

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS, PART II

On May 11, WASDA and Baird hosted the second in a series of discussions among K–12 educators, business leaders and college entrance officials on what it means to be college- or career-ready in 2017. Their observations and insights are summarized below.

WHAT ATTRIBUTES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF FROM RECENT GRADUATES?

- The ability to evaluate data and come to a sound, informed decision
- The flexibility to adapt to changes in technology or direction
- A better understanding of general business practices
- Good judgment and common sense
- The courage to fail
- Curiosity – to be involved enough to ask “why,” instead of just accepting what is in front of them
- Self-sufficiency – the drive to put forth the work needed to find an answer

WHAT FACTORS LEAD STUDENTS AND NEW EMPLOYEES TO FAILURE?

- Poor time management
- Math, reading and comprehension skills that are not at the desired level
- Enrolling in a four-year college program when a two-year or technical program might be more appropriate
- A lack of clarity surrounding personal long-term goals
- Unrealistic expectations around responsibilities and salary
- Job search skills (such as résumé and cover letter creation) that could be enhanced

In school, students are typically asked to differentiate between “right answers” and “wrong answers.” In the real world, it’s not that clear-cut. We need employees who are self-directed enough to come up with an informed decision independently and who exercise good judgment.

Young adults don’t actually know WHY they’re pursuing the jobs they have or what else might be out there.

WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING RIGHT?

- Dual-enrollment programs that encourage higher-achieving students to apply for college credits, potentially helping them finish their college programs early
- STEM academies and programs that are focused on particular areas of learning and education
- Job fairs and career days that feature professionals from various industries
- Exposing middle- and even elementary-school students to alternative careers they didn't know existed
- A sufficiently broad curriculum that prepares students for multiple internships
- Encouraging students to look at an industry instead of a specialized role

WHAT COULD K-12 SCHOOLS DO MORE OF?

- Teaching students to recognize the connectedness of their actions – how theories learned in school can be applied to real-world situations
- Helping students feel more confident about themselves and what they learned
- Adopting current and relevant technology for their students
- Challenging students to embrace ambiguity and change

By October of junior year, many college students are either required or strongly encouraged to commit to internships within their program.

How prepared – and financially equipped – are educators to keep up with advancements in industrial technology?

PANELISTS

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