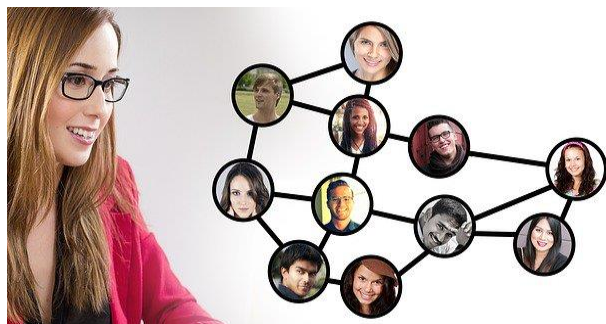


Who is Responsible for Preparing Students for College and Career?

By [Jill Berkowicz and Ann Myers](#) on July 20, 2017 6:57 AM | [No comments](#)



This is a two-part post about college and career readiness. Today's focus is on preparedness for college. Sunday's post will focus on career readiness.


According to the [Ed.Gov website](#), college and career readiness, defined by former President Obama, included the following:

We must do better. Together, we must achieve a new goal, that by 2020, the United States will once again lead the world in college completion. We must raise the expectations for our students, for our schools, and for ourselves - this must be a national priority. We must ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for college and a career.

It is important that standards remain high, gaps are closed, and there is equal access to opportunities for learning for all. Equal access means more than open enrollment. It means that all students, strong and weak, are held to the same academic standards. It means that support and encouragement are offered to all so gap closing results in students being able to access the level of courses that will prepare them for college admittance or career readiness.

Higher standards and expectations are expected to facilitate the preparation for college and career. As educators, we are familiar with what being prepared for college means. Students have to be prepared as skilled readers and writers, adept at mathematical





thinking, able to function in an environment that expects them to be independently responsible for their learning, and have a level of maturity that supports the decisions they are asked to make. Students have to know how to live harmoniously with others, work with others, and communicate well. Now, in this century, in addition to this they need to have experience in being creative, critical thinking, working in a collaborative setting and communicating in a variety of genres.

College is familiar to educators. Most believe they know the way, the route, and what is expected. Yet, a [Hechinger Report](#) from January 2017 reports:

The numbers reveal a glaring gap in the nation's education system: A high school diploma, no matter how recently earned, doesn't guarantee that students are prepared for college courses. Higher education institutions across the country are forced to spend time, money and energy to solve this disconnect. They must determine who's not ready for college and attempt to get those students up to speed as quickly as possible, or risk losing them altogether.

Not a blaming of K-12 education, rather a question arises. Why are high schools under the impression that they are preparing students for college and career, when colleges do not? It is not a failure to teach. It is another kind of educational gap, the gap in communication and relationship between k-12 and higher education. It is a failure to create a k - 16 relationship that supports students. Public schools and higher education have a responsibility to generate a conversation that benefits both.

Both systems are in positions that need to change/shift into a more modern model. Why not do it together? It is not a question of colleges telling public schools what they need to do better. It is a matter of public schools and colleges finding out how the transition from 12th grade to freshman can be more seamless.

Four questions for school-higher education partners:

1. What skills and behaviors do high schools need to boost in their expectations?
2. What developmental understandings do colleges need to reset for incoming freshman?



3. What programs can both high schools and colleges put in place to smooth the transition?
4. What shifts in practice do both need to learn from each other?

In school districts where students move from an elementary to a middle school and a middle school to a high school, conversations unfold when vertical curriculum planning takes place. Are the skills in the departing grades adequately preparing students for the receiving grades? Are the expectations of the receiving grades in sync with the incoming students? What is the cause of this mismatch and how can it be reset? How do the demands of the curriculum in each grade spiral to help the students reach the expectations of the receiving grades? These are conversations that have taken hold in our schools, hopefully. So why then would it not make sense to have these conversations with colleges and universities?

We are not suggesting a meeting to address a problem. We believe and have seen evidence that when high schools and colleges and universities create partnerships, where conversations are ongoing, professors observe, or better, work along side high school teachers, both learn and students are the beneficiaries. As schools look to increase their college ready population, rather than working harder, consider working with partners. This is surely a leadership responsibility to develop the inter-organizational relationship and nurturing it. The relationships are of value to the system, to the teachers, and most certainly the students; enriching the system and the possibilities for success for the students. Who wouldn't want that?

Ann Myers and Jill Berkowicz are the authors of [The STEM Shift](#) (2015, Corwin) a book about leading the shift into 21st century schools. Ann and Jill welcome connecting through [Twitter](#) & [Email](#).



Who Is Really Responsible for Preparing Students for Careers?

By Jill Berkowicz and Ann Myers on July 23, 2017 6:51 AM | [No comments](#)




This is the second part of a two-part post about college and career readiness. Today's focus is on preparedness for career. [Thursday's post](#) focused on college readiness.

How much do educators know and understand about creating graduates who are career ready? What are the skills and knowledge students need for a career over the next forty years? Are our minds full of traditional careers and not thinking about the careers that today's students will be entering? The issue of career ready is one that applies to all students. College is not an end in itself ... at least for most of us. Georgetown University's Center for Education and the Workforce reports that by 2020, three years from now, two thirds of all jobs in this country will require college or post-secondary training of some sort. Most students, we hope, will obtain college degrees but all students should be thinking and preparing for careers.

What Careers Are We Preparing Students For?

To successfully prepare students for careers, educators must be scanners of the economy and alert to shifts in the business world. They must think how those changes might cause us to adjust curriculum. Consider this. Three recent announcements in the world of business underscored the changes at our doorstep. One was that major department stores were closing in malls across the country. The retail industry has been one local employer for high school graduates. Another was that Amazon bought Whole Foods. The mail order food business is on a roll. The market for prepared foods, fresh





and frozen, delivered to your door at affordable prices diminishes the supermarket as an employer. Another evolution in the food market is an online food company called Brandless™ based in San Francisco and Minneapolis. It came to life on July 11, 2017 and adds to the trend of warehouses replacing stores.


We're a group of thinkers, eaters, doers, and lovers of life with big dreams about changing the world. Our mission is deeply rooted in quality, transparency, and community-driven values. Better stuff, fewer dollars. It's that simple
(Brandless.com)

While the local retail market shrinks, the delivery companies will grow. USPS, UPS, and FedEx will need more drivers, sorters, carriers, and the systems they use will have to become faster and continue to grow and develop. But, it is anticipated that this is a short term employment as drones will take over part of that delivery field. All industries are changing.

Can Graduates Be Prepared?

Of those who enter careers after high school, some of them hope to open their own businesses. They become the small business owners who sustain communities everywhere. Increasing numbers of vocational programs across the country allow graduates to exit with industry certifications. Programs offered no longer just include the traditional programs in cosmetology, food services, auto repair or nursing and heavy equipment operation. Now, high school students in these programs are learning digital design, airplane mechanics, alternative energy, criminal justice, gaming, fashion design and STEM programs. Many of these graduates will go directly into the workforce as a result of on the job training and apprenticeships but a large number will continue their education after high school as well. They need to be skilled at reading and creating contracts, knowing how to work with others, supervise others, dealing with customers and regulations, and make difficult decisions. Vocational educators often have program advisors comprised of practitioners in the field who help them keep courses forward looking and in pace with changes in the field. This might be a good idea for all educators.





How do new roles and changing dimensions of traditional roles affect what high school graduates need to know and be able to do in order to be prepared for their careers at 18 years of age? How does that affect the manner in which all students are taught? It isn't an issue only in their high school years; it matters in all thirteen. In some recent conversations with high school educators, it was evident that the focus on subject success and graduation rates still rule the day. Accountability is responsible for that. It is easier to measure how well students do on a test or how many of them are successful in the subjects required to graduate. But schools still are struggling with how to prepare all students for careers, especially when we cannot predict what those careers will demand or even be.

Preparation for On The Job Training


On the job training will take on an even greater role as new jobs emerge. Are our graduates prepared to learn and learn well, with their livelihoods depending on it as their roles as employees or business owners grow and change? It should be no surprise that we will emphasize here that business partnerships are essential. Even before bringing businesses into schools to work with students, helping teachers and their leaders understand what is happening in the world of work that students will be entering is essential to driving the changes schools will make. Before creating an environment that produces graduates who can succeed in a world centered on design thinking, design thinking has to take hold in schools. Here is one definition:

Design thinking drives the work of the 21st century. Design thinking utilizes elements from the designer's toolkit like empathy and experimentation to arrive at innovative solutions. By using design thinking, you make decisions based on what future customers really want instead of relying only on historical data or making risky bets based on instinct instead of evidence. ([IDEOU](#))

Preparation for College & Career is Similar

Strategies to improve the graduation rate may no longer work if career readiness becomes a priority. This isn't about vocational education for all but think about those





conversations students have with counselors about their futures. They are formative in the course choices students make and in the breadth of perspective students have about what career is possible for them. This is a call for shifting school practice into one that prepares all students for a world of work in which careers may change and in which many careers these students will discover are now unknown. So, we teach them how to be continual learners, acquire new information, transfer knowledge from one arena to another, be creative, think critically, collaborate and communicate well.

Preparing graduates for the world of work is now more similar to preparing students for college than before. The skills that develop into the talents for success in the world of work, with or without a college degree, are the same. Project and problem based learning holds the key to success in both arenas. Business partners are essential in that endeavor. Preparing students for college and career can be interwoven from the early years until graduation.

We need educators who are conversant in the reality of the workplace. We need counselors and teachers who open doors rather than limit options, we need business partners and we need a curriculum which includes workplace skills with an equal value to academic ones. But, most of all we need schools to embrace design thinking for themselves. The environment we need to create is this one:

A set of principles collectively known as *design thinking*--empathy with users, a discipline of prototyping, and tolerance for failure chief among them--is the best tool we have for creating ... and developing a responsive, flexible organizational culture ([Harvard Business Review](#)).

Ann Myers and Jill Berkowicz are the authors of [The STEM Shift](#) (2015, Corwin) a book about leading the shift into 21st century schools. Ann and Jill welcome connecting through [Twitter](#) & [Email](#).

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