

# COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

On January 17, 2017, WASDA and Baird hosted the first 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 SKILLS ARE SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR FROM TODAY'S HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES?

- The ability to face and overcome challenges
- The capacity to accept constructive criticism
- A positive and curious attitude
- The ability to analyze a problem and find a solution
- An aptitude for customer service
- The ability to act and communicate professionally
- A demonstrated commitment and work ethic
- The ability to remain flexible and engaged

## WHAT CAUSES NEW GRADUATES ENTERING COLLEGE OR THE WORKFORCE TO FAIL?

- A lack of pride in their work
- A lack of resiliency and “grit”
- An inability to juggle multiple projects
- A lack of confidence
- A disregard for what's expected of them
- Impatience for career advancement
- An inability to appreciate nuance and competing client expectations
- A lack of a strong role model

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Today's companies aren't hiring high school graduates for their skills. They're hiring for attitude and will train the skills.

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Young people new to college or the workforce are going to make mistakes. It's unavoidable. They must prove they can get up, learn from their mistakes and succeed.

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## WHAT CURRENT K–12 PRACTICES SUCCESSFULLY PREPARE STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE AND THEIR CAREERS?

- Businesses – especially skilled-trade businesses – offering to pay for education
- Teachers with firsthand experience of technical colleges, skilled trades and “corporate America”
- Internships, youth apprenticeships and mentorships
- School advancement based on performance and competency
- Informal presentations where business leaders speak with students
- Mock interviews evaluated by human resources professionals
- Extracurricular activities that teach students time management and responsibility
- Instruction that “connects the dots” between the behaviors taught in school and the behaviors expected by colleges and businesses

## WHAT COULD HIGH SCHOOLS DO MORE OR LESS OF?

- One career day isn’t the answer – students need to be developing their interpersonal and critical thinking skills throughout school
- Learning through real-world experiences – less telling, more immersing
- More parent engagement in student learning
- Job shadows and industry tours
- Greater flexibility in the curriculum – ex. you could teach geometry in a technical education class on woodworking
- Authentic, personalized assessment of each student’s understanding and abilities
- Educational opportunities that have multiple solutions to develop students’ judgment
- More collaboration and teaming to create high-functioning teams

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It’s so important that students not only learn facts and figures at school – they also need to learn how to think critically and act professionally.

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As much as possible, the concepts taught in school should be grounded in practical, real-world applications.

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*The conversation between K-12 educators, business leaders and college entrance officials will continue at the WASDA Annual Educational Conference on Thursday, May 11, 2017. To learn more, visit the WASDA website at [wasda.org](http://wasda.org).*