

SURVEY REPORT: Q1 2020

BUSINESS LEADERS: FUTURE OF WORK IS A ROAD MAP FOR HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

 **BUSINESSFORWARD**
FOUNDATION

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.

For two years, we've helped our network brief mayors, school boards, state and local officials on how high schools can better prepare graduates for the “future of work.” Thousands of business leaders have participated. This report outlines eight common themes from their recommendations.

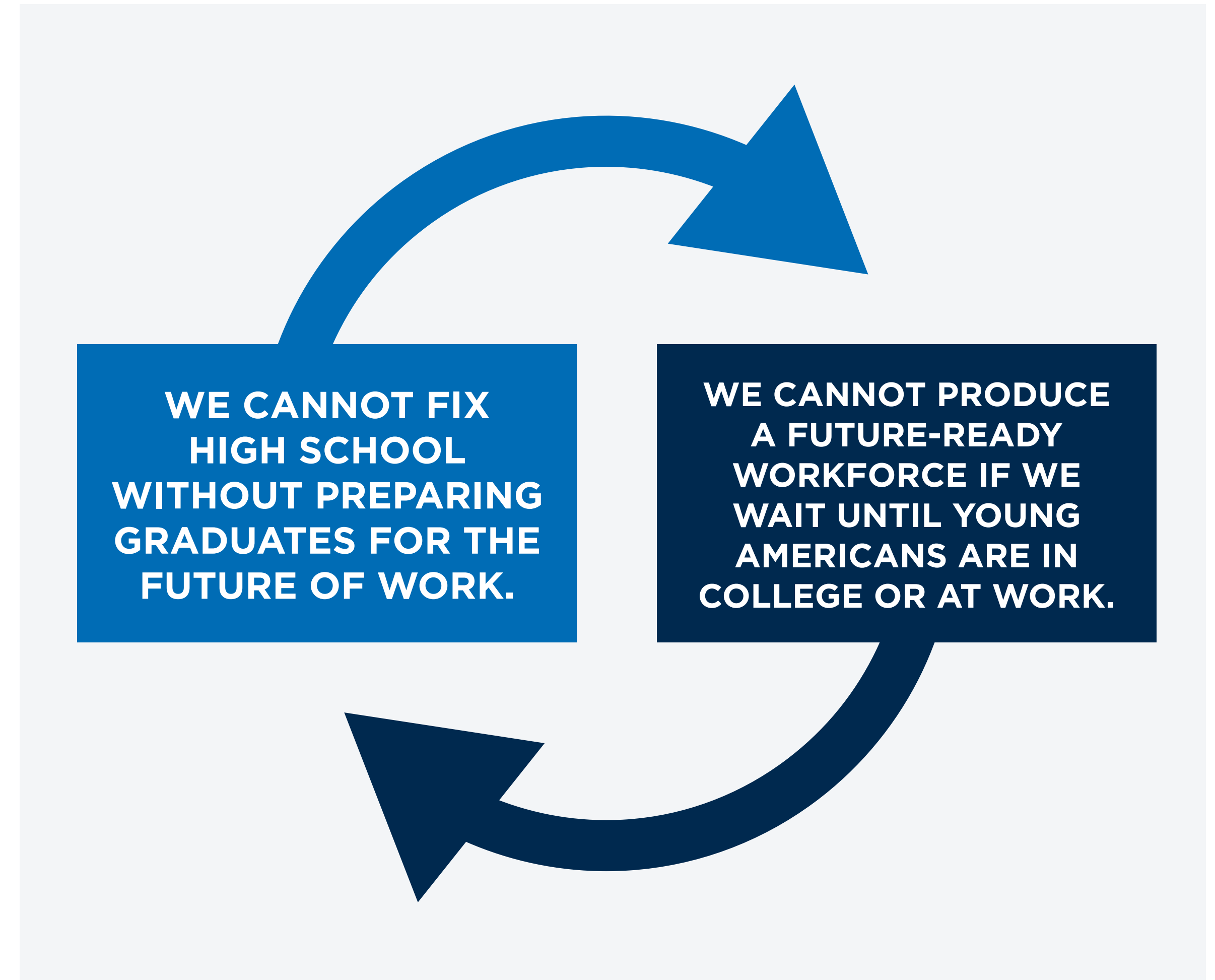
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If you ask a room of business leaders to rank the issues that matter most to their business and to them personally, “good schools” will rank near the top, right below affordable health care and ahead of climate change, immigration, and infrastructure. Most of the business leaders in our network feel an obligation to hire graduates from local schools, and nearly all of them see good schools as a competitive advantage for their community.

For these business owners, the “future of work” is already here. Automation is simultaneously creating and destroying jobs, changing each community’s “job mix” as it goes. Workers who gain new skills can earn more; workers who do not earn less – or fall out of the workforce altogether.

We face two problems that are related, dependent, and reinforcing. First, we cannot fix our high schools without preparing graduates for the future of work. Second, we cannot produce a future-ready workforce if we start in college.

For the leaders in our network, the future of work is a roadmap for education reform. We know what students need: basic technical skills, the ability to learn continuously, teamwork and good judgment, and self-reliance. Internships and apprenticeships work. And more college isn’t always necessary.



WE CANNOT WAIT FOR COLLEGE TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

“

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

“

[In Huntsville, we] develop career education in high school and two year institutions to prepare student for the work force. [We] emphasi[ze] coding and technology training... More needs to be done by local industry to educate and help families support their children in schools.

”

- REGINA COLSTON
CEO,
COLSTONCONSULTANTS,
HUNTSVILLE, AL

“

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

“

A high school diploma is now a milestone in your career.

”

- DENISE BURGESS
PRESIDENT/CEO,
BURGESS SERVICES,
DENVER, CO

“

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

“

Not enough is being done in schools to prepare them for the 21st century jobs. Students must be prepared for future careers in a world where some of the jobs do not yet exist and the required skills are being determined on the job. We need to incorporate 1. more skills-based learning, 2. more project-based learning, 3. more STEM learning, [and] 4. more entrepreneurial skills and courses.

”

- RAJ MUKHI
CEO,
SOFTWARE CATALYSTS, LLC,
HERNDON, VA

LIFE SKILLS, “SOFT” SKILLS, AND TEAMWORK WILL MATTER MORE

“ 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

“ Soft skills training is needed. ”

- TIKA FUFUKA
PRESIDENT/CEO,
MINDY’S RETURN TO FASHION,
CLEVELAND, OH

“ More experiential learning that includes working on teams, working with computers, improving communication skills and good work habits. ”

- KEVIN O’NEILL
PRESIDENT,
CONFERENCE EXCHANGE
CUMBERLAND, RHODE ISLAND

“ Critical thinking skills are paramount to both succeed in further schooling and in the workforce. Teaching kids work ethics, GRIT, stick-to-it that come along with study skills are also key to success in the work force. The same follow-through that is needed for school is critical for the workforce. ”

- MIKE WESTRA
TECHNICAL EXPERT,
FORD MOTOR COMPANY,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

“ 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

“ The students are not being prepared for life never mind the workforce. They have zero grasps on personal finance and budgeting. They have very little technical training. A small percentage leave school with either of these skills. ”

- GARY GOLDMAN
PRESIDENT,
G&M NEW ENGLAND,
SHERBORN, MA

“ Include entrepreneurship in the curriculum. ”

- HEIDI PICKMAN
VP PROGRAMS AND POLICY,
CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR MICRO
ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITY,
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

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

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

SCHOOLS THAT PARTNER WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES WILL PROSPER

“ We need more community participation from businesses, both privately owned and corporations, large and small. ”

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

“ 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

“ The students that graduate from local schools are not mentally prepared for the business opportunities I offer. They need a great deal more appreciation for the important contributions that businesses make to communities, cities, states, and the country. ”

- BENJAMIN BACON
OWNER,
PLANE SPACE DESIGN,
SAVANNAH, GA

“ 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

“ Invite persons from the business sector to give real life examples of the importance of graduating with practical skills and technical training. Include within this outreach examples of what is available to students and how a diverse workforce [is] a trending positive movement. Relate to various opportunities for both degree and non-degree talent... ”

- JOE REDDIX
PRESIDENT/CEO,
THE REDDIX GROUP, LLC
HANOVER, MD

“ 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

“ The best way to work around [school] underfunding is through forming public-private ventures as well as creating charitable foundations to support school systems throughout the state. ”

- JOE REDDIX
PRESIDENT/CEO,
THE REDDIX GROUP, LLC
HANOVER, MD

“ Market-driven reforms should include better alignment and partnerships with businesses in different industries. ”

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

GIVE TEACHERS MORE CREDIT AND SUPPORT

“ 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

“ 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

“ 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

“ 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

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

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

“ Hire more teachers and pay them sufficiently to hold them in the profession. ”

- JAMES KLEIN
COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR
CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

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

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

“ 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

GIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS MORE AUTONOMY, BUT HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE

“

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

“

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

“

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

”

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

“

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 CAMPOS**,
MANAGER,
ROSE VILLE BOUTIQUE,
SAN ANTONIO, TX

“

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

“

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

”

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

TREAT STUDENTS LIKE THE “CUSTOMER”

“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

“[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,
CJT KOOLCARB, INC.,
BLOOMINGDALE, IN

“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

“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

“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

“Schools need to innovate and that takes investment in new forms of K-16 education that have yet to be taken to scale.”

- FRED KELLER
FOUNDER/CHAIR,
CASCADE ENGINEERING,
ALTO, MI

CAREER PREP IS KEY; COLLEGE ISN'T FOR EVERYONE

“

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

“

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

“

Offer more vocational training.

”

- TIM WATERS,
MANAGER,
CHICAGO DOUGH CO.,
NEW LENOX, IL

“

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 OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT,
SR SCALES,
HAMBURG, NY

“

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

“

Our students are being educated and steered strictly to go to college with the weight of that debt behind it. They do not graduate with practical trade type, money-making skill sets that they can use on day one. The criticism with this approach is that every child is not and should not be geared towards college.

”

- CAMILLE JAMERSON
CEO,
CDJ & ASSOCIATES,
SOUTHFIELD, MI

“

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

GOOD SCHOOLS ARE A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

“

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

“

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,
TROVIT,
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

“

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

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