the impact of such choices, to name a few. In other words, they either enter or are put in situations that require adult-level decision making and, absent the presence of an adult, they make what some might call chief executive decisions regarding their life when they’re clearly not equipped to do so. The relatively high incidence of teenage pregnancy in the county was cited as an example. It was shared that it is common for pregnant teens to have their parents “turn their back on them,” which ends up further exacerbating the challenges associated with a teen trying to learn how to become a parent. The reported incidence of drug use and juvenile delinquency among some youth was also linked to influences within the home environment and social network.

While some of this may be attributable to single-parent households, it was also shared as affecting youth in dual parent households, often where both parents are in full-time employment situations. The county was reported to have its share of “latch key” children. Generally, the lack of parental involvement was viewed as affecting all students.

As is often the case elsewhere, Troup County parents were described as being more involved in the early grades and less involved in the upper grades.

- **Impact of “traumas.”** It was shared that many youth are affected by numerous life-altering challenges that they experience, such as divorce, death in the family, a parent being laid off or losing their job, being new to the area due to family relocation, etc. These “traumas” coupled with the everyday challenges of being adolescents who are dealing with very real changes in their physical, emotional, and mental development has reportedly led to many students “disconnecting” and “disengaging” from the classroom and positive social influences. Some shared that this can be observed among kids as early as in elementary school grades.
- **Challenges in dealing with diversity.** Troup County youth were described as having challenges in dealing with the demographic differences that characterize them, especially in terms of race and income, mirroring the challenges that can be seen in the adult society generally. Given the growing international diversity of Troup County, it was also shared that native-born and foreign-born students are having difficulties interacting well and there are also some socialization challenges among the foreign-born students of different nationalities. To some extent, this is due to language barriers as students have difficulty understanding each other.
- **Lack of interest in vocational and technical careers.** Workforce development professionals attributed this lack of interest to a “stigma” associated with vocational education being for the less bright, with a lack of awareness of such education as being a viable pursuit to desirable careers, and parental influences. They discussed the need to raise greater awareness among students and parents in the types of careers available through vocational and technical education. Affecting whether they see technical colleges as a viable pursuit is the reported misperceptions regarding careers in manufacturing and the need to expose youth to the modern manufacturing environment. These observations are not unique to Troup County. With this said, one-in-five (21.4

percent) of Troup County youth survey participants indicated plans to attend a two-year or technical college, signaling that the stigma may not be as pervasive as perceived.

- **Lack of soft skills.** Workforce developers discussed the need to foster the development of greater soft skills among youth such as work ethic, completing tasks, and other work habits such as showing up on time, working on a team, dressing appropriately, and having a respectful demeanor. Again, this is not unique to Troup County.
- **Lack of hard skills.** In addition to needing improvement in math and reading, youth were described as needing improvement in communicating, verbally and in writing. Workforce developers saw a need for youth to improve in not only reading for information but applying that information to reaching sound conclusions and solving problems. It was also shared that they lack keyboarding and other basic computer skills.
- **Unrealistic expectations.** It was shared that some Troup County youth hold unrealistic expectations regarding future careers and potential. For example, many eighth graders polled were reported to believe rock or sports stardom was a viable pursuit. It was also shared how youth and their families fail to see the importance of education to their potential in the future economy. Some of this was attributed to ripple effects from what was dominantly a mill culture where many youth may recall how their parents had decent jobs with less than a college or sometimes high school education. Regarding those who do pursue college, representatives of area institutions of higher learning shared how their expectations need to be tempered as well. Some college students were reported to anticipate that their college degree will be an automatic ticket to a \$50,000 a year job upon graduation without realizing what's really on the immediate horizon for them. This was reportedly often the case among students coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Difficulty in seeing the relevance of what they're learning.** Workforce developers discussed how Troup County's youth have difficulty seeing the real-life application of what they're learning - for example, why it is important to learn algebra and how it applies to real world careers. This is not unique to Troup County's youth.

THE WORKFORCE DEMAND

While Troup County experienced a net job loss from 2001 to 2006, significant job creation is the future prognosis for the county due to Kia, its suppliers, and the growth anticipated from the Columbus, Georgia area.

A Look at Recent Job Openings

In February 2008, job postings within The Atlanta Journal Constitution and Monster.com were reviewed to help assess the current workforce demand. A review of 44 such positions revealed a few general observations.

Roughly two-thirds (64 percent) of the positions are in LaGrange; and another one-fourth (27 percent) are in West Point. The majority of the positions were available for workers with less than 2 years of experience.

Desired Experience for Recent Job Openings in Troup County

<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Postings</u>
Less than 2 Years	17
2 to 5 Years	12
5 - 10 Years	8
More than 10 Years	3
Unknown	4

Source: The Atlanta Journal Constitution and Monster.com, February 2008

Most employers were seeking candidates with a four-year degree in terms of minimum educational requirements. A notable number of employers were seeking candidates with high school diplomas as their highest attainment.

Desired Education for Recent Job Openings in Troup County

<u>Educational Attainment</u>	<u>Postings</u>
High School Diploma	13
Associates or Some College	5
Bachelors' Degree	20
Unknown	6

Source: The Atlanta Journal Constitution and Monster.com, February 2008

There appear to be opportunities in several sectors: accounting / finance / administrative, construction, engineering, hospitality, manufacturing / industrial, retail / sales, and technology. In terms of the positions, they reflected a wide degree of responsibility, from ground floor to management.

About Kia¹¹

When Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia Inc. begins building cars at its West Point facility in 2009, its team members are anticipated to make up one of the most technologically skilled workforces in the automotive industry. The pre-employment training process - the first phase of the process for selecting the Kia team for the West Point manufacturing facility - began in April 2008 and will continue

¹¹ Sources: www.kiajobsingorgia.com; Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia, Inc. press releases; Georgia Quick Start.

until the facility is fully operational in 2010. The entire assessment, selection and training process has been designed and developed through a fully integrated partnership between Georgia Quick Start and Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia, Inc. The West Point facility is Kia Motors Corporation's first assembly plant in North America.

The development of the overall strategic workforce solution for Kia was based on extensive research and study carried out by Quick Start's team of training professionals. Benchmarks defining industry standards were established, and the Quick Start-Kia teams then developed processes and procedures to exceed those standards. This has involved implementing the next generation of technology throughout the process, adapting proven industry best practices, and developing solutions to resolve gaps identified in the processes of other automobile manufacturers, both domestic and international.

These extraordinary efforts have resulted in an overall workforce solution that has raised the bar for advanced manufacturing projects in Georgia.

Kia's first application period took place from January 8 to February 7, 2008. More than 43,000 people applied for hourly positions in production, maintenance, and tool and die areas through an innovative online-only process. Beyond the numbers, what was impressive about the workforce applying for these positions was their level of education. Kia executives reported that 97 percent of the applicants completed high school (or its equivalent) and nearly 30 percent completed a two-or-four year college program. Nearly three quarters (74 percent) indicated to have more than three years of work experience.

The online process was developed by Georgia Quick Start using leading-edge web-based programming and technology and integrates all phases of the application, assessment, selection, and hiring process. The significantly high level of application activity reflects the technological savvy of what is largely a Georgia workforce. Three quarters (75 percent) of the applicants resided in the state.

The immediate success in finding a qualified applicant pool is credited both to the quality of the region's workforce and to the Georgia Quick Start program which, beyond its online-only turnkey solution for the application process, also collaborated with Kia to develop and launch a progressive and comprehensive public education and outreach strategy to recruit applicants. Partnering with Georgia Quick Start was the Georgia Department of Labor which provided computers and assistance at 53 Career Centers around the state and the Technical College System of Georgia which hosted Kia visits at a number of colleges around the state.

Georgia Quick Start is administering the selection process for evaluating applicants. Qualified applicants will undergo a series of classes and assessments at the Kia Georgia Training Center that will help determine whether an applicant continues through the process. The training center, a true technological asset for its region, is wired with more than 20 miles of fiber-optic cable to enable it to deploy advanced digital technologies. It houses robotics, welding and electronics labs, classrooms and equipment for training on state-of-the-art programmable logic controllers (PLCs). During the selection process, beyond the fundamental face-to-face interviews, Kia is also using on-demand video feeds, computer controlled robots, and custom-crafted assessment stations. The assessments evaluate the skills, flexibility, team concept, qualifications, and work ethic of an applicant. Once a team member is selected by the company, Quick Start will provide additional customized training.

Most people to be hired by Kia will fall into one of two categories - maintenance or production.

Production team members will be involved in the assembly operations in Stamping, Body/Welding, Paint, and General Assembly departments at the Kia facility. These positions will use pneumatic and electric tooling to assemble various components to the vehicles produced. These team members will go through a 40-hour free pre-employment training and assessment program. This includes 20 hours of classroom instruction and 20 hours of hands-on skills assessment. It is designed to evaluate a candidate's aptitude in a broad range of skills

related to advanced manufacturing technologies and processes. Production team members will start at \$14.90 per hour and top out at \$23.50 per hour.

Maintenance team members will be involved in performing a variety of mechanical and electrical functions, such as corrective and predictive maintenance on equipment. These team members will need previous experience and/or training in industrial and manufacturing technologies such as mechanics, electronics, automation, tool-and-die, robotics, fabrication, pneumatics, PLCs, welding, etc. They will go through an 8-hour free pre-employment training and assessment program. Maintenance team members will start at \$20.80 per hour and top out at \$27.00 per hour.

The Kia team will also include salaried team members in the following positions: administrative support, technical support specialist, group leader, assistant manager, and manager for functional areas throughout the company's operations from back office to production.

When fully operational, Kia will employ 2,500 team members and its suppliers are anticipated to employ approximately 3,000 more. As of March 2008, seven supplier companies had already announced their plans to build facilities in Georgia or nearby Alabama.

A Look at Auto Plant Communities¹²

As Troup County prepares for the arrival of Kia and its suppliers, it is instructive to look towards other communities in the South that have undergone a similar change. The Southeastern United States has been attracting auto manufacturers for several decades. These companies saw the South as a relatively affordable place to do business, with business-friendly state governments, a smaller presence of unionized workers, and a workforce that was motivated and looking for quality job opportunities. States throughout the country have begun competing with one another over the attraction of auto manufacturing facilities, and their corresponding suppliers. As a result of this action, state and local incentives became a larger factor in location decisions. The table below provides a brief overview of the auto manufacturing plants that have been established in the Southeastern U.S. since 1990.

Auto Plants in the Southeast United States

<u>Autoplants</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Employment</u> (recent count)	<u>Year</u> Established	<u>County</u> Pop *	<u>Interstate</u> Access	<u>MSA*</u>
GM	Spring Hill	TN	Maury	4,341	1990	54,812	I-65	Yes [^]
BMW	Spartanburg	SC	Spartanburg	4,700	1994	237,052	I-85, I-26	Yes
Toyota	Princeton	IN	Gibson	4,645	1996	32,032	I-64	Yes [^]
DaimlerChrysler	Vance	AL	Tuscaloosa	4,012	1997	159,878	I-20	Yes
Toyota	Buffalo	WV	Putnam	1,150	1998	51,195	I-64	Yes
Toyota	Huntsville	AL	Madison	950	2001	281,210	I-65	Yes
Honda	Lincoln	AL	Talladega	4,500	2001	80,288	I-20	No
Nissan	Canton	MS	Madison	4,200	2003	79,614	I-55	Yes
Hyundai	Montgomery	AL	Montgomery	2,000	2004	221,010	I-65, I-85	Yes
Kia	West Point	GA	Troup ^{**}			63,245	I-85	No
Toyota	Blue Springs	MS	Union ^{**}			27,008	I-22	No

*Source: Census - Year Established Population

**2006 Population

[^]Not part of MSA at Year Established

Of these plants, the experiences of GM (Saturn), Honda, and Toyota in Buffalo and Princeton were reviewed in closer detail. All four have placed great emphasis on finding workers with desirable “soft

¹² Information from this section was derived from a case study report of four auto plant communities referred to as *Preparing for the Future: A Case Study Review of Auto Plant Communities in the South*.

skills” such as team work, following instructions, etc. They all experienced some difficulty in meeting their employment needs in the local market, but they were all also able to fully staff up as anticipated.

There are implications to be derived from the experiences in the four auto plant communities, such as:

- First, there will likely be some movement from existing companies to new companies. Auto manufacturers tend to pay very well and offer excellent benefit packages. This will undoubtedly lure some employees away from their current positions. However, companies should not assume that their best employees will automatically be leaving - and, as with any decision to stay in or leave a job, the reasons will vary employee to employee.
- It is also clear that auto manufacturing companies have few challenges filling their production roles. The real opportunity for new people to enter the workforce is through positions that open as a result of shifting employees. In other states, companies have promoted from within to fill important gaps left by an employee changing jobs. This opens up a lot of job opportunities that require less technical skills and more basic hard and soft job skills.
- Auto manufacturers do struggle to fill certain roles. Mechanical maintenance positions, for people who can service the plant’s machines, were something constantly mentioned during these interviews. They pay very well and are understaffed in most auto assembly plants. One interviewee stated that Mercedes, in Alabama, pays six-figure salaries to people in these positions, and has had to start an apprenticeship program in order to develop the talent that is needed.
- It is also important to be aware that management opportunities often exist for US citizens at foreign corporations. In Gibson County, the number 2 and 3 plant managers are American. Strong communication between company, community leadership, the business community and the educational community can help make people aware of these types of opportunities.
- Communities desiring to prepare their future workforce for the opportunities that will continue to present itself through the auto manufacturer and related suppliers will need to increase awareness about what it is like to work in a modern manufacturing facility. High school students in Lincoln associated Honda jobs with their view of “blue collar jobs” and determined they were not desirable pursuits. Local workers who have had previous manufacturing experience will likely not be fully prepared for the highly automated, robotic environment of today’s auto assembly plant.

There are implications for education, as well. Components of the educational system, in each profiled community, found ways to benefit from the company’s presence, and integrate changes that improved their student’s chance of success within that industry. The following are some key examples from each community:

- In Lincoln, high schools began integrating technical skill development into their curriculum, including a welding program. Higher educational institutions provided workforce training to both those looking for work in the auto manufacturing industry, and to those who were already employed by Honda.
- In Putnam County, Toyota partnered with vocational schools and higher education institutions to create a curriculum for developing maintenance and mechanical skills.
- Saturn/GM began a partnership with the state of Tennessee’s flagship university. Through this partnership, they worked on both practical matters and future workforce planning. The university actively promoted the State of Tennessee and local region as a quality place for auto

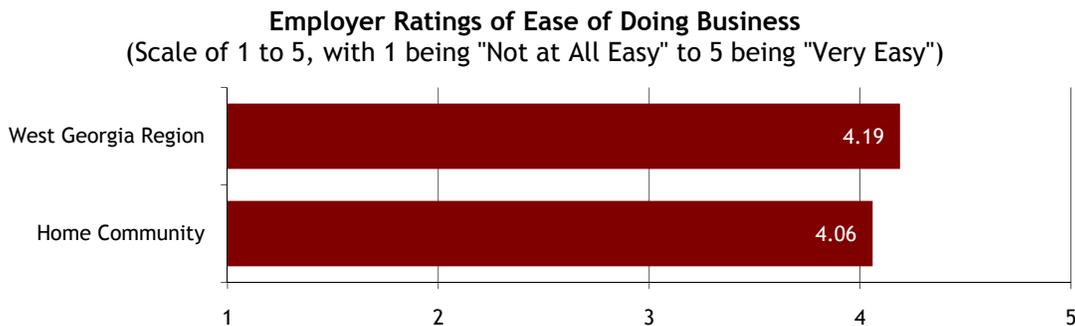
manufacturing. Saturn/GM also worked with the local high school to develop technical curriculum for their students, in lieu of a technical college in the area.

- In Gibson County, Princeton High School developed an advanced manufacturing course for their students.

While exploring the experiences of these other communities provided insights of value when considering Troup County, it appears that none of these communities engaged in any significant workforce development planning initiative related to the location of the auto plant or the related impact on area employers - therefore, Troup County's efforts would be considered rather proactive in comparison.

The View from Employers

Troup County appears to have a fair amount of growth potential among its existing industry. A total of 43 employers representing 10,998 jobs provided information on their company's future growth plans when surveyed. The employers provided relatively high ratings to Troup County and the West Georgia region for the ease of operating their business.



Of the companies that participated in the survey, nearly half (45.4 percent) were in the manufacturing sector, 15.1 percent were in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector, and 9.1 percent provide educational services. The remaining 30 percent represented a number of other sectors (retail, utilities, construction, mining / quarrying / oil / gas extraction, transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance, real estate, health care, other).

Twenty two employers indicated their company was in growth mode, 13 companies indicated plans to expand over the next five years, and 16 companies reported their employment needs are increasing. The majority of employers (70.8 percent) indicated that they would likely hire from the unemployed adult workforce to fill their company's needs in the next five years.

Employers were asked to indicate their level of difficulty with finding qualified employees to meet their company's needs. They were asked to indicate on a scale of one to five where 1 meant "not at all difficult" and 5 meant "very difficult." Twenty employers responded to this question and provided an average rating of 3.15 just above the median mark of 3 for difficulty. While this reflects the five employers who provided ratings to indicate their experiences as difficult or very difficult, it also reflects the 12 employers who provided a middle of the road rating of 3 and three employees who provided a rating of relative ease of 1 or 2.

The employers participating in the survey together identified 67 positions for which they hire most, meaning that they are often hiring to fill these positions. The employers reported that their hiring plans will increase for 50 of these positions. In terms of level of difficulty in filling these specific positions, employers indicated that they are able to fill 20 positions with relative ease as noted by their rating of 1 or 2 on a 1 to 5 difficulty scale where 1 means not at all difficult and 5 means very

difficult. However, for 22 of the positions identified, they indicated that filling such positions is difficult or very difficult (as denoted by a rating of 4 or 5), as denoted in the following table by red shade. For some positions, they were provided a rating of relative ease by one employer and a rating of difficulty by another. For such positions, this suggests that the ability to fill a position may be partly due to specific company needs and requirements rather a general difficulty in filling the position.

Future Employment Needs by Major Employers in Troup County

Position	Difficulty Rating	Future Need
Accounting / Finance	2	Increase
Accounting / Finance	2	Increase
Administrative / Clerical	1	Increase
Administrative / Clerical	1	Increase
Administrative / Clerical	3	Increase
Administrative / Clerical	4	Increase
Administrative / Clerical	3	Increase
Administrator	1	Increase
Agriculture	3	Increase
Assembly Worker	2	Increase
Assembly Worker	3	Increase
Assembly Worker	3	NA
Assembly Worker	4	Increase
Automotive	NA	Increase
Automotive	3	Increase
Business / Marketing	4	Increase
Carpenter	5	Increase
Clerical	1	Stay the Same
Computer Programmer	5	Increase
Construction	2	Increase
Customer Service Representative	2	Increase
Customer Service Representative	3	Increase
Customer Service Representative	4	Increase
Engineer	5	Increase
Extrusion Operator	5	Stay the Same
Faculty Member	3	Increase
Food Service Worker	3	Increase
Forklift Operator	3	Increase
Forklift Operator	3	Increase
Forklift Operator	3	Stay the Same
Inside Sales	2	Stay the Same
Laborer	2	Stay the Same
Laborer	4	Increase
Laborer	5	Increase
Lineman	4	Increase
Loader	2	Stay the Same
Machine Operator	1	Increase
Machine Operator	2	Increase
Machine Operator	3	Stay the Same

Future Employment Needs by Major Employers in Troup County (cont'd)

Position	Difficulty Rating	Future Need
Machine Operator	3	Stay the Same
Machine Operator	4	Increase
Material Handler	3	NA
Material Handler	4	Stay the Same
Mechanical Maintenance / Electrical Technician	1	Stay the Same
Mechanical Maintenance / Electrical Technician	5	Increase
Mechanical Maintenance / Electrical Technician	5	Stay the Same
Mechanical Maintenance / Electrical Technician	NA	Increase
Order Filler	2	Stay the Same
Production Assistant	3	Increase
Project Manager	3	Increase
Property Manager	3	Increase
Quality Assurance Engineer	4	Increase
Quality Inspector	5	Increase
Sales Representative	2	Stay the Same
Sewer	4	Increase
Shipping / Receiving Worker	1	Increase
Superintendent	3	Increase
Telecommunication Sales Representative	5	Increase
Telecommunications Installer	5	Increase
Tool and Die Maker	5	Increase
Utility Operator	2	NA
Utility Operator	3	Decrease
Welder	2	Increase
Welder	5	Increase

Source: Georgia Tech 2008 Survey of Troup County Employers

Employers reported an entry level hourly wage of \$10.76, well below the reported wages for Kia which range from \$14.90 to \$23.50 per hour for production workers and from \$20.80 to \$27.00 per hour for maintenance / die maintenance team members.¹³

Compensation by Major Employers in Troup County

	Hourly Wage	Salary
Entry Level	\$10.76	\$36,818
Mid Level	\$13.16	\$49,630
Senior Level	\$17.84	\$77,000

Source: Georgia Tech 2008 Survey of Troup County Employers

However, one thing to note about Troup County’s employers is that there appears to be a fair amount of longevity among their employees. It was reported that the average length of service for hourly employees was 8.3 years and for salary employees was 11.4 years. This signals the likelihood of positive working environments among these employers as well as a fair degree of loyalty among workers in Troup County, the two often going hand-in-hand. And, this coincides with what some of the

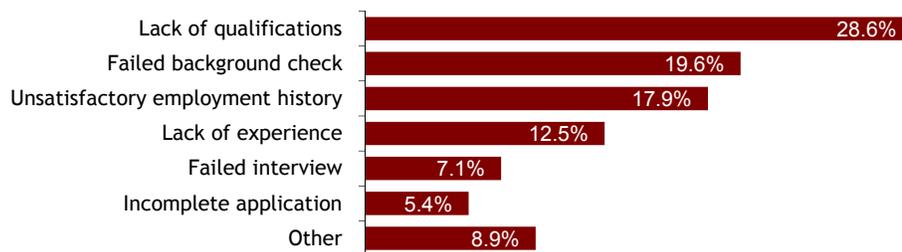
¹³ Source: <https://www.kiajobsingorgia.com/faqs.php>.

workforce development professionals shared about many of the major employers in the area being good to their employees.

In terms of education, most employers (74.1 percent) reported to require a high school degree for their entry level jobs. Five employers shared they do not require a high school diploma for such jobs. Only two employers indicated they required some college. What this reveals is that, Kia notwithstanding, it would appear that there are already jobs available for high school graduates.

Employers were asked to indicate their top reasons for rejecting job applicants, providing a total of 56 responses. Lack of qualifications top the list, accounting for more than one-fourth (28.6 percent) of the mentions. Here, employers discussed reasons ranging from lack of job-specific skills to lack of education such as a high school diploma. Nearly one-in-five (19.6 percent) of the employers indicated that the candidates failed a background check which includes, drug, criminal, and reference screens. Unsatisfactory employment history rounded out the top three in terms of mentions. Employers discussed how unexplainable gaps between employment and obvious “job-hopping” are major detractors.

Employer Reasons for Rejecting Applicants



In terms of hiring future graduates from local institutions in the next five years, the majority of the employers (60 percent) indicated they would be likely or very likely to hire high school graduates, almost as many (59.2 percent) indicated the same would be true of West Georgia Technical College graduates, and 45.8 percent indicated the same for LaGrange College graduates.

Occupations for the Future¹⁴

In terms of where the economy is going, the fastest growing jobs in West Georgia appear to be personal care related. These occupations have the fastest paced projected job growth from 2004 to 2014. Beyond these, the need for network systems and data communication analysts are anticipated to grow significantly, as are truck drivers, pre-school teachers, cement masons, medical assistants, and certain textile-related occupations. Creative class jobs appear to be another source of opportunity for West Georgia. These jobs are particularly advantageous because human capital is their main input and they are often of a high wage nature. Given the projected growth of professional, scientific, and technical industries due to Kia, these jobs will likely only grow in demand for qualified workers. Prior to the announcement of Kia, projections were provided for growth from 2002 to 2012, and such jobs were projected to expand by 15.1 percent from 54,870 to 63,160, yielding 8,290 net new jobs.

¹⁴ Information for this section was derived from the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Business Growth Opportunities Analysis* and the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Sustainable Development Report Card* reports.

Net New Job Growth in Creative Class Occupations for West Georgia Region

Creative Class Occupation	Net New Jobs 2002-2014
Sales and related (SOC 41-0000)	2,362
Education, training, library (SOC 25-0000)	1,722
Healthcare practitioners, technical (SOC 29-0000)	1,342
Management (SOC 11-0000)	1151
Business and financial operations (SOC 13-0000)	533
Computer and mathematical (SOC 15-0000)	488
Life, physical, and social science (SOC 19-0000)	39
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, media (SOC 27-0000)	69
Architecture and engineering (SOC 17-0000)	90
Legal (SOC 23-0000)	33
TOTAL	7,829

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

When considering future workforce demands, it is imperative to examine where the economy is going generally, but, even more so for Troup County given the location of Kia and its suppliers. An economic impact analysis conducted by Georgia Tech reveals that this magnificent economic development activity will result in a total of 1,699 new establishments in the Troup County region and surrounding area and an estimated 20,266 new jobs by 2012. A review of these industries and the associated occupations is certainly warranted for strategic planning associated with workforce development.

Top Job Creating Sectors from Economic Impact Analysis¹⁵

Industry Title	Estimated Establishments	Estimated Jobs	Average Weekly Wages (2004)
Manufacturing - Transportation Equipment	17	6,251	\$1,425.30
Other Services	850	3,157	\$428.32
Transportation and Warehousing	89	1,620	\$933.79
Retail	111	1,358	\$463.23
Accommodation and Food Services	64	1,244	\$259.62
Wholesale Trade	119	1,077	\$851.16
Health Care and Social Assistance	55	1,027	\$746.37
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	45	885	\$349.86
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	124	842	\$814.92
Finance and Insurance	29	523	\$969.36
TOTAL	1,699	20,266	\$877.96

Source: IMPLAN model and Enterprise Innovation Institute analyses.

Troup County's fairly strong manufacturing sector is anticipated by Georgia Tech economists to only get stronger with the Kia plant opening. They advise that the manufacturing industries that should

¹⁵ The 17 establishments in the transportation equipment manufacturing industry reflect Kia and the known suppliers at the time of this analysis.

receive the most priority, based on their average weekly wages, projected national growth rates, location quotients, and ability to further diversify the county's manufacturing sector are:

- 327 Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing (low LQ so higher concentration would diversify)
- 332 Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing (low LQ so higher concentration would diversify)
- 333 Machinery Manufacturing (high LQ, high average wage, decent national output growth)
- 334 Computer & Electronic Product Manufacturing (good LQ, very high national output growth)
- 335 Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing (high LQ, high average wage)
- 339 Miscellaneous Manufacturing (high LQ, high average wage)

In addition, they recommend the following business and consumer services sectors, all of which are predicted to grow from the Kia impact, as sectors warranting special attention.

- 522 Credit Intermediation and Related Activities
- 523 Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments and Related Activities
- 524 Insurance Carriers and Related Activities
- 541 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- 551 Management of Companies and Enterprises

What's interesting to note here is the industry that represented the highest measure of prosperity (where growth in wages far exceeded growth in jobs) from 2001 to 2006 - Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services - for Troup County in particular is projected to be one of the highest growth industries for the region and beyond in terms of number of establishments due to Kia and also registers as an industry of potential importance from other economic analyses as well.

ADDRESSING THE WORKFORCE DEMAND

Key Programs and Initiatives

Troup County has an incredible cadre of workforce development organizations who are undertaking impressive initiatives to help better prepare the area's workforce. Following is a brief profile of some initiatives by many of these organizations.

TROUP COUNTY SCHOOLS

Troup County's school system's 21 schools include 14 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, 3 high schools, and 1 alternative school for grades 5th through 11th. The system served 11,921 enrolled students during the 2006 to 2007 school year. In 2007, the school system received its Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation to recognize its efforts in quality management and continual improvement. In addition, LaGrange High School has been repeatedly recognized as among the nation's best. Following are just some of the key initiatives by the school system.

- **Controlled Choice:** Recognizing the key link between race and socioeconomic status, Troup County Schools assigns students to attendance zones based on socioeconomic background to create a more diversified student body at every school.
- **Plan, Do, Check, Act:** Troup County Schools has implemented a continual improvement process to identify challenge areas and mobilize or redirect resources to address those areas. One example is "data rooms", a concept designed to create data driven teachers and schools whereby leadership teams and teachers meet weekly to assess data to determine student strengths and weaknesses and re-direct teaching if necessary.
- **The New Curriculum:** Not only is the school system implementing the new Georgia Performance Standards and is not only in step with the State of Georgia, but officials have added requirements to meet area workforce needs and to be Learning Focused Schools.
- **Advanced Placement and College Preparatory Courses:** Advanced courses are offered according to parent and student choice.
- **Safety Net Programs for At-Risk Students:** Troup County schools offers scaffolding, etc.
- **Career Pathways:** This program is intended to help high school students determine the best educational pathway to best attain their future career goals. It offers a chance to explore a career area and to build skills and competencies that will help succeed in any industry.
- **School to Home Liaisons:** Every family of an elementary school student has a liaison who focuses on providing assistance to help ensure their child comes to school consistently and to help address family needs.
- **International Accreditation:** Enables high school students transfer educational credits from 65 countries.

OTHER

- **Advanced Automotive Manufacturing Task Force:** Created with support from the Governor's Office of Workforce Development, dedicated to providing adequate and skilled workforce to Kia and its suppliers.
- **Georgia Department of Labor:** Provides education and training services, support services, personal employment assistance, local and national job listings, resource areas, job search and financial management workshops and self-help library among many others.
- **Georgia Quick Start Program:** Provides customized workforce training, free-of-charge, to qualified businesses in Georgia.
- **LaGrange College:** Offers a variety of educational opportunities with 53 academic and pre-professional programs
- **LaGrange Employer Committee:** Dedicated to enhancing employment related services provided by GDOL.
- **LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce Workforce Committee, Education Committee, and Certified Work Ready Community effort:** Provide education services and job training to help companies match right people with right jobs.
- **West Georgia Education & Career Partnership:** Provide a continuing education program of applied and technical courses at the secondary and post-secondary level.
- **West Georgia Society for Human Resource Management:** Serves the needs of human resource management professionals.
- **West Georgia Technical College:** Provides educational opportunities, technical training and retraining of persons, transfer of new technology to businesses and industries, and community support services.
- Other higher education institutions within a 60-mile radius:
 - Auburn University
 - Columbus State University
 - Columbus Technical College
 - Flint River Technical College
 - Georgia Military College-Columbus Campus
 - Gordon College
 - Griffin Technical College
 - Southern Union State Community College
 - Troy University
 - University of Phoenix-Columbus Georgia Campus
 - University of West Georgia
 - West Central Technical College

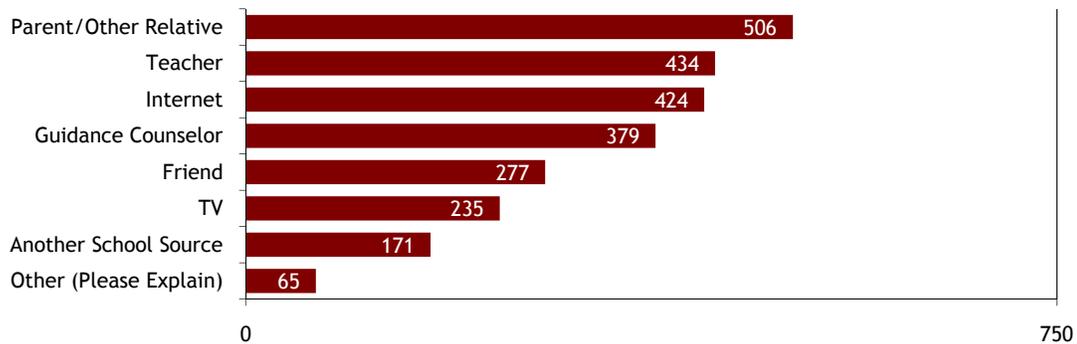
The View from Youth

While there are an impressive scope and scale of programs underway to address key workforce development challenges, the view from youth point to some unmet needs to be addressed through these programs or others in the future.

The majority (69.4 percent) of the high school students indicated that they are receiving help or guidance from someone on their career or college decisions. However, nearly one-third (31.6 percent) indicated they were not receiving such assistance. The youth were asked whether they felt they had enough information about potential careers, societal needs, the economy, and the marketplace for jobs to determine the kind of career they would like to pursue. More than half (60.4 percent) responded affirmatively while 40.6 percent responded “no” or that they “don’t know.”

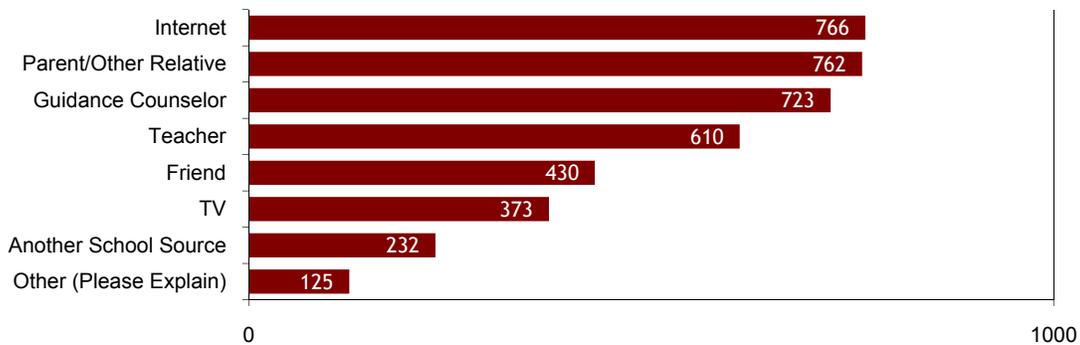
When asked to identify their main sources for career guidance, the youth pointed to their parents or other relatives as their main source, illustrating the importance of both parental involvement and parental literacy on the state of the economy and where it is heading. This was followed by their teacher and the Internet.

**Main Sources for Career Guidance
According to Troup County Youth**



High school students were asked to indicate where they receive information about college and identified the Internet as the number one source. This was followed by parents or other relatives and, thirdly, guidance counselors.

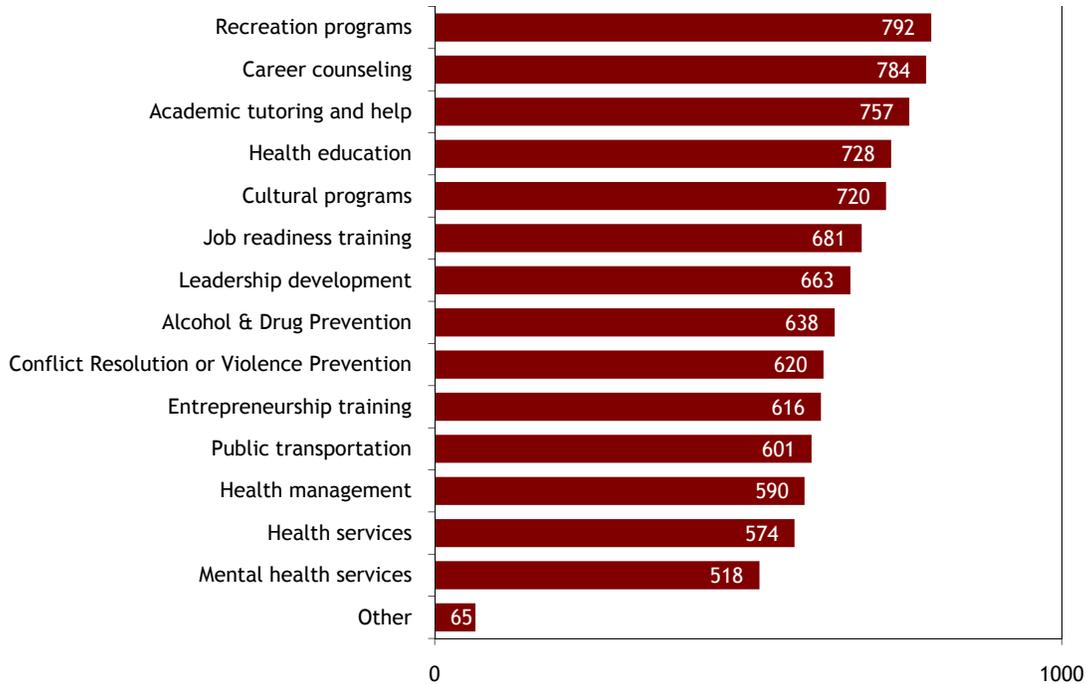
**Main Sources for College Information
According to Troup County Youth**



The youth were asked to identify services they would like to see expanded in the future as Troup County prepares for growth and change. Naturally, topping the list was recreational programs.

Together, they made a total of 9,347 selections. Rounding out the top three, however, were career counseling and academic tutoring and help, each identified as a desire by more than 750 students.

**Services to Expand
According to Troup County Youth**



The View from Employers

The majority (66.7 percent) of Troup County’s employers reported to provide training options for their employees. It was shared that an average of 64.5 percent of hourly employees and 72.9 percent of salary employees receive some form of training annually. While 62.5 percent shared that they planned to maintain their training budget for employees over the next five years, more than a third (37.5 percent) indicated plans to increase their budget.

Of those who indicated they provide training, more than half (60 percent) shared they provide 30 or more hours of on-the-job training for their hourly staff and half (50 percent) indicated they did so for their salary staff. More than one fourth (28.6 percent) shared that they provided 30 or more hours of off-site training for their hourly employees per year and nearly one-third (31.3 percent) shared they did so for their salaried employees. This is fairly impressive and may help to explain the relatively long tenure reported by both hourly and salary workers at these employer sites.

On the Job Training Hours per Year

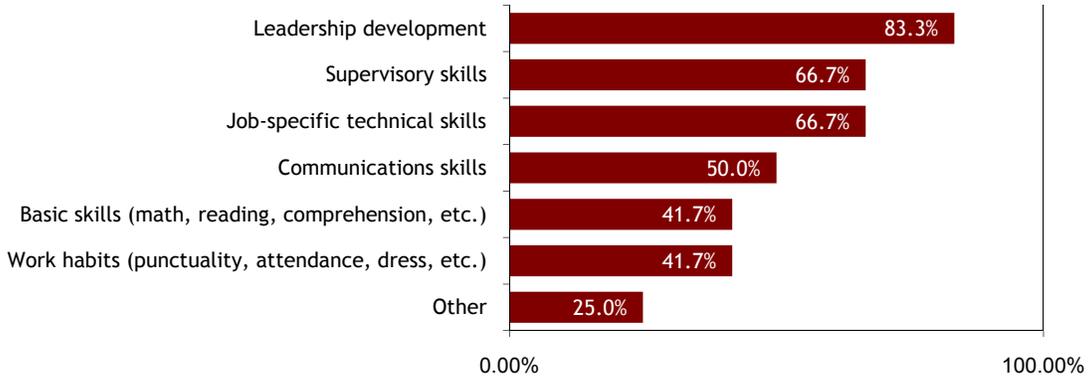
	0	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	30 and Up
Hourly Employees	13.3%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%	13.3%	60.0%
Salaried Employees	0.0%	12.5%	6.3%	18.8%	12.5%	50.0%

Paid Off-Site Training Hours per Year

	0	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	30 and Up
Hourly Employees	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%
Salaried Employees	0.0%	18.8%	18.8%	25.0%	6.3%	31.3%

When asked to share what percentage of their budget is devoted to key areas, leadership development was identified as the lead focal point of the training provided, followed by supervisory skills and job-specific technical skills.

Average Percent of Training Budget by Troup Employers



Major employers generally rated Troup County’s West Georgia Technical College and LaGrange College higher than Troup County Schools for meeting their company’s needs, but, at the same time, the average company shared that as much as nearly fifty percent of their workforce was a Troup County high school graduate, compared to 10.1 percent from West Georgia Tech and 4.2 percent from LaGrange College. Also, the employers indicated slightly more likeliness to hire high school graduates than graduates from West Georgia Tech and significantly more likeliness to do so than to hire graduates from LaGrange College.

The employers were noticeably much more knowledgeable about and engaged within Troup County Schools than both West Georgia Tech and LaGrange College, and, of the two, they were more engaged with the former than the latter. Job fairs appeared to be the most common vehicle for interaction between employers and all three institutions. For Troup County Schools, this was followed by mentorship and financial sponsorship. For West Georgia Tech, this was followed by contributed space / equipment, organized special programs, and internships / job shadowing, each to a much lesser degree than the job fair route. In LaGrange College’s case, employers did not report much interaction beyond job fairs - mentorship and internship / job shadowing were identified to a marginal degree.

Though, it is evident that there is definite room for improvement as a number of employers do not interact with these institutions at all. When asked about their level of interaction, half (50 percent) indicated they do not interact with LaGrange College, more than one-fourth (28.6 percent) shared they do not interact with West Georgia Tech, and more than one-fifth (22.7 percent) indicated they do not interact with Troup County Schools.

Employer Interaction with Educational Institutions

Activity	Troup County High School	West Georgia Tech	LaGrange College
Contributed Space / Equipment	18.2%	14.3%	0.0%
Curriculum Development	9.1%	9.5%	0.0%
Financial Sponsorship	31.8%	9.5%	0.0%
Job Fairs	45.5%	57.1%	27.8%
Loaned Company Personnel	4.5%	9.5%	0.0%
Mentorship	40.9%	4.8%	5.6%
Organized Special Programs	27.3%	14.3%	0.0%
Part-Time Jobs	9.1%	4.8%	0.0%
Summer Internships for Teachers	4.5%	NA	NA
Youth Apprenticeship / Internships / Job Shadowing	31.8%	14.3%	5.6%
Does Not Interact	22.7%	28.6%	50.0%
Other	9.1%	14.3%	16.7%

Source: Georgia Tech 2008 Survey of Troup County Employers

Relating to Troup County Schools, employers offered several suggestions:

- Focus on improving graduation rates.
- Reach out to local businesses and tell them what they need. Match curriculums to business and community needs and eliminate some programs that are presently offered that are not relevant. Understand the products manufactured by local companies to better understand the skill sets needed by employees.
- Teach students about working in a manufacturing company and skill they can actually use in the work force.
- Concentrate on basic skills (computer, reading, English, math), problem solving and critical thinking.
- Grade students on work ethic, attendance, meeting deadlines, attitude, self motivation, personal standards.
- Provide more "real world" education. How to apply for jobs, fill out applications, and be employable. Help students better understand job interview process

The View from Workforce Development Professionals

Workforce development professionals echoed each other in a resound fashion by sharing how strong the coordination already is among workforce development leaders and how active they all are in working to address the issues. With this said, they also identified opportunities for improvement.

FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

- It was shared how kindergarten teachers are faced with the challenge of trying to serve children of varying needs and abilities. Given the importance of this particular year in creating the foundation for learning among children, it is imperative to be able to fully address the needs of each child. It was shared how some children are deficient in Kindergarten and how this can become a handicap, for their self-esteem, ability to learn, and in other ways throughout their school career if their needs are not met. While some kindergarten teachers are assisted by a paraprofessional, this is reportedly not the situation in every classroom.
- Many children were observed to be affected by serious life-altering traumas, but there is a lack of mental health and counseling help available to them.
- The state mandates "character education" and every school is reported to do it in some form, although it was shared that there is no consistency in approach. However, it was also shared that Troup County is home to an educator who has developed a model approach and is infusing this at one of the local high schools and some raise the question of whether this could be expanded throughout the county's schools and at all grade levels.
- While there are some efforts to build soft skills among students, it was shared that not enough is being done. Workforce developers cited the increased mandates put on the school day as impacting the ability to offer activities which incite the imagination and build essential soft skills. The need to incorporate arts into every day instruction was identified as unmet. In addition, arts, music, and other opportunities are reportedly not available at every school. Concern regarding the minimization of other creative outlets (e.g., recess) for building soft skills was also shared.

- The need for greater parental involvement is reportedly a “major cry” from all the schools. Parents were reported to lack awareness about economic trends and careers of the future. It was shared how the parents do not understand that anything less than a high school education will no longer be sufficient for being competitive for future jobs. While they continue to often be a lead source for children for attaining guidance on future career and educational pursuits, there are apparently no efforts underway to foster greater parent literacy on these subjects.
- While Troup County was viewed as having some strong options for children in pre-K through 5th grade, it was shared that there are very few options for children post-5th grade. Some discussed concerns for those who are 14 and 15 years of age and are ready for more productive outlets to spend their time. It was shared that many young people in this age group would like to work (or feel the need to work to support their family) but are barred from doing so due to the legal age for employment. This was viewed as a contributing factor to the dropout rate.
- It was shared that guidance counselors continue to be pushing the four-year college degree as the most desirable pursuit, and some are observed to be emphasizing to the students they serve the need to explore a research university route as the best route for future employment.
- It was also shared that there is a great need to do more effective career mentoring that would enable students to establish career goals and a viable action plan for reaching them. “We need to put kids on a path where they can see themselves in certain vocations and help them realize their goals,” it was shared. The lack of career mentors was also identified as a key need. It was also shared that Troup County Schools lacks full-time personnel dedicated to fostering career connections.

FOR THE GENERAL WORKFORCE

- While impressive efforts are underway to foster better work habits (showing up at work on time, dressing appropriately, etc.), workforce developers unanimously identified this as a key challenge that could benefit from greater effort, resources, and coordination.
- Troup County does not have an affordable public transportation option to serve the general public. The lack of transportation is affecting the ability of individuals to go to technical college, to work, etc.
- Troup County’s employers and schools were observed to need improvement in handling racial diversity. It was shared how employers and their employees and schools and their teachers and students could all benefit from diversity training.
- Troup County was observed to be “not ready for international people” even though it is reportedly a growing destination for persons of many cultures, from German and Russian to Peruvian and Guatemalan. From local government offices and the local department of driver services office to the banks and the grocery stores, it was shared that there is a lack of patience among those serving constituencies for language and cultural barriers and a lack of knowledge in how to best address them. Troup County Schools does not have an “international office” as other school systems have created for working with families and children who relocate from other countries. While the school system offers English Language Learner (ELL) classes, it appears to not have any other formal program for helping foreign-born students make the successful transition to their new school and community. In many cases, this their first introduction to the American way of life and they and their families could benefit from some 101 assistance on local, state, and federal governance, the services available, and how to access those services.

- Adult literacy was observed to be a challenge in Troup County. While it was recognized that there are programs in place to address this, it was also shared that better coordination among such programs would be ideal.
- It was shared that it is difficult to recruit and retain young professionals. From school teachers and medical professionals to engineers and computer programmers, Troup County was described as being at a comparative disadvantage in terms of compensation and the amenities available in larger communities that are attractive to these professionals. However, it was also shared that the tide may shift on this if Troup County leverages the anticipated growth to foster greater community livability.
- There is reportedly a shortage of industrial maintenance workers (machinists, welders, electrical, mechanical) and while the school system and West Georgia Tech are working together on addressing this need, it was uncertain as to whether employers are playing any part in helping their existing employees develop these skills. Entry level workers were reported to be easier to find than mid-level and higher level workers.
- It was shared how adults could benefit from guidance on career pathways. Employers were observed to not be helping their employees develop these pathways, such as a five-year plan that includes specific professional development steps for getting from A to B. In addition, it was shared how many employers do not actively encourage continuing education among their employees and some do not have a training budget. Some are reported to be so focused on production and bottom line that it is challenging for them to think of their employees in terms of the long-term, strategic horizon for the future of their company.
- There is reportedly a lack of awareness among employers concerning the value of West Georgia Technical College in meeting their company's workforce development needs. For example, it was shared how one of the Kia suppliers recently asked West Georgia Tech to develop a customized program to address their key needs and was actively involved in consulting with college personnel on development of the curriculum - and that this is not something that the region's employers have done before.
- The lack of a four-year public college or university within 30 miles was also voiced as a workforce development challenge. While some efforts are underway to create a "university center" that would provide courses from colleges offering four-year and master's degrees through what would mainly be an online format, some interest was shared in exploring opportunities associated with Columbus State University, Auburn University, and Georgia Tech.
- The need to "get the word out" to the general population about where the economy is headed and the need for lifelong learning and continued education was echoed by many. It was shared how the "commitment to learn" is not high and some attributed this to the remnants of a mill culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS¹⁶

Workforce development is a critical lynchpin to Troup County’s ability to reach its strategic goals for the future - especially as it relates to being a Knowledge Driven and Prosperous Community. At its heart, workforce development is the desire to improve the human condition - and, therefore, it is economic development at the most personal level. What’s more is that the opportunities to focus on the individual have never been greater. More communities are realizing that human capital is THE key asset, where developing, keeping, and attracting talent - from infancy through elderhood - will increasingly become a “must-do” component within community betterment strategies, no matter the community’s size. And, with the right support, individuals can and do make an incredible difference and everyday people can accomplish extraordinary goals.

In Troup County, there is exceptional leadership at the political, civic, business, and volunteer levels, bolstered by a plethora of assets, for fostering a more optimal workforce.

The following recommendations are offered for consideration to the Troup County Leadership Team. What is important to note is that the recommendations are not intended for one entity to implement but rather for implementation through joint efforts by multiple institutions involved in the workforce development arena.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County, like is common elsewhere, is dealing with the challenges of talent retention, especially among its young adult population.
STRATEGY:	Explore initiatives to best leverage the realities associated with internal and external migration.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Knowledge Driven Community The Prosperous Community The Neighborly Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment 2008 Survey of Troup County Youth A Case Study Review of Auto Plant Communities in the South

A common trend among individuals who are coming of age is a desire to experience something new and often they will leave their hometowns to do so, even if it means leaving for the next county or two over. At the same time, Troup County has several communities that are desirable places to live and appealing to persons of all ages.

K-1 Troup County should launch a campaign to attract 20-somethings from outside Troup County. The county should leverage its appeal and market itself to the 20-somethings located outside Troup County who might see the county as the answer to their question for that “something new.”

K-2 Troup County should develop an initiative to keep Troup County on the minds of its departing citizens. For example, many of the 20-somethings may desire to come “home” when they become 30-somethings. In addition, by proactively “keeping the door open,” Troup County has the opportunity to leave a lasting positive impression with its departing citizens

¹⁶ Recommendations follow the same coding system utilized in the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Recommendations for a Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development* report.

which might make their return more likely. The county should consider inviting those who leave Troup County for school, work, or other options to register their new contact information with the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce or other entity to enable continued connectivity.

- K-3** An agency such as the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce should develop a young professional networking group that is both informational and social. The group can host activities and events that correspond with areas of employment such as finance, management, the arts, entrepreneurship, real estate and others.
- K-4** Troup County should explore efforts to create expanded opportunities for civic involvement for youth. Many of the participants in Georgia Tech's *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: 2008 Survey of Youth* expressed significant appreciation for being invited to provide input. Troup County should regularly seek out the opinions of young people on civic issues and create opportunities for them to participate on non-profit and public boards. Existing leaders should be tasked with identifying candidates for emerging leadership and providing one-on-one mentorship.
 - Troup County should consider creating a “community planning academy” for high school and college students. This academy could introduce students to the principles and policies associated with developing “well-planned” communities. A similar program was done on a pilot basis through the Urban Land Institute in Atlanta and found effective for not only developing a greater knowledge about planning-related matters, but in encouraging greater civic participation in such matters.
- K-5** Troup County should champion young adult excellence to help this demographic feel more welcomed and engaged in the community. Progressive efforts should be made to identify young people who are making great achievements whether they are in academia, entrepreneurship, the arts, through civic life, etc., and to widely publicize and celebrate their achievements.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County is home to several organizations that address various aspects of workforce development and they are working in a coordinated fashion. However, a more cohesive organizational structure could enable them to leverage and integrate their collective assets even more.
STRATEGY:	Explore options for creating a more seamless approach to workforce development.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Knowledge Driven Community The Quality Governance Community The Well Planned Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment

Troup County’s workforce development organizations collaborate effectively through existing networks such as the West Georgia Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), LaGrange Employers Committee, and the Workforce Investment Board, and through initiatives spearheaded by Troup County Schools. The region’s workforce development professionals praised such efforts but also noted the need to have a single unitary structure for sharing information and for maximizing opportunities for effectiveness in coordinating activities among the multiple organizations.

- K-6** Troup County should establish a formal workforce development coordination body in partnership with existing groups. Ideally, this coordination body would be staffed by at least one full-time professional in a coordinator / director role. Program administrators

representing education, workforce development, social services, and health services should foster regular meetings among these entities to share information, discuss needs, and develop solutions collaboratively. The coordination body could help to:

- a. Create a single and local repository for all workforce development information related to Troup County and surrounding areas and meet regularly (for example, quarterly) to discuss workforce development challenges and investigate options for addressing those challenges
- b. Provide greater opportunities to collaborate on providing career development and job counseling services.
- c. Identify potential job opportunities including those not advertised through traditional channels and those to address future needs identified by area employers, and coordinate efforts with the Georgia Department of Labor to disseminate information about those opportunities.
- d. Communicate regularly with educational institutions about area employment needs and provide advisement about curriculum development.

K-7 Troup County should foster greater coordination and connectivity among educational assets to address key workforce development needs by encouraging the development of faculty networks tied to specific areas of expertise. For example, science faculty from Troup County Schools (from K-12), LaGrange College, and West Georgia Tech could convene on a regular basis to share information and ideas, and provide cross mentorship. The same could be done in the areas of math and social studies.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County’s workforce has been largely described as not ready for the jobs of today or the future.
STRATEGY:	Align workforce development efforts to address the expected demands to arise due to the impact of Kia and its suppliers and the community’s strategy to promote the future development of high growth industries.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Knowledge Driven Community The Prosperous Community
REFERENCE(S):	Business Development Assessment Workforce Development Assessment The View From Community Stakeholders

When asked to identify the most serious issue affecting Troup County’s ability to prepare for the future, the quality of the workforce was mentioned by community stakeholders more frequently than any other. The stakeholders were asked to share their views on how “ready” the workforce is for industry. They were asked to provide a rating on a scale of one to five where one meant “not all ready” and five meant “very ready.” The stakeholders gave generally low marks for the readiness of the Troup County workforce to meet future needs and an average mark when considering today’s needs. Troup County’s workforce development professionals echoed the concerns of the stakeholders concerning the readiness of the current and future workforce.

K-8 Troup County should review the industries recommended for future consideration, according to where the economy is heading, and align program and curriculum plans accordingly. This should include an exploration into the occupations associated with those industries identified in the *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Business Development Assessment* report and a review of local training programs available to prepare workers for those occupations to determine capacity needs.

K-9 Troup County’s workforce development institutions should continue to regularly review and adjust their curriculum and programs according to stakeholder concerns, employer needs, and projected occupational demand for the area. They should consider expanding programs for skills in current demand by area employers, especially for those occupations identified through Georgia Tech’s 2008 survey of employers as being in growth mode in the next five years. Particular attention should be paid to examining capacity to prepare workers for those occupations that have been identified by employers as difficult to fill. Expanding programs for skills for occupations in projected high-demand and in for the region, as reported by the Georgia Department of Labor should also be explored. Anticipated growth in “creative class” occupations, as denoted by both the GDOL projections as well as the Georgia Tech economic impact analysis conducted on Kia should be examined for further workforce development programming needs as these are typically higher wage jobs. Specifically, the following should be considered:

- Working with LaGrange College to consider these recommendations as they explore options for growth in evening college and off-site programs, one of the selected priorities for 2008-2009 for the LaGrange College Leadership Council. Another one of this council’s selected priorities - achieving enrollment goals - could be further supported by enhancing the applicability of degree programs and curriculums to area employer’s needs as this may be an effective means of increasing high school seniors’ interest in attending LaGrange College.
- Working with West Georgia Technical College to consider these recommendations as they explore the expansion and creation of future programming.
- Working with Troup County Schools Career Pathways Program to consider these recommendations as they continue to calibrate the program.

OBSERVATION:	There appears to be a significant lack of awareness among the general citizenry about where the economy is heading.
STRATEGY:	Launch a multi-tiered campaign to raise awareness about future economic trends and implications for future career options.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Knowledge Driven Community The Prosperous Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment 2008 Survey of Troup County Youth

The need to “get the word out” to the general population about where the economy is headed and the need for lifelong learning and continued education was echoed by many workforce development professionals. It was shared how the “commitment to learn” is not high and some attributed this to the remnants of a mill culture. Parents were reported to lack awareness about economic trends and careers of the future. It was shared how the parents do not fully understand that anything less than a high school education will no longer be sufficient for being competitive for future jobs. While they continue to often be a lead source for children for attaining guidance on future career and educational pursuits, there are apparently no efforts underway to foster greater parent literacy on these subjects. More or better career guidance was the second most frequently mentioned area of assistance desired by youth.

K-10 Troup County should dramatically increase the community capacity that is devoted toward career mentoring and guidance for youth. The youth in Troup County have sounded the bell for more career guidance. The school system’s development of “career pathways” is an excellent step toward this direction - however it is not supported by full-time personnel. At the same time, students desire more one-on-one guidance.

- Troup County should consider having every student develop a career plan, every year beginning in second grade. (It was reported that some students start to mentally drop out as early as the age of 7. See further recommendations on addressing the dropout rate elsewhere in this report.)
 - Troup County Schools should explore opportunities for expanding staff capacity devoted to career connections and related counseling, including the hiring of full-time professional staffing.
 - Volunteer mentors from the business and the retirement communities should be viewed as a potential resource for helping to develop or advise career plans. Regarding the latter, Troup County could consider creating a “SCORE-like” concept for linking retirees to youth to provide career mentoring.
 - Troup County should tap into LaGrange College’s service learning programs to connect college students with students in K-12.
- K-11 Troup County Schools should consider fostering a partnership with the area’s human resource professionals and area guidance counseling professionals.** There are opportunities for these professionals to more proactively work with each other to share information and inform each other’s work. Members of the West Georgia Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and LaGrange Employer Committee could be an invaluable resource for providing additional counseling support, especially to high school students.
- K-12 Troup County should expand programs to raise student awareness about real life applications.** Troup County Schools’ new Career Pathways program is an excellent step in this regard and several potential activities could be aligned with it. Some examples for doing this include: field trips (within and outside Troup County) to sites that expose students to current and new technologies (e.g., technical college, universities, modern manufacturing facilities, high tech companies), coordination of “technology road shows” or “technology fairs” where representatives from industry and other organizations showcase their products in a organized fashion, and student internships and apprenticeships.
- Troup County should proceed with its plans to start a “12 for Life” program. Modeled after Carroll County’s program and created in partnership with Southwire Company, this program combines traditional classroom instruction with jobs inside a real manufacturing plant.
 - Troup County should consider mechanisms to foster greater student participation in internships or apprenticeships before graduation. One potential way to encourage greater participation would be to create a stipend fund, supported by local philanthropic sources, that provides a monetary stipend to students for participating in internship programs.
 - Troup County should create a speakers bureau program with business partners. The program should be a formal way to coordinate regular involvement by business professionals in the classroom.
 - Troup County should encourage its employers to have a “take child to work day.” The county could designate one day per year as the Take Child to Work Day so that this becomes a universal focus of the day.
- K-13 Troup County Schools should consider encouraging local employers and teachers to participate in a business internship programs.** The Georgia Internship for Teachers (GIFT) program is a statewide program that has had a very successful track in coordinating these internships for more than 10 years. Through this program, teachers are provided with exposure to the latest in technological breakthroughs and current applications for their lesson material.

Whether through GIFT or through a locally organized mechanism, this has the potential to be of great value given teachers have been identified as a leading resource for career guidance to youth.

K-14 Troup County should develop a career pathways program for adults. Troup County should emphasize the importance of life-long learning for everyone. The county should explore the opportunity to do so with existing workforce development partners such as LaGrange College, West Georgia Technical College, the Georgia Department of Labor, West Georgia SHRM, and the LaGrange Employer Committee. Employers should be encouraged to develop a professional development plan with every employee. Several employers reported to foster training on-the-job or off-site, with a notable number indicating that leadership development was their aim. More employers should be encouraged to do so.

K-15 Troup County’s economic development leadership should be engaged to raise community wide awareness regarding current and future economic trends. Staff and membership of the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce and area development authorities could be engaged to provide talks on economic development through the local school system, civic clubs, and other venues. Outreach should be conducted to help explain to the general public where the regional economy is heading in layman’s terms. The LaGrange Daily News and other media outlets could also be vital in helping to disseminate information on trends and their implications for future careers.

- Troup County should continue to raise awareness about the value of a technical college degree. Efforts should be made to help parents and youth see the technical college degree as a viable pursuit to a meaningful career.
- Troup County should engage its Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) to foster greater awareness among parents about the economy. The PTO should explore the feasibility for hosting parent workshops to help them become more aware of the opportunities. This is especially critical given the Troup County youth have indicated that their parents are the number one source for career guidance.
- The feasibility of creating an economic development club for students through the school system should be explored. This could be designed as an optional extracurricular activity, supported by community volunteers, offered similarly as other clubs. The club could provide interactive options to help participants understand where the economy is heading, and the implications of such trends on the jobs of tomorrow.

OBSERVATION:	To be competitive in a global economy, today’s employers require workers who are creative, adept at problem-solving, show initiative, and have good work habits. Yet, Troup County’s youth and adult workforce were not rated highly in these areas by area employers.
STRATEGY:	Focus energies on developing the next generation worker who is flexible, agile, a continual learner, and has the traits desired by employers.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Knowledge Driven Community The Prosperous Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment

While impressive efforts are underway to foster better work habits (showing up at work on time, dressing appropriately, etc.), workforce developers unanimously identified this as a key challenge that could benefit from greater effort, resources, and coordination. In terms of attributes, employers provided top marks to their employees for stability and low turnover, productivity, and work ethic.

However, employees received the lowest mark for their level of creativity, followed by their absenteeism and show of initiative. Employers were less enthusiastic about the work place related attributes possessed by high school students. Students received the lowest marks for absenteeism, show of initiative, and work ethic.

- K-16 Troup County should continue to explore opportunities to expand its efforts in foster better work habits among its workforce.** Several initiatives for doing so were shared with investigators conducting this assessment. These initiatives had a common challenge - lack of resources and capacity to be able to address the widespread need. The commitment to fostering better work habits needs to take on a more global approach involving workforce development, social service, and health organizations working in a cohesive partnership focused on the same goals.
- K-17 Troup County employers should be encouraged to develop tangible employee incentives for demonstration of desirable soft skills and work habits.** Employers should provide training to their existing employees on appropriate soft skills and work habits and create measurable performance objectives in these areas to be reviewed for compensation and bonus adjustments. Another option is providing additional benefits (e.g., an extra vacation day off per quarter) to reward positive performance.
- K-18 Troup County Schools should incorporate a review of soft skills and work habits into their grading system, from Kindergarten through 12th grade.** At the time of this assessment, the high schools are reported to be incorporating this to some extent through its career pathways program. However, it would be ideal to include a grade on the report cards for every student at every grade level on basic work habits. There are mixed opinions about having such a grade count toward an academic grade as many educational experts advise that academic grades should be based on content knowledge. However, this grade should at least be part of the “conduct” area of the report card at the earliest grade possible to provide parental awareness and reinforcement for work habits.¹⁷
- K-19 Troup County should explore mechanisms to help more at-risk youth tap into available programs for fostering soft skills and work habits.** In addition to the Boys & Girls Club which is mostly utilized by at-risk youth, the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and Junior Achievement are just a few examples of programs that excel in this area, as well as in developing solid leadership skills. These outlets are excellent for providing youth real life applications to test and develop their soft skills and work habits but are often not utilized by youth of the lower socioeconomic rungs due to the financial costs (e.g., cost of uniforms and handbooks, transportation). Greater efforts should be made to overcome the barriers and link those youth who do not have positive role models with these opportunities.
- K-20 Troup County should expand programs that foster the development of skills in reading comprehension and in the interpretation and application of information.** Whether through the daily curriculum or through extracurricular and civic opportunities, such skills are critical for fostering problem-solving abilities. Such programs should focus on building skills in the area of “reading for information.”
- K-21 Troup County should leverage its tremendous assets in arts and music to foster greater creativity among its workforce and youth.** Arts-related careers were the third highest area of occupational interest among youth surveyed by Georgia Tech. Efforts should be made to link arts, music, and cultural professionals with the local schools, for all grade levels. Full-time arts and music programs should be available at every elementary, middle, and high school. In

¹⁷ West Georgia Technical College includes incorporates work habits into their grading system.

addition, teachers should be encouraged to incorporate art-related practices in every day instruction as much as possible. For example, students could be asked to build dioramas depicting historic battles for social studies.

K-22 Troup County should encourage and champion independent invention. School-based programs such as inventor clubs, writing clubs, “Odyssey of the Mind” and other contests, science discovery camps, LEGO and VEX robotics programs, and other programs to foster “real-life” creativity should be sustained and expanded. Efforts should be made to reach children during the early years - for example, those in pre-school and Kindergarten could participate in organized “Play-Doh” clubs. Similar opportunities for creative outlets should also be expanded for the post-high school community.

- The county should consider working with area partners, including the arts and cultural organizations, to host an annual event that illustrates appreciation for independent inventor creativity and initiative of all ages.

K-23 Troup County should encourage more employers and individuals to participate in the Certified Work Ready program. Local companies who have participated in the program should be engaged as champions of the program. Efforts to publicize the value of the program through media, chamber, and civic channels should be expanded, with an emphasis on the bottom-line benefits for business.

- The county should explore options for incorporating the Certified Work Ready assessment process into the middle and high schools. The school system is now testing seniors based on “work ready” credentials. Efforts should be made to expand the assessment process to students as early as in the 6th grade.

K-24 Troup County should foster greater awareness among area employers concerning state incentives associated with workforce development. In addition to training programs offered through Georgia Quick Start and Georgia’s Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP) for new and expanding businesses, employers are eligible for tax credits. For example, the child care tax credit is available to those employers that provide or sponsor child care for their employees. The basic skills education tax credit is available to those employers who sponsor basic skills education for their employees through the Technical College of Georgia system.

OBSERVATION:	Though making strides, Troup County continues to have significant challenges in curbing its dropout rate and graduating students.
STRATEGY:	Continue and expand ongoing efforts to address the individual needs of students.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Knowledge Driven Community The Neighborly Community The Prosperous Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment

Many of Troup County’s youth were described as having made life-altering choices for a variety of reasons such as lack of parental involvement, lack of positive role models, and lack of knowledge about the impact of such choices, to name a few. In other words, they either enter or are put in situations that require adult-level decision making and, absent the presence of an adult, they make what some might call chief executive decisions regarding their life when they’re clearly not equipped to do so. The relatively high incidence of teenage pregnancy in the county was cited as an example. It was shared that it is common for pregnant teens to have their parents “turn their back on them,” which ends up further exacerbating the challenges associated with a teen trying to learn how to become a parent. The reported incidence of drug use and juvenile delinquency among some youth was also

linked to influences within the home environment and social network. While some of this may be attributable to single-parent households, it was also shared as affecting youth in dual parent households, often where both parents are in full-time employment situations. The county was reported to have its share of “latch key” children. Generally, the lack of parental involvement was viewed as affecting all students.

- K-25** Troup County should consider launching a communitywide commitment campaign - e.g., “The Troup County Promise” - where parents, teachers, business leaders, and others commit to working together for identifying and saving at-risk children. Similar to the neighborhood watch concept for crime, this campaign would involve various actors in the adult community committing to keeping their eyes open for youth who are at-risk for making life-altering decisions that will have a lasting negative impact on their futures. A key partner in this initiative will be LaGrange College, as the Leadership Council has selected addressing high school dropout rates as one of their priorities for 2008-2009.
- K-26** Troup County should examine innovative ways to reward teachers who are able to foster positive classroom experiences. Educators point out that it is the experience in the classroom that influences the degree to which a child will stay interested in school. The more exciting, engaging, and hands-on activity-based the environment, the greater the likelihood for stimulating student minds and interest - and those fostering such environments should be celebrated and championed.
- K-27** Troup County School’s impressive efforts to identify “at-risk” high school students should be expanded into the earlier grades. School officials’ institution of a rigorous analysis process on test and other data to serve as an “early warning” beacon should begin as early as second grade. Troup County should explore the feasibility of conducting individualized needs assessments for every student on an annual basis, beginning in second grade. Every student should be assigned an assessment team that includes their teacher, guidance counselor, parent, and a professional “advisor” from business and industry.
- K-28** Troup County should continue to sound the alarm on the “economics of education” at every opportunity through a locally crafted public relations campaign, building on the efforts of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. Through churches, PTOs, youth clubs, the media, and any other available outlet, efforts should be made to continually remind parents and children on the costs associated with dropping out of school. The video production capabilities at West Georgia Tech could be utilized to produce a PR video on the value of a technical college education and four-year college education with testimonials from members of the local business community and alumnae. Successful adults of all ages could be engaged to “tell their story” through various outlets including local television stations and media.
- K-29** Troup County should explore efforts to increase available tutoring services in the area. This was the third leading service area identified by youth to expand. It is clear that the youth desire more one-on-one help while the professionals serving them regularly pointing to such help as being the critical difference maker. Efforts should be made to engage LaGrange College’s service learning programs for connecting college students with K-12 students needing or desiring academic help. For example, students in LaGrange College’s popular business administration program could be linked with students needing help in mathematics. Other potential avenues (area Rotaries, Lions Clubs, etc.) to identify tutors and mentors should be explored.
- K-30** Troup County should encourage its employers to provide their workers with compensated time off to enable their involvement in the schools. For example, employers include in the benefits to their workers with up to 40 hours per year of time to use for involvement in the schools. This could be utilized by parents so they can attend parent-teacher meetings and

participate in classroom and field trip activities. It could also be used by workers who wish to volunteer in the schools as mentors or in some other role.

OBSERVATION:	Many children enter the school system without being “Kindergarten-ready.” Troup County’s workforce would benefit from advancing child care options, with a focus on preparing children to enter kindergarten.
STRATEGY:	Increase awareness and support for numerous programs already in existence, and fill in any gaps that may arise.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Knowledge Driven Community The Neighborly Community The Good Habitat Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment Human Services Assessment

Many community stakeholders expressed an understanding of the importance of the zero to four age range as an opportunity to begin developing skills that will prepare the children for kindergarten. Advancing child care support networks can also help ensure that children are being properly cared for while their dual-income or single parents are at work.

It was shared how kindergarten teachers are faced with the challenge of trying to serve children of varying needs and abilities. Given the importance of this particular year in creating the foundation for learning among children, it is imperative to be able to fully address the needs of each child. It was shared how some children are deficient in Kindergarten and how this can become a handicap, for their self-esteem, ability to learn, and in other ways throughout their school career if their needs are not met. While some kindergarten teachers are assisted by a paraprofessional, this is reportedly not the situation in every classroom.

- K-31 Troup County should approach early childhood development in a holistic collaborative sense through a dynamic partnership among Troup County Schools and various social, health, and workforce development organizations to foster initiatives to help prepare children for the transition to Kindergarten.** Recognizing that a child’s ability to be a successful learner in K-12 depends upon fundamental developmental opportunities from birth through 4 years of age, community professionals should partner on creating a more seamless approach to addressing the needs of children. One workforce developer pointed to the example of how pediatrician offices could be used to provide “incidental learning” opportunities to parents and babies during immunization times.
- K-32 Troup County should support the work the United Way, its affiliates, and other agencies that have already begun to strengthen the child care and educational options for children under the age of 6.** Troup County should use the School Readiness Team of stakeholder agencies that the United Way Success by Six program has already assembled to continue to advance its goals of identifying at-risk children, increasing parent awareness, supporting existing programs (including Summer PLAY), and expanding parent education (including Parents as Teachers, First Steps, Coalition for Positive Change, Walt’s World Community Resources). Troup County’s support should take the form of awareness-raising of the good programs already in existence to help garner additional financing and volunteer hours where needed.
- K-33 Troup County should continue to reach out to informal child care provider networks.** Through faith and community-based organizations, youth clubs, the media, and other outlets, awareness should be raised regarding the resources available (for example, the United Way’s

Born Learning toolkit) to educate informal child care providers (i.e., family or friends who provide regular child care for small groups of children) about ways to engage and educate children in their care. This awareness-raising campaign can also highlight the many support resources available to parents and these providers. Possibly through the United Way, Troup County can create a coordinated support network for new or otherwise small formal and informal child care centers so that providers may share experiences and resource ideas with one another.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County is becoming increasingly globally relevant.
STRATEGY:	Market area for ‘globility.’ Capitalize on the apparent international destination it has become and foster greater connectivity for foreign-based companies and residents alike.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Prosperous Community The Knowledgeable Community The Neighborly Community
REFERENCE(S):	The View From Community Stakeholders Sustainable Development Report Card Workforce Development Assessment

The strength of the community, educational assets, and governance are all areas that make Troup County a contender for attracting international residents and investment. This was evident prior to the announcement of Kia. For example, LaGrange had already housed nine foreign-based firms representing five countries before the foreign automaker chose to locate nearby. The notion that LaGrange and its surrounding area has become more global was confirmed by several stakeholders who discussed the city’s three international sister city relationships (with Aso, Japan; P’ot’i, Abashis, Georgia; and Craigavon, Northern Ireland, UK), the growing diversity of students enrolled at LaGrange College, and the number of cultures represented by the faith-based and arts and dance communities in LaGrange. The community’s eye toward sustainability—as evident in efforts such as LaGrange College and its partnership with the United Nations Centre International de Formation des Autorités/Acteurs Locaux (CIFAL) program, the planning initiatives underway, the innovative conversion of landfill gas to energy, and the growing countywide parks and green space conservation system, to name a few—also hold international appeal. Troup County Schools’ recent enactment of an international accreditation program will also be an asset to this end.

The arrival of Kia in West Point and its suppliers in Troup County will serve to both add diversity to a community that has already been growing in diversity, and to further showcase the area as capable of meeting the needs of international businesses which are considering the best community to trust with their substantial investments. The county’s growing international business community, coupled with its proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, and institutions of higher learning are significant factors that can be effectively used to market itself as an international community.

P-2 Troup County should strive to be “internationally friendly.” Expand efforts to provide outreach and support services to incoming employees and residents from other countries to help them and their families adjust. This should extend beyond the Korean families associated with Kia.

Opportunities to expand LaGrange College’s international relations program should be explored. This program is geared toward helping foreign-born residents “learn the ropes” of living in Troup County (and the United States) but has limited coverage because it is currently staffed by a full-time professional with several other responsibilities.

The school system should expand efforts to focus on addressing the needs of international newcomers joining the student and faculty body. It should consider creating a full-time professional position devoted to this purpose.

P-3 Troup County should employ efforts to help foster multicultural awareness. Arts and cultural institutions and institutions of higher learning should continue and, when possible, expand efforts to provide exposure to diverse cultures. The school system could also explore the potential for sister school relationships with schools in the three sister cities of LaGrange and explore other efforts to engage in other types of international exchange programs.

Troup County Schools and area institutions of higher learning serving Troup County should expand their programs of learning to provide offerings focusing on the Korean language, history, and culture. Given Kia and its suppliers are anticipated to be major economic drivers for this region, and the manner in which Korean-based companies operate according to the Korean culture (as opposed to the “corporate culture” that varies through the American free enterprise system), such expanded program offerings could contribute toward fostering greater multicultural understanding, engagement, and trust that will be critical for knowing how best to support and do business with such companies. This is in similar vein as to how Korean students learn the American culture through their learning institutions given the importance of American economic drivers to Korea.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County has an abundance of assets that support the further development of a “creative economy.”
STRATEGY:	Explore the potential for strengthening and leveraging the creative centers of Troup County.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Prosperous Community
REFERENCE(S):	The View From Community Stakeholders The View From Statewide and Regional Partners Workforce Development Assessment

LaGrange is already a creative center for music, visual arts, drama, dance, and many other areas. From the LaGrange Symphony Orchestra and the Lafayette Society of Performing Arts to the assets available through LaGrange College and West Georgia Technical College, there appears to be a critical mass of creative assets that are quite impressive for a city the size of LaGrange. And, given the historic preservation efforts in West Point and Hogansville, there’s incredible potential to develop further creative assets in Troup.

The linkage between arts-related amenities and economic prosperity is well recognized by economic development experts as such amenities are known for keeping and drawing in talented professionals. Related to this, Troup County is well poised to capture some of the “creative class” jobs projected for the region. This includes the professional, scientific, and technical service-related jobs projected to grow in the region due to Kia. Capturing those jobs will depend on the county’s focus on talent development and recruitment, which depends upon its ability to further foster quality places with a mixture of living and amenity options that are often affiliated with downtown areas.

Vibrant downtown centers are often at the heart of creative economies and all three of Troup County’s cities already have advantages in this regard. Recent efforts relating to revitalizing the downtown areas of LaGrange position the city very well. With the help of the Callaway Foundation, LaGrange’s downtown has become one of the premiere downtowns for a city of its size in Georgia in terms of quality place making. West Point’s depot, collection of unique shops, and potential for loft housing are key assets for the city in this regard. The City of Hogansville, with the potential for restoring its downtown theater, its assortment of unique shops, children’s theater, the Hummingbird Festival, and downtown mural, also has the potential to be a creative center.

The natural linkage of all three cities by US Highway 29 adds strategic value to focusing on building creative centers in all three cities. And, the implementation of this strategy will further aid Troup County’s strategy to market itself for “gloability” as such assets tend to have high appeal internationally.

P-6 Troup County should consider its arts and cultural assets as chief assets to protect, sustain, and, when the opportunities arise, to expand. The county should consider creating an Arts Bureau, perhaps as part of the Creative Centers Coalition, and staffed with at least one full-time professional with the responsibility of tracking and providing coordination support to entertainment activities and options, and providing public relations and resource development support to the community’s arts and cultural organizations. The county should explore the role LaGrange College, the Callaway Foundation, and West Georgia Technical College can further play in supporting the creative arts given their already strong orientation towards arts and culture. Beyond providing resources or programs, these entities could serve in think tank and advisory capacities.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County has numerous institutions of higher learning within a 45-mile radius.
STRATEGY:	Explore the potential for economically beneficial relationships that can be developed with nearby colleges and universities.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Prosperous Community The Knowledge Driven Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment

While Troup County is home to tremendous higher education assets such as LaGrange College and West Georgia Technical College, it could also stand to benefit from greater linkages to institutions of higher learning in the surrounding region. The appetite for doing so is evident among the governmental and institutional leadership.

P-7 Troup County should explore the concept of creating a technical problem-solving program for the region’s industries that leverages higher educational assets. Options for creating such a program should be explored with West Georgia Technical College and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) programs at Georgia Tech and Auburn University that maximizes and connects industries to the core competencies of each through an agreed-upon and joint approach.

P-8 Troup County should explore the potential for designating a local facilitator to connect local industries to available resources at institutions of higher learning. Given that many small-to-medium sized industries do not have the resources to conduct research and development in-house, the facilitator should work to connect such industries interested in product development and innovation with area research universities. In addition, the facilitator should serve as a point person connecting local industries with opportunities for continual education and professional development of their existing workforce.

P-9 Troup County should promote and encourage greater participation in the cross-matriculation programs available among area institutions. For example, LaGrange College has such programs with Auburn University and Georgia Tech for students interested in engineering or science related pursuits. Participating students attend their beginning years at LaGrange College and then transfer to one of these research universities and earn a degree from both institutions of higher learning.

P-10 Troup County should consult with enrollment offices at nearby institutions of higher learning regarding the Career Pathways curriculum. Given Troup County Schools' progressive approach to not only implementing the Georgia Performance Standards curriculum but also adding additional content tied to specific careers, it should explore the feasibility for becoming a model case for doing so. Specifically, university faculty should be approached to review and provide advisement on the curriculum to ensure capability with university curriculum. In addition, efforts should be made to explore the potential for creating memorandums of understanding regarding university recognition of the Career Pathways programs as being suitable preparation for their classroom instruction while recognizing that such recognition does not guarantee admission. This type of collaboration is not being done yet in the State of Georgia.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County middle and high school students have a limited number of club activities.
STRATEGY:	Garner volunteer support for creating additional club activities for area youth.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Entertaining Community The Knowledge Driven Community
REFERENCE(S):	Workforce Development Assessment 2008 Survey of Troup County Youth

It was pointed out that Troup County's middle and high schools do not have the extensive array of club activities which one might think. Expanding these types of activities is an effective way of increasing the reality and perception among youth of the availability of things to do in the community. The desire for more things to do was chief among the feedback received through the youth survey.

E-13 Troup County should link the interests of students with willing parent/teacher/administrator volunteers to create additional club activities for middle and high school students. An easy means of creating after-school activities for area youth are through clubs, like a computer club, chess club, writing club, reading club, photography club, and similarly-focused activities. Implementation would require identifying what are the student's primary interest areas to pursue for club ideas, then finding the resources necessary to keep schools open an extra hour or two after classes conclude for meeting space, and finally, having adult volunteers to support the club's activities, as needed.

OBSERVATION:	Troup County will experience increasing demand for a more robust public transportation system as the population increases.
STRATEGY:	Troup County, working in conjunction with the Cities and human service partners, should develop an incremental exploration to expand public transportation services.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Navigable Community The Good Habitat Community The Prosperous Community
REFERENCE(S):	Human Services Assessment Transportation Assessment Workforce Development Assessment

Several stakeholders expressed a need for enhanced public transportation services. Approximately 12 percent of households in the county do not have access to a vehicle and in some areas it is as much as 46 percent.¹⁸ Furthermore, population projections show a growing older adult population segment, which will have greater need of transportation services.

The lack of reliable or public transportation was the most pervasive concern raised by human service professionals serving Troup County. This critical issue affects everything from a person's ability to access jobs, training and education opportunities, to health care services, and to other basic human service needs. This is also critical for school-age children to access after-school and other enrichment activities. Troup County must determine a suitable option for creating a public transit service.

N-3 Troup County should explore opportunities to expand the public transportation system.

One mechanism for doing this would be by convening a Task Force composed of representatives from the cities and county, Georgia Department of Transportation, and key human services and workforce development professionals. Whatever the mechanism of choice, the county should consider:

- Assessing the adequacy of the current public transportation system and services provided by individual agencies and explore where the current dial-a-ride system could be expanded to satisfy unmet needs, or if a flexible-route or fixed-route system warrants exploration. The task force should explore the pros and cons of a single-coordinated system, which can benefit from shared vehicle, staff, and administrative responsibilities. If a joint system is favorable, then careful consideration should be directed to who—public sector, non-profit, or private sector—would operate the system. Depending on which entity operates the system, different requirements, funding sources, and demands will apply to the entity.
- If the assessment identifies the need for a flexible-route or fixed-route system, Troup County should conduct a feasibility analysis that examines areas of demand (where residents in need of such service live) and destinations (e.g. hospitals, pharmacies, grocery stores, job centers, community facilities). Care should be taken in examining requirements pertaining to compliance with the American with Disabilities Act in relation to the type of service being operated. Depending on who operates the system and the style of operation, an expanded public transportation system may require wheelchair-accessible vehicles and specially trained personnel, which may be cost prohibitive. In addition, consideration should be given toward exploring environmentally friendly alternatives such as alternative fuel vehicles and electric shuttles. The *Preparing for the Future in Troup County, Georgia: Transportation Assessment* includes case studies of communities with various levels of public transportation services and sources of funding.¹⁹

¹⁸ Or Housing Units, as described by the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

¹⁹ Jon E. Burkhardt, Charles A. Nelson, Gail Murray, David Koffman., 2004. *Toolkit for Rural Community Coordinated Transportation Services*. Transportation Cooperative Research Program, Report 101, Transportation Research Board.

OBSERVATION:	As is the case for all communities, stakeholders pointed to opportunities for continual improvement in the area of addressing the needs of a population that is significantly diverse and growing in its diversity.
STRATEGY:	Troup County should explore all opportunities to embrace and leverage its community diversity.
STRATEGIC GOAL(S):	The Neighborly Community
REFERENCE(S):	The View From Community Stakeholders Human Services Assessment Workforce Development Assessment

Further embracing and leveraging community diversity was identified by stakeholders and external partners alike as an opportunity for model-setting in Troup County because of the strong civic, business, and political leadership. It was strongly advocated to pursue opportunities to champion the diversity present in the region. Stakeholders also called for better engagement of minorities in community decision-making and leadership roles. Boding well for the future, Troup County Schools has successfully implemented significant efforts to create a more diverse community in its student population at each school, an effort which is anticipated to have longer term positive impacts with regards to addressing the needs of a diverse population. As can be said of health care services or housing affordability, it is true that dealing with the diversity will only be expected to intensify as a challenge with the ensuing growth.

- Y-19** Troup County should garner support for leading a “model” effort of cultural change, with the first step being to foster creative dialogue about diversity in the community. Troup County can begin building momentum via the LaGrange College Leadership Council, which is a recognized leader in setting the forum for such creative dialogues, most recently on the subject of sustainability. Through such effort, LaGrange College has showcased its talents in playing an important role in the dialogue process.
- Y-20** Troup County should consider creating a “diversity task force” of a wider spectrum of leaders in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The purpose of this task force would be to focus on championing and celebrating diversity in the region.
- Y-21** When Troup County formulates a leadership committee or similar group of community members, continued efforts should be taken to ensure that there is effective representation from various constituencies in the community in approximately proportional numbers. A commitment to this approach should not only include strong representation from the largest race and ethnic groups in the county, but also balanced gender and age membership. This principal should be applied to task forces, councils, and other groups formed to advance county-wide goals, and other initiatives that help community members feel engaged, such as the chamber’s Leadership Troup and Youth Leadership programs.
- Y-22** Troup County should encourage more emerging community leaders of minority race or ethnic background to participate in leadership development programs. Working with leadership organizations - such as the LaGrange College Leadership Council, Leadership Troup, the Troup County Resource Commission, and faith-based organizations - the community can expand efforts to help identify “next generation” leaders and to encourage them to participate in leadership development programs. To demonstrate its commitment to this effort, Troup County could explore the possibility of providing scholarships or some form of incentive for emerging leaders to participate in a leadership development program.