

SURVEY REPORT: FEBRUARY 2019

BUSINESS LEADERS: TRANSFORM HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK



INTRODUCTION

Business Forward works with more than 100,000 business leaders across the U.S. We cover a range of issues, including education reform, health care, tax reform, trade, infrastructure, clean energy, intellectual property, and immigration. We organize local round-tables, Washington fly-ins, national conference calls, and training webinars. We also help business leaders work with local media, publish op-eds, and submit testimony to government agencies. More than 650 mayors, governors, Members of Congress, and senior Administration officials have participated in our briefings.

We recently asked our network to tell us what they think schools should be doing to prepare students for the future of work. Thousands of leaders responded, and several hundred provided personal statements or recommendations. This report outlines 10 common themes from these responses. We will produce further reports on many of these themes over the next year.

Business Forward has partnered in this work with XQ, the nation's leading organization dedicated to reimagining high schools across America so every student succeeds—no matter their race, gender, or zip code. XQ has a community-led approach. Its national call to rethink high school inspired more than 10,000 people to join locally-led design teams. XQ offers free, open-source tools that every community can use to reimagine its high schools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business leaders understand the world is changing. High schools must produce “future ready” graduates because technologies like automation and AI are making it harder for people without high-level skills to find jobs that pay well enough to support a family.

Too many high school students aren’t graduating, and too many of those who do graduate aren’t ready for college or a career. These challenges are real in communities all over the United States – in big cities and small ones, rural areas and suburbs.

Changing education in the ways we’ve tried in the past won’t be enough. We must transform our high schools for the future of work. We must give teachers the tools they need, and we must make high school diplomas meaningful again. Business leaders can help – by learning about the challenges schools face, speaking out in support of innovative schools, and developing collaborative training and internship programs.

As employers and active members of their communities, business leaders care deeply about high schools. What is important when it comes to redesigning schools for the future of work? Business leaders recommend:

1. **Transform high schools for the modern world.**
2. **Combine academics with practical skills for real-world success.**
3. **Involve employers in transforming high schools.**
4. **Hold high schools to higher standards.**
5. **Give teachers the tools they need to succeed.**
6. **Provide flexibility to forward-thinking schools.**
7. **Keep students interested, not bored.**
8. **Personalize education to match students’ interests and needs.**
9. **Support career preparation and work-based learning.**
10. **Build on each community’s unique assets.**

Business Forward and XQ are encouraging Governors to make high schools a priority. They can do that by offering incentives to design schools of the future, promoting the “innovation” status that allows high schools to try new approaches, and using pilot programs to seed innovation.

TRANSFORM HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE MODERN WORLD

Business leaders want high schools designed intentionally for the modern world. A high school diploma should mean a graduate is prepared for the jobs and careers of the future.

“ The issue isn’t quality, it is the program itself. Our educational structure needs to evolve. ”

- STACEY RICKMAN
OWNER - CONSULTANT,
IMAGINETHIS CAREER JOURNEY LLC,
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

“ The school system of today is preparing our children for the economy of yesterday or, if they are lucky, the economy of today. ”

- SHAHZAD BHATTI
CEO, AXIOM LEARNING,
BELLEVUE, WA

“ We need more innovation and a forward-thinking curriculum. The schools need to be totally transformed. ”

- ELLEE KOSS
CO-FOUNDER,
DEMOLISH THE BOX,
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

“ The standard system is lacking in foresight and the ability to actually prep kids for a sustainable life, not just college or a job. ”

- SCOTT O’SHAUGHNESSY
OWNER, GOAT LOCKER REAL ESTATE,
PORT ORCHARD, WA

“ It’s important to redesign high schools in my state by preparing all youngsters, including the ones attending urban city schools, so that they in return will be able to acquire the necessary skills needed to thrive in a technological field and workforce. ”

- ADRA YOUNG
DIRECTOR, ARDANNYL,
GARY, IN

“ The future of our nation depends on the success of our children. When we prepare them for success, we prepare our nation for success. ”

- BEVIN CALLAN
MEMBERSHIP & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER,
THE PCPI FOUNDATION,
CHICAGO, IL

“ Tech education should be found throughout the USA in every high school curriculum. ”

- DAN LUBAR
FOUNDER, RELAYSERVICES,
BOULDER, CO

COMBINE ACADEMICS WITH PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR REAL-WORLD SUCCESS

Too many schools are preparing young people for jobs that won't exist in the near future. Instead, schools need to embrace technology, innovation and collaboration skills that will be in even greater demand. Students need real-world skills, including teamwork and problem-solving, as well as fundamental skills like reading, writing and math.

“ It would be nice if high school students were given the opportunity to learn the basics of everyday life. For example, they should be taught to balance a checkbook, pay their bills, and work with a budget to live in the manner they can afford. ”

- JOYCE TRUMPET
CFO,
FACEFRONT MUSIC, INC.,
LAKE ELSINORE, CA

“ Business needs well-educated citizens who can function in teams, generate new ideas and approaches, embrace competition, and participate in their communities. Intrinsic values of education, especially within rapid technological advances, must emphasize critical thinking skills, broad-gauge access to knowledge and information, and reliable advancement paths. ”

- STAN BARNES
CEO,
BIOALGENE,
MERCER ISLAND, WA

“ I wish there were more work opportunities within the school system and resources for the students like skill centers (car, media, nursing, carpentry, arts, design, etc.). We need to increase the skills centers and opportunities for hands-on, project-based learning in our schools. ”

- KIM SCHWARZKOPF
PRODUCER,
SEATTLE, WA

“ Expose the kids to the real world scenarios, and provide a safe space for them to develop the skill of creating & implementing solutions. ”

- DWAYNE LANGLEY
KNIGHT, CHESS MOVES LLC,
VAN NUYS, CA

“ High schools should include an option of study in the trades with the realization that not everyone needs to go to college. The option of a trade school should be offered. ”

- SAMUEL BAKER
DIRECTOR - GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT,
SR SCALES, HAMBURG, NY

“ [High schools] need a curriculum aimed at what businesses need in terms of new employees. ”

- WARREN BANKS
ADVISOR, GLOBAL TRADE CENTER,
PORTLAND, OR

INVOLVE BUSINESS LEADERS IN TRANSFORMING HIGH SCHOOLS

Business leaders want to be involved in efforts to transform high schools to prepare students for the future of work. They want to learn more about the challenges schools face, speak out in support of innovative schools and develop collaborative training and internship programs.

“ We should allow children to focus earlier on the skills they need as opposed to general projects/courses which take a lot of time but will not help them one iota when they leave school. Encourage more flexible teaching so that business leaders in the community are invited to teach certain skills or knowledge in the vocational areas which appeal to children. ”

- DARRYL KEYS
PRESIDENT, ZYPHA CORPORATION,
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL

“ I believe we as business owners should assist in the development of the skills we need for our businesses. ”

- LANEAY LONDON
CEO, LLLONDON CONSULTING, LLC,
LANCASTER, CA

“ [We need] more collaboration between businesses and the school through internships which are managed through the schools. The schools look to the businesses to support their organizations but offer little support in wanting to hear about real issues such as students having poor retail math skills and communication skills. ”

- ERIN CALVO-BACCI
OWNER/CMO, CB STUFFER,
READING, MA

“ The business community should get more involved in ensuring that the local schools prepare local students for local jobs rather than always looking to recruit from out of area. ”

- KRIS STADELMAN
DIRECTOR, NOVA
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT,
SUNNYVALE, CA

“ Market-driven reforms should include better alignment and partnerships with businesses in different industries. Also, I would like to see strong internships and job shadows for 11 and 12 grades. ”

- STACEY RICKMAN
OWNER - CONSULTANT,
IMAGINETHIS CAREER
JOURNEY LLC,
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

“ It matters to me that the curriculum is meaningful and applicable to the job market. Plenty of hands-on experience should be utilized in the classroom. Mentoring programs should be created and utilized. Sponsor Q & A sessions with people from all levels of different occupations. ”

- MARIA MCGUINNESS
HR/SAFETY MANAGER,
C & D ASSEMBLY, INCORPORATED,
MCGRAW, NY

“ By working with large companies or mom-and-pop businesses, students will be exposed to what is out in the world. Summer internship for a week or a weekend may open students' eyes to many different avenues of the future for them. ”

- DEB FRITZLER
LIBRARY BUSINESS MANAGER,
SBC, AMHERST, VA

HOLD HIGH SCHOOLS TO HIGHER STANDARDS

Business leaders believe in accountability. They want to hold high schools to higher standards.

“

It is important for the business community to support increased accountability for student and school performance.

”

- **LESLIE TALBOT**
FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL,
TALBOT CONSULTING,
NEW YORK, NY

“

I see just how much these institutions have suffered in my state since I attended them. A good education should prepare students for the world they will be entering upon graduation, whether that includes further education or joining the work force.

”

- **JOHN DELIBOS**
PRINCIPAL, CONCEPTS IN DESIGN,
LAS VEGAS, NV

“

Administrators and school boards should be subject to rigorous evaluation and comparative rankings.

”

- **STAN BARNES**
CEO,
BIOALGENE,
MERCER ISLAND, WA

“

Help those that are behind, but never lower the bar for those ahead!

”

- **JUSTIN M. CRASTO, SR.**
PRINCIPAL, IT REVENUE MANAGEMENT CORP.,
BEDFORD, NY

GIVE TEACHERS THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

Business leaders support teachers. They deserve better preparation and access to more high-quality learning tools and resources.

“ Teachers need to be praised for working so hard for the students. Teachers are treated poorly and paid poorly. ”

- CAROLE EHRHARDT
RETIRED EDUCATOR,
DOUGLAS RANCH CAMP,
PEBBLE BEACH, CA

“ We should provide higher salaries for teachers. We should be finding new methods to reach into high school students’ potential, such as a broader scope of activities. For example, art and music classes, intramural sports, and qualified counselors to help those who are struggling. ”

- JANE CHURCH
ONE EARTH ONE PEOPLE,
CHAPEL HILL, NC

“ Teachers are underpaid, materials continue to be a challenge and it appears to be the first on the chopping block at budget time. ”

- E.W.
CONSULTANT,
NEW ORLEANS, LA

“ It’s all about the teacher: hire the best and pay them well. ”

- KRIS STADELMAN
DIRECTOR,
NOVA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT,
SUNNYVALE, CA

“ We can’t expect the 21st century teachers and students to teach, learn and go forward in this new and technical society while dealing and working with 20th century schools, equipment and teaching aids! We can’t lead or produce the world’s future leaders by educating or teaching under yester-years’ conditions and methods! ”

- RON L. HUBBARD
V.P./G.M.,
B&R SALES & MARKETING CONSULTING GROUP,
JASPER, TN

“ The district is losing quality teachers to other districts that have improved their budgets and classroom capacity. ”

- RICHARD RUEL
CHAIRMAN, METRO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
EAST SAINT LOUIS, IL

“ Not enough money gets in the classroom for teachers. ”

- MICHAEL KELLY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE LOS ANGELES
COALITION FOR THE ECONOMY & JOBS,
LOS ANGELES, CA

“ We should provide quality teachers and support staff that will serve all students. The curriculum must provide relevant information that directs students to available employment fields. ”

- JOHN DELGADO
DIVISION OFFICER,
CALIFORNIA RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOC,
SAN MARTIN, CA

PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY TO FORWARD-THINKING SCHOOLS

Local education innovators often run into rules and regulations that stop them from transforming education. Give communities, schools, and teachers the flexibility to innovate based on sound ideas—and an agreement to be held accountable for getting results.

“
Continue to make sure all children are getting a quality education, so when they go off to college all of our children have gotten the same quality of education.
”

- **LINDA MENSAH**
OWNER,
C & L CATALYST LLC,
ARLINGTON, VA

“
Schools need more flexibility in how they expend funds - including personnel line items in their budgets.
”

- **LESLIE TALBOT**
FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL,
TALBOT CONSULTING,
NEW YORK, NY

“
When the lead manager is given the autonomy to manage and has the power to make budgetary and self-management decisions, the educational institutions will begin to improve.
”

- **CARMEN ELISA CAMPOS HERNANDEZ**
MANAGER,
PRODOCA, CA.,
WASHOUGAL, WA

“
We should create a vibrant network of small schools - alternative programs of choice that have the freedom to waive requirements and focus on learning.
”

- **ELLEEE KOSS**
FOUNDER,
DEMOLISH THE BOX,
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

“
Schools are chronically under-resourced. Until local and state governments prioritize funding for schools, very little is likely to change.
”

- **TOM PIPAL**
SENIOR PARTNER,
PIPAL, HALL ET AL,
PARKER, CO

KEEP STUDENTS INTERESTED, NOT BORED

Surveys show that most high school students are bored, unchallenged, and unengaged. Business leaders know that students who are bored are not learning well. They want to help schools find ways for students to be challenged with hands-on projects and real-world learning outside the classroom.

“

[Our school system attempted] to use quality control measures used in manufacturing as their model. The problem was that the widget was the child in the model and the customer was the future employer. I believe this would have been better had they understood the child to be the customer.

”

- **CATHERINE TROST-STEFFEN**
FORMER BOARD MEMBER, CURRENT STOCK HOLDER,
CJT KOOLCARB, INC.,
BLOOMINGDALE, IN

“

I moved our grandchildren to a private school as they were bored, doing little and their teachers were not good. Our grandson at age 11 mentioned that he loved being challenged in the new school.

”

- **CAROLE EHRHARDT**
RETIRED EDUCATOR,
DOUGLAS RANCH CAMP,
PEBBLE BEACH, CA

“

I myself was barely able to stay awake in high school so I rarely went 50 years ago, but when I got to college, I found out you could learn a lot, so I got an AA, a BS and an MBA from Johns Hopkins. Let's make high school interesting.

”

- **TERRY GOODSPEEDE**
OWNER, BAGCO,
JEFFERSON CITY, TN

PERSONALIZE EDUCATION TO MATCH STUDENTS' INTERESTS AND NEEDS

Business leaders believe it is important to support the overall development of students as much as possible, and that won't work with a "one size fits all" approach. Students have different interests and challenges. Some students need extra support to prepare for college, a career and life as an adult.

"If we are to thrive in the 21st Century...we need to educate 100% of what it means to be human."

- ELLEE KOSS
CO-FOUNDER,
DEMOLISH THE BOX,
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

"Funding needs to focus on the students' natural interests, critical thinking skills and workplace cultural awareness and prep. The educational model needs to evolve to a tailored educational model that fits students' natural interests and talents."

- STACEY RICKMAN
OWNER - CONSULTANT,
IMAGINETHIS CAREER JOURNEY LLC,
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

"Education must fit and inspire citizens for life-long learning, community participation, and teamwork rather than simple preparation for existing 'jobs' that will disappear."

- STAN BARNES
CEO,
BIOALGENE,
MERCER ISLAND, WA

"The one-size-fits-all approach to education is ridiculous given the availability of simple diagnostics and technology which would allow for effective personalization of skills."

- SHAHZAD BHATTI
CEO,
AXIOM LEARNING,
BELLEVUE, WA

"We want our schools to do everything - including parent our kids. But we really need them to provide safe, joyous locations for learning and coming into one's own as an individual, for exploring the possibilities of life and work and to be ready to tackle those challenges."

- LESLIE BAER
PRESIDENT,
ENERGY INTERSECTIONS, LLC,
DENVER, CO

SUPPORT CAREER PREPARATION AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

Business leaders know that strong career preparation programs and work-based learning experiences give high school students a leg up on real-world success. Employers want to partner with schools to give students opportunities to learn in workplace settings outside the classroom.

“ We need more community participation from businesses, both privately owned and corporations, large and small. I used to run a College and Career Day Event and students entered fields (like actuaries) that they never would have if not for this event. It was priceless to students! ”

- RICHARD BOWLES
CEO AND FOUNDER,
BTECH VENTURES INTERNATIONAL,
PORTLAND, OR

“ Students need more help in looking at several types of careers to help them find the best schools or institutions for teaching them what they need to know to start their career. Going on to further education without understanding what can help the student get the career he/she wants will hurt students. ”

- HELEN DARKOW
CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER,
OMNICARE AND TEL-DRUG,
SIOUX FALLS, SD

“ Oregon needs more accommodation for different learning styles, especially more hands-on learning in STEM. We should help transition and support students prepare for a variety of jobs, only some of which require a traditional path through university. ”

- RICHARD BOWLES
CEO AND FOUNDER,
BTECH VENTURES INTERNATIONAL,
PORTLAND, OR

“ I believe it is critical for our community to prepare our students for the economy and jobs that will be available in the future. ”

- DAVID PATTERSON
TRUSTEE,
PLACER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION,
ROCKLIN, CA

“ I am a court reporter, and our industry is experiencing a severe shortage of reporters. Yet, very few folks are aware of the career opportunities available in my field. High schools need to do a much better job of educating students about career opportunities. ”

- DYANN BERNDT
OWNER, DYANN L. BERNDT, CSR, RPR,
BERWYN, IL

BUILD ON EACH COMMUNITY'S UNIQUE ASSETS

Every community is different, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating future-ready schools. Business leaders want communities to be able to transform high schools in ways that address local challenges and take advantage of unique local assets.

“
Schools should be the driving factor in the communities they reside in, as well as the businesses that service them.
”

- PIOTR DEWICKI
CFO,
SYNERGY LLC,
MORRISON, CO

“
We need to get back to the concept of every neighborhood school being a great school. Great schools make for great communities and great businesses in those communities.
”

- LESLIE BAER
PRESIDENT,
ENERGY INTERSECTIONS, LLC,
DENVER, CO

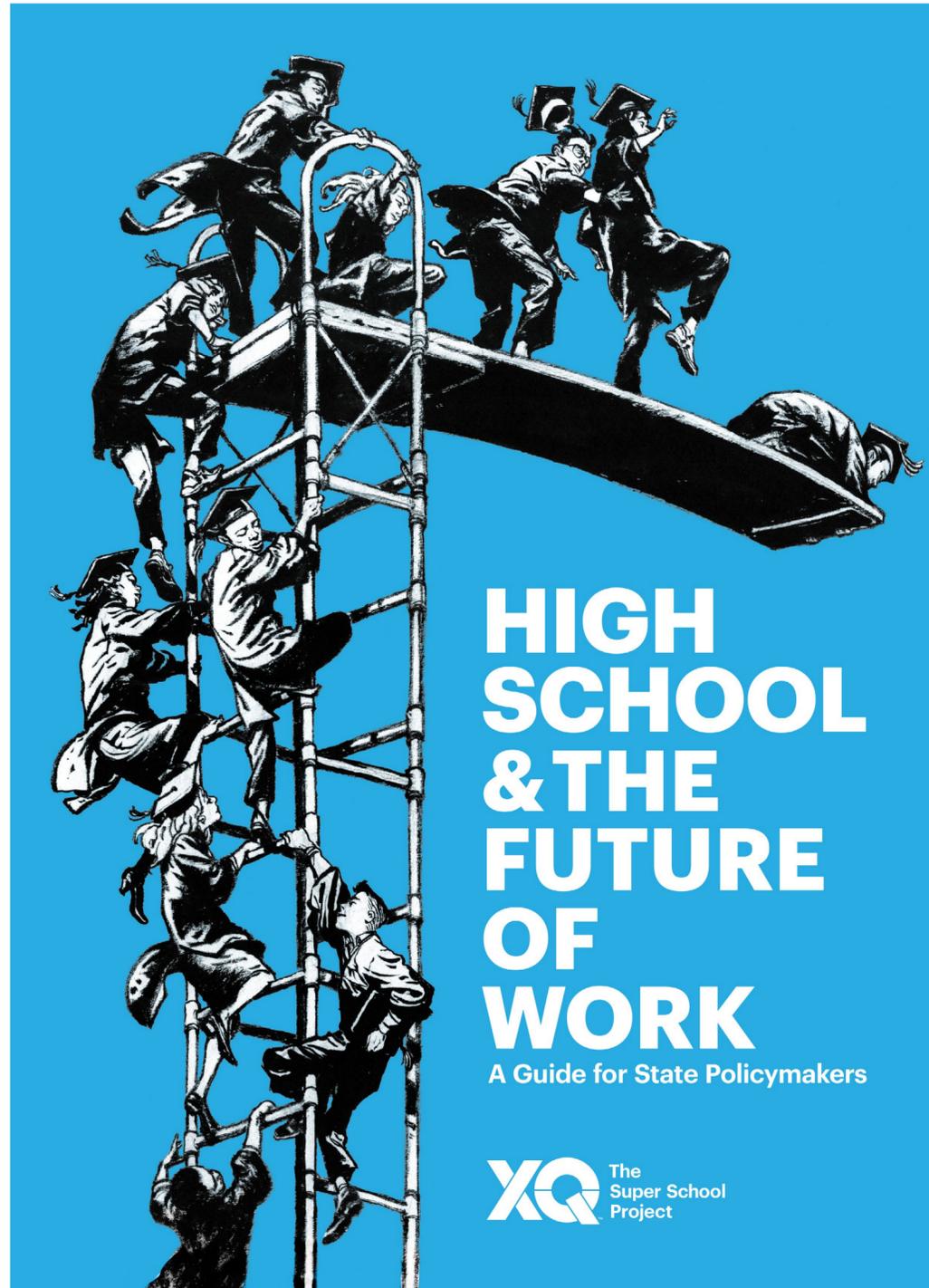
“
Our public schools shape our local and national community. Our neglect of them over the last 40 years shows in our social fabric today. We can do better.
”

- TORRANCE ROBINSON
CEO,
TROVVIT,
BROOKLYN, NY

“
We have excellent local schools. I believe the community is a great example of how schools and the city can work in tandem to make this a more desirable place to live and work.
”

- SUZY TRUITT
DISTRIBUTOR MANAGER,
CID BIO-SCIENCE,
CAMAS, WA

ABOUT XQ



XQ is the nation's leading organization dedicated to reimagining high schools across America so every student succeeds—no matter their race, gender, or zip code. XQ wants to see that change underway in every high school and in every community—all 14,000+ school districts—and offers free, open-source tools that every community can use to reimagine its high schools.

XQ launched in 2015 as an open call to the nation to rethink and redesign the American high school, inspiring more than 10,000 people to join locally-led teams to propose innovative, student-centered school designs. From these, 19 Super Schools are now turning their visions into reality.

To learn more about XQ, visit: www.xqsuperschool.org

To learn more about high school and the future of work, visit: www.xqsuperschool.org/future

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