
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



College and career readiness



**January
2015**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

The goal of education is to prepare students for careers – directly after high school or, often, after completing a college or post-secondary program. Academic achievement is essential, of course, but other training is necessary to ensure that students understand their career options and the steps they will need to take to attain their goals.

Students who are most prepared to enter the workforce or college after high school have been trained from early grades in skills that will help them be successful.

The value of college and career training

College and career readiness are not new concepts. High school graduates have aspired to attend college or get family-wage work since the earliest graduates walked across the stage to receive a diploma.

Now, however, there is a greater urgency for students to learn the skills they need for work that is well compensated. The wage gap for workers with only a high school diploma is huge. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that workers with a bachelor's degree earn about twice as much as workers with only a high school diploma. And there is a much lower unemployment rate for college graduates. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=77>

What is career and college readiness?

College and career readiness are primary educational goals at every high school and are a priority of the U.S. Department of Education.

The definition for readiness is still under development. To help ensure that all educators are on the same page, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) has defined college and career readiness with three skill areas that students should learn to succeed in the workforce: academic skills, employability and technical skills. www.centerdigitaled.com/workforce/Education-Experts-Define-Career-Readiness.html

“All three of them must be in place and must be achieved by an individual in order to be considered career ready,” said ACTE Executive Director Jan Bray.

Academic skills

This is the primary reason students attend school – to master basic and essential academics such as math and language arts. The ACTE recommends that schools also focus on connecting these skills with workforce tasks. They argue that the application of this knowledge is as important as the mastery.

Employability skills

Employers do not only seek workers with jobs skills; they also look for skills that will ensure success with colleagues and leadership, such as

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creativity, teamwork, problem solving and effective communication, to name a few. These are essential skills for keeping a job.

Technical skills

As schools adopt digital tools, students are gaining more technical skills that will translate to the modern workplace, but these technical skills are broader than computer literacy.

Students who seek to pursue specific career goals should also have exposure to the modern equipment in today's jobs. Employers want to hire workers who can use equipment that meets modern industry standards. Students who train on old tools are not work-ready for the updated tools in place in many fields.

High school programs

For most high schools, it isn't realistic to offer specific job training for immediate employment after graduation. Career readiness programs are intended to expose students to possible career options and help students understand how to reach those goals. In most cases, college or additional training is the next step.

Career Technical Education (CTE) programs are in place in high schools around the country. They are career classes that include instruction, job shadows, site visits and hands-on opportunities. A health occupation pathway, for example, allows students to observe clinical careers, such as radiologists and anesthesiologists, and public safety careers, such as emergency medical technicians.

Starting early for college and career readiness

Getting ready for college starts early. Students need a solid academic background at the earliest grades. The achievement gap for students who fall behind academically usually grows wider each year. If students are not on track to meet educational standards in fourth and eighth grades, they face a one-in-three chance of graduating high school prepared for college or careers.

www.reasoningmind.org/blog/2014/07/10/college-readiness-study/

How can parents help their young students?

Aside from supporting elementary students academically, especially in literacy, these tips will help prepare students for success after high school:

Help students develop positive beliefs about themselves.

Get involved in your child's school. Model work to demonstrate the value of work. Encourage reading and writing at the earliest possible ages.

Focus on literacy.

Students who can read at grade level in third grade are more likely to do well in school and graduate from high school. Build language skills with storytelling, conversations and new vocabulary words. Point out printed words in public and at home. Limit computer and TV "screen time."

Focus on social skills as well as academic skills.

Encourage pretend play and unstructured play time to build social skills and make connections to the real world. Talk to your child to promote language and listening skills.

<http://futureready.org/elementary-school>