

REPORT

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce:

Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents





Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The inextricable link between America's education and workforce systems has become increasingly clear in recent years: success in the workforce depends upon success in the education system. Yet pathways that value lifelong learning, and prepare individuals for a successful, rewarding, financially secure career remain out of reach for many students.

In 2017, the Committee for Economic Development (CED) embarked upon a "listening tour" of business leaders and parents to discuss firsthand information about workplace demands and aspirations for high school graduates. With generous funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the listening tour made stops in five communities over the course of a year: Oakland, CA; Westfield, MA; Tupelo, MS; Marysville, OH; and Norfolk, VA. In each community, 90-minute facilitated discussions were conducted to identify strategies for increasing the effectiveness of business engagement, and to identify the information and supports parents need to ensure student success in the workplace—and to leave each community with a potential path for continued dialogue.

There were striking similarities across all five communities from coast to coast when examining the goals and aspirations for students shared by parents and business leaders. Strategies often aligned, as well. Yet, each group brought a distinct perspective that reflected the culture and values of the community, as well as the economic landscape. In examining the ideas shared by participants, the underlying theme is unmistakable: There is a significant gap between what parents and employers want, and what high schools are delivering.

Prevailing Themes

Parents' goals and expectations for their children after high school centered around four main themes:

- Being happy and successful in a career,
- Gaining financial independence,
- Embracing learning as a lifelong endeavor, and
- Being a good person: having a disposition toward serving others, acting in an ethical manner, and embracing family and community values.

Business leaders' goals and expectations for employees centered around two main themes:

- Demonstrating soft skills upon entry into the workforce, and
- Being a good person: having a disposition toward treating others with respect, being service-oriented, honest, and positive.

The strategies that parents and business leaders developed for improving career readiness across communities shared some commonalities, as well:

- Improving communication among stakeholders about career pathways within the region, beginning as early as elementary school,
- Hosting career fairs to inform students, parents, and educators about available careers within the region,
- Providing the full range of work-based learning opportunities to students,
- Improving counseling and mentoring focused on career readiness, and
- Modeling and reinforcing soft skills and dispositions for students.

Executive Summary

Recommendations

The common thread running throughout the five communities was a goal of helping students navigate a path toward a successful, rewarding career. Below are recommendations for community action drawn from the many ideas shared by participants throughout the listening tour:

- **Coordination & Collaboration Among Stakeholders.** From regional government, to business and industry, to schools, to parents, to students, better collaboration and coordination of efforts is needed to improve outcomes for students.
- **Communication Among Stakeholders.** Communities need an intermediary to serve as a conduit for gathering and sharing information, as well as a strategic plan for communicating information about career pathways and available career opportunities.
- **Tools, Resources, & Supports to Identify Career Pathways.** On a more global scale, students, parents, and businesses need tools, resources, and supports to help them develop a community-based plan for addressing career readiness. In the interim, communities on the listening tour universally identified one specific support as an urgent need: counselors and/or mentors who can help students identify and chart a career pathway.
- **Work-Based Learning Opportunities.** Parents and business leaders expressed support for providing students with opportunities to experience the full continuum of work-based learning experiences, from awareness, to exploration, to training, and finally preparation.
- **Development of Soft Skills.** Communities on the listening tour universally stressed the importance of soft skills. The list varied from one

community to the next, but frequently included: being honest, being motivated, showing resilience, having a positive attitude, being a continuous learner, being service-oriented, the ability to problem solve and manage conflict, and possessing time management skills. Indeed, business leaders repeatedly identified soft skills as one of, if not the most important, factors in hiring. Yet, students often lack many of the skills needed in today's workplace, and in life.

The listening tour stopped in only five communities, but the common goals and aspirations discussed in community to community revealed a shared hope for students as they chart a course for the future. Throughout the listening tour, parents and business leaders echoed the value of coming together to discuss the topic of career readiness. In each discussion, there was a deep understanding that the success or failure of students to thrive in the workplace impacts everyone, from the individual student, to their parents, their neighbors, and more globally, the entire community and economy. These conversations were small in size and scope, yet it was clear that participants share common objectives and ideas for improving the career readiness of students.

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Introduction: Overview of Listening Tour

In 2017, the Committee for Economic Development (CED) embarked upon a “listening tour” of business leaders and parents to discuss firsthand information about workplace demands and aspirations for high school graduates. With generous funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the listening tour made stops in five communities over the course of a year:

- **Oakland, CA.** Located on the eastern side of the San Francisco Bay, Oakland is home to more than 420,000 residents.¹ The leading industries include health care services, transportation, and government.²
- **Westfield, MA.** Located in western Massachusetts, Westfield is home to roughly 42,000 residents.³ Leading industries include precision manufacturing, warehousing operations, aviation-related businesses, and a mix of retail, in addition to government.⁴
- **Tupelo, MS.** Nearly 39,000 people reside in Tupelo, located in the northeast corner of the rural majority state.⁵ Major industries include healthcare, furniture manufacturing, banking, and auto manufacturing.⁶
- **Marysville, OH.** A small town located in central Ohio, Marysville is home to 23,000 people.⁷ Honda is the largest employer, with over 7,110 employees.⁸ Scotts Miracle-Gro Company is also headquartered in Marysville, as are several R&D operations.⁹
- **Norfolk, VA.** Home to the largest navy base in the world, more than 245,000 people reside in Norfolk.¹⁰ Leading industries aside from the military include healthcare and government.¹¹

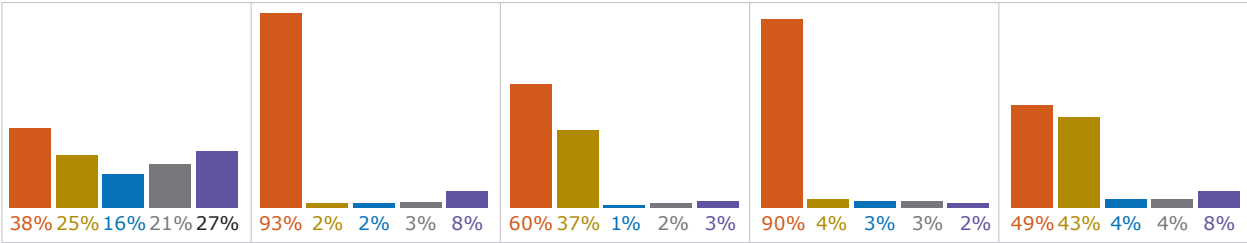
In each community, 90-minute sessions were structured to identify strategies for increasing the effectiveness of business engagement, and to identify the information and supports parents need to ensure student success in the workplace—and to leave each community with a potential path for continued dialogue. No community-level data, strategies, or initiatives related to education or workforce development were gathered or shared as part of the listening tour. Instead, the scope of the listening tour was deliberately narrowed to focus solely on community-based, community-driven insights and ideas. CED is grateful to its network of business leaders, partner organizations, and community members who shared their time and insights. This report provides a brief overview of the importance of career readiness, describes the methodology of the listening tour, highlights the findings from each of the five communities, and concludes with recommendations for how communities nationwide can advance career readiness efforts.

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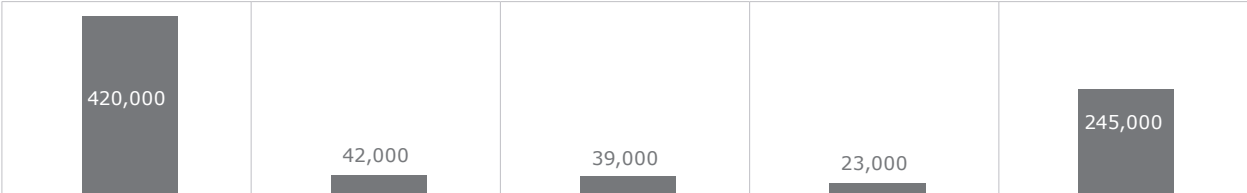
Comparison of Demographics

Oakland	Westfield	Tupelo	Marysville	Norfolk
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Race: White Black or African American Asian Other Hispanic or Latino of Any Race



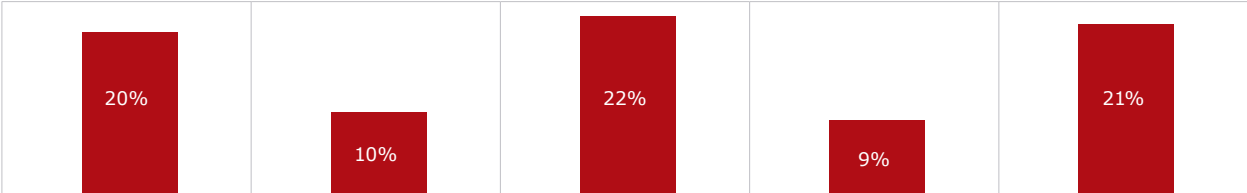
Population



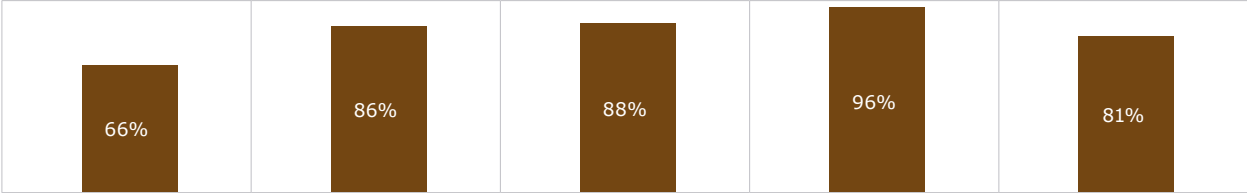
Median Household Income



Poverty Rate



High School Graduation Rate



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Oakland Unified School District, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Tupelo Public School District, Marysville Exempted School District, Norfolk Public Schools

Why Career Readiness Matters

Career readiness has a long and somewhat complicated history in the United States. Following generations of pendulum swings from vocational tracking, to college-for-all, recent years have seen an attempt to shift toward a more nuanced approach of preparing students for both college *and* a career.

Why this shift toward a middle ground? Despite some indications that our education system is improving following decades of standards-based reform, data show that too many young people in America are floundering. This can be seen at various points along the pipeline.

In the K-12 system:

- High school graduation rates are on the rise overall (83 percent¹²), yet attainment gaps persist: 88 percent of White students graduate within four years, however their Black peers graduate at a rate of just 75 percent, and their Hispanic peers at a rate of 78 percent.¹³ Both students with disabilities and limited English proficient students graduate at a rate of only 65 percent, which is particularly troubling given the rising number of students who fall into these subgroups.¹⁴
- Achievement rates on many national assessments are either stagnant or dropping. For example, scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) exam for 4th graders remained stagnant in 2015; scores dipped for 8th graders, whereas 12th graders saw no measurable difference.¹⁵ For math, 4th, 8th, and 12th graders all scored lower in 2015 than in the previous assessment year.¹⁶

At the postsecondary level:

- In 2016, composite scores on the ACT exam (designed to predict how well a student will do in college) averaged just below 21 out of a possible score of 36—the same average composite score reported for 1995, more

than twenty years earlier.¹⁷ SAT scores, which similarly measure how well a student will do in college, have been on a steady decline for the past ten years, dropping from 508 to 495.¹⁸

- Once in college, nearly one-third of students report taking remedial coursework—29 percent in four-year programs and 41 percent in two-year programs.¹⁹
- And, looking at degree attainment, only 59 percent of full-time undergraduates earn a bachelor's degree within six years.²⁰ For students in two-year programs the rates are significantly lower: only 28 percent of students earn a degree within three years of entering a program.²¹

Unfortunately, these outcomes are too often a foregone conclusion long before students even enter school, beginning in early childhood:

- Children entering kindergarten without prior experience in formal early education programs score lower on assessments of reading, mathematics, and fine motor skills than those who have such experience.²²
- Only 5 percent of 3-year-olds and 32 percent of 4-year-olds are enrolled in a public preschool setting,²³ such as Head Start or a state-funded preschool program, and even among these publicly funded preschool programs, quality varies greatly. Yet, research demonstrates the short- and long-term benefits for children who participate in high-quality early learning programs, including increased readiness for kindergarten, high school graduation rates, and future wages.²⁴

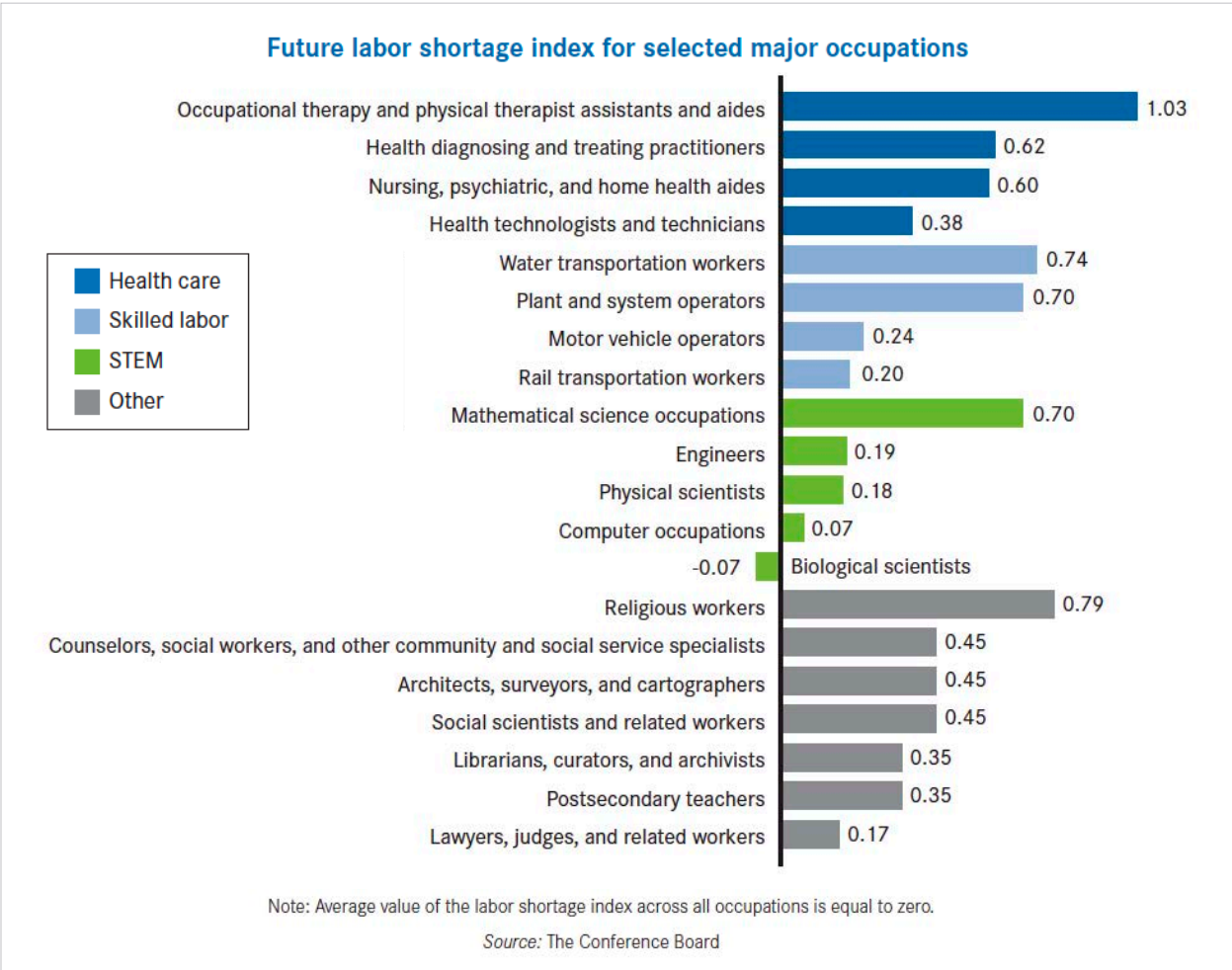
Why do these figures matter? By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the economy are projected to require postsecondary education and training beyond high school (35 percent at least a bachelor's degree, 30 percent some college or an associate's degree).²⁵ Yet, if the attainment rates mentioned above hold steady, the supply of qualified candidates will fall short. Reports from employers already point to

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a skills gap, meaning a mismatch between the knowledge and skills of prospective employees and the competencies needed for available jobs. One report examining middle market companies found that 44 percent of executives report lacking candidates with the right skills.²⁶ Another source reports that the skills gap costs employers up to \$23,000 a year per unfilled position.²⁷

There is a growing awareness of the need to address this gap in preparedness and skills among various stakeholders—perhaps most notably among students. A recent survey from YouthTruth found that 84 percent of students want to go to college, yet only 1 in 2 feels academically prepared.²⁸ Moreover, students place value on college *and* career: in another survey 8 in 10

students indicate having a job that pays well is important—a sentiment parents echo.²⁹ And this link matters: on measures of economic well-being Millennials who earn a college diploma outperform their peers who earned a high school diploma by about \$17,500—a much bigger gap than previous generations.³⁰ Yet, students and parents also report being ill-informed about career readiness programs and resources at the high school level: just 47 percent were familiar with the term “career technical education,” and only 54 percent were familiar with career centers.³¹ In another survey, 54 percent of high schoolers report a lack of supports to help match interests to jobs; 51 percent indicate they lack an understanding of the steps to secure their desired career.³²



Methodology

The listening tour was designed to provide an opportunity for business leaders and parents to share insights and ideas with each other on the topic of career readiness through small community-based conversations. Drawing from CED's deep and broad network of partners nationwide, five communities were identified as prospective sites following extensive research and vetting. Communities were selected based on a number of factors:

- **Geography**, with an eye toward representing the West Coast, Midwest, South, New England, and the Mid-Atlantic regions.
- **Community**, to include a mix of urban, rural, suburban, and small-to-mid sized towns.
- **Industry**, with the goal of tapping into a broad spectrum of career pathways within each region including manufacturing, healthcare, government, and hospitality and tourism, among others.

A local partner was selected to aid in identifying and inviting prospective participants, and coordinating onsite meeting logistics. Local partners included state and regional chambers of commerce, United Way chapters, and other community-based nonprofits and foundations working to improve the lives of local citizens.

Invitations were extended to 10 business leaders who are representative of the regional economy, as well as 10 parents with children of varied age ranges from middle and high school. The size of the group was kept deliberately small to allow for conversation among participants. Further, the participant list was intentionally limited to parents and business leaders; local partners were asked to omit educators from the invite list to provide these two stakeholder groups with an opportunity to interact without the school as an intermediary.

Participants were not provided with any information to review in advance. Further, no data were presented during the session about student outcomes, or specific national or local initiatives to avoid influencing the conversation. No personal information was recorded to identify the participants or business leaders following the session, nor were any comments attributed to any individual in public documentation of the sessions.

Each community conversation lasted approximately 90 minutes. A protocol was developed to guide the discussion, led by a facilitator. The facilitator also documented the conversations. The protocol included a series of questions to promote conversation among the participants, including:

- What are your goals and expectations for your child/children after they finish their education and/or training?
- What are your goals and expectations for employees once they are hired by your company?
- What is needed to help ensure that high school graduates are on a path toward a successful job/career?
- What is the role of business? What is the role of parents?
- What is the role of schools? What is the role of other intermediaries?

At the close of each session, participants were asked to complete a brief survey to help further the understanding of parent and business perspectives (see Appendix A for sample parent and business leader surveys). The survey responses were analyzed and are included in the Findings section, along with the results from each community discussion.

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Findings

There were striking similarities across the five communities from coast to coast when examining the goals and aspirations for students shared by parents and business leaders. Strategies often aligned, as well. Yet, each group brought a distinct perspective that reflected the culture

and values of the community, as well as the economic landscape.³³ In examining the ideas shared by participants, the underlying theme is unmistakable: There is a significant gap between what parents and employers want, and what high schools are delivering.

Prevailing Themes

Parent Goals & Expectations

Parents' goals and expectations for their children after high school centered around four main themes:

- Being happy and successful in a career,
- Gaining financial independence,
- Embracing learning as a lifelong endeavor, and
- Being a good person: having a disposition toward serving others, acting in an ethical manner, and embracing family and community values.



Business Goals & Expectations

Business leaders' goals and expectations for employees centered around two main themes:

- Demonstrating soft skills upon entry into the workforce, and
- Being a good person: having a disposition toward treating others with respect, being service oriented, honest, and positive.

Strategies for Achieving Career Readiness

The strategies that parents and business leaders developed for improving career readiness across communities shared some commonalities, as well:

- Improving communication among stakeholders about career pathways within the region, beginning as early as elementary school,
- Hosting career fairs to inform students, parents, and educators about available careers within the region,
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Oakland, CA

On May 12, 2017 California Forward, Rise Together Bay Area, and All-In Alameda County hosted parents and business leaders for the first stop on the listening tour at the Urban Strategies Council.³⁴

The discussion among parents and business leaders covered topics such as goals and expectations for students after high school graduation, strategies for achieving career readiness, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders including business leaders, parents, and schools.

Goals & Expectations

Parents that participated in the group discussion, and those who followed up in greater detail via phone following the session, shared a number of goals for their children after high school:

- To gain financial independence and earn a living/comfortable wage,
- To secure fulfilling work,
- To make a contribution,
- To find purpose, meaning, and joy, and
- To be ethical

Business leaders that participated in the group discussion, and those who followed up in greater detail via phone following the session, also shared goals for employees:

- To be caring,
- To be competent,
- To be respectful,
- To work well with others,
- To be focused on results, and
- To know how to learn.

There is a clear expectation among this group of parents that their children will go into a four-year-degree program, followed by a graduate degree



program, just as they did following their high school experience.⁴⁵ And although these parents discuss prospective college majors with their children, few have connected higher education plans with a career pathway. All see college as the first step on the path to life after high school, but beyond that, participants expressed having little-to-no knowledge of the different types of career pathways available, nor the education and training required for entry into a career.

“I want my kids to be able to find a job that will provide a comfortable living and give them a satisfying sense of purpose in the world.”

Business leaders affirmed that parents are generally not a target audience for career-related outreach. Indeed, business leaders expressed frustration about the lack of a familiar, consistent conduit that is easily accessible for sharing information related to career pathways, whether the goal is sharing information about the types of knowledge and skills needed to work in a particular industry, or creating a pipeline for work-based learning opportunities. As one regional employer noted, “I’m frustrated over so many different organizations asking the same questions. Can’t they collaborate? I need ways to communicate more broadly.”

Oakland

Oakland is home to more than 420,000 residents.³⁵ Located on the eastern side of the San Francisco Bay, Oakland is the fifth busiest port in the United States,³⁶ and serves as the county seat for Alameda County. The leading industries include health care services, transportation, and government.³⁷

PRINCIPAL EMPLOYERS

<u>Employer</u>	<u>2016</u>		
	<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Percent of Total Employment</u>
Kaiser Permanente/Kaiser Foundation	12,287	1	6.13%
Oakland Unified School District	5,080	2	2.53%
County of Alameda	4,490	3	2.24%
City of Oakland	3,500	4	1.75%
Bay Area Rapid Transit	3,288	5	1.64%
State of California	3,168	6	1.58%
UCSF Children's Hospital Oakland	2,675	7	1.33%
Alameda Health Systems (Highland Hospital)	2,300	8	1.15%
Southwest Airlines	2,256	9	1.13%
Sutter Hospitals, Medical Foundation, & Support Services	2,257	10	1.13%
U. S. Postal Service	N/A		
East Bay Municipal Utility District	N/A		
Federal Express	N/A		
Total	41,301		

Source: City of Oakland Economic and Workforce Development Department and County of Alameda
Total employment of 200,500 from State of California Employment Development Department is used to calculate the percentage of employment in 2016.

Looking at demographics:

- Thirty-eight percent of Oakland residents are White, 25 percent Black or African American, 16 percent Asian, and 21 percent other; 27 percent are Hispanic or Latino, of any race.³⁸
- The median household income is just under \$58,000.³⁹
- Twenty percent of the population of Oakland lives in poverty.⁴⁰
- The unemployment rate in December 2017 was 3 percent.⁴¹

On the education front:

- Just over 80 percent of residents have earned a high school diploma; nearly 40 percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴²
- The main school district is Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), which serves more than 50,000 students in both district-run schools and district-authorized charter schools.⁴³ The graduation rate for OUSD is just under 66 percent, and of those who graduate 60 percent attend college, split evenly between two- and four-year institutions.⁴⁴

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Participants also discussed the value of students gaining workplace experience, but struggled to pinpoint when this should occur: high school, after high school, during community college, or towards the end of a four-year degree program. Business leaders expressed a desire to provide opportunities, but a challenge in doing so, particularly at the high school level. As one business leader put it, “it is very time consuming to offer high school students meaningful opportunities.” Another concurred, noting that internships are difficult to coordinate, and the cost is prohibitive. Simply put, the ROI is not there for many businesses. Yet one parent noted the value of work experience in setting her on a path toward a career, “I have a disability, so I was tracked into a summer program where I could learn about computers.”

Another theme in the Oakland discussion focused on the idea of failure. Parents and business leaders alike expressed concern over the high expectations for students, and the perceived inability to take chances, and fail—in school, extra-curricular activities, and even at home.

Strategies for Achieving Career Readiness

Parents shared a number of strategies for helping their child/children to become more career ready:

- Share more information on career pathways, CTE, and available jobs,
- Discuss pathways during high school, meaning looking beyond California’s A-G requirements,⁴⁶
- Host career days, and
- Provide career exploration opportunities.

Communication of career-related information was a top need identified by the parents in Oakland. Parents specifically mentioned a need for businesses and guidance counselors to play a bigger role in sharing information. “I want outreach to parents in venues where they frequent, such as after school programs, doctors’ offices, behavioral health, libraries, and on listservs,” said

one parent of a middle schooler. From business leaders, parents want more information about the types of jobs that are available. From guidance counselors, parents want information to go beyond A-G requirements to include a broader discussion of career pathways and related knowledge, skills, and educational requirements.

Career day was mentioned as another option for exposing students to the different types of jobs available in the region, hosted by business and industry. Finally, parents expressed a need for career exploration opportunities for students, although as mentioned earlier, there was not consensus on who should offer these, what they should entail, and when they should occur.

Business leaders also shared a number of strategies:

- Model behaviors for students,
- Encourage students to take responsibility for their future, and
- Help parents and students understand that it doesn’t matter which college they attend; the knowledge, skills, and attributes are more important.

For business leaders, parents and teachers need to model and reinforce behaviors that match the goals and expectations employers have for students: to be caring, competent, respectful, to work well with others, to focus on results, and to know how to learn. As one participant who represents multiple businesses in the region stated, “My message to parents: develop a broader skill set to provide more flexibility for a career.” Business leaders also want students to take the initiative in planning for their careers. And employers want parents to hear this message: it doesn’t matter where your child goes to college; it’s who they are as a person, what knowledge and skills they bring to the table, and what attributes they bring to the job, that matter most to hiring managers.

Westfield, MA

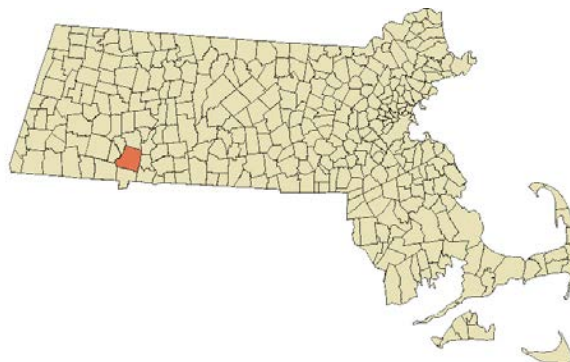
On August 10, 2017 the Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce hosted the listening tour at The Reed Institute Educational Center.⁴⁷

The discussion among parents and business leaders covered topics such as goals and expectations for students after high school graduation, strategies for achieving career readiness, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders including business leaders, parents, and schools.

Goals & Expectations

Parents that participated in the group discussion shared a number of goals for their children after high school:

- To have a sense of self,
- To understand the reality of available jobs and associated salaries,
- To possess life skills,
- To understand it's a journey, there is no one, right way,
- To be ready to enter the workforce after high school; it's not all about entering college,
- To have strong communication skills,
- To know there are many opportunities, for all,
- To be happy,
- To gain work experience in high school,
- To learn to fail, and
- To embrace lifelong learning, continuing education.



Business leaders that participated in the group discussion shared the following goals for employees:

- To ask for assistance,
- To possess great communication skills,
- To have the ability to learn,
- To be a problem solver,
- To possess critical thinking skills,
- To have the ability to plan,
- To be able to assess pros/cons,
- To have soft skills: teamwork, reliability, and time management, and
- To have the right attitude.

There is a strong sense of community in Westfield. Indeed, most of the participants knew each other, but more often in silos; they might stand shoulder-to-shoulder on the soccer field all weekend, said one parent, but know little about the potential career opportunities at their fellow soccer parent's company. Indeed, most parents were surprised to learn about the efforts of many businesses in the community to expose students to potential career pathways. Business leaders spent significant time during the session sharing information about the programs in place, particularly in the manufacturing industry. "We provide internships, but we have more interaction with students than we do with parents," noted one business leader.

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Westfield

Located in western Massachusetts, Westfield is home to roughly 42,000 residents.⁴⁸ Known as the “Whip City” for manufacturing of buggy whips in the 1800s,⁴⁹ leading industries include precision manufacturing, warehousing operations, aviation-related businesses, and a mix of retail, in addition to government.⁵⁰

EMPLOYERS and EMPLOYMENT 2014

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of Community Total</i>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries	14	0.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,482	8.0%
Construction	831	4.5%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	386	2.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,792	15.1%
Information	249	1.3%
Manufacturing	3,023	16.3%
Services	5,357	29.0%
Transportation, Comm. & Utilities	1,449	7.8%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	2,850	15.4%

Note: Above does not include self-employed, where many work in the agriculture, construction and service industries.

Average Weekly Wage \$856

Self-employed (includes all business types) 1266

Source: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Looking at demographics:

- Ninety-three percent of Westfield residents are White, 2 percent Black or African American, 2 percent Asian, and 3 percent other; roughly 8 percent are Hispanic or Latino, of any race.⁵¹
- The median household income is just under \$63,000.⁵²
- Just less than 10 percent of the population of Westfield lives in poverty.⁵³
- The unemployment rate in December 2017 was 3.4 percent.⁵⁴

On the education front:

- Ninety-two percent of residents have earned a high school diploma; 32 percent have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher.⁵⁵
- The main school district is Westfield Public School District, which serves approximately 5,200 students across 12 schools.⁵⁶ The graduation rate for the district is 86 percent, and of those who graduate 71 percent attend college after graduation.⁵⁷

Strategies for Achieving Career Readiness

Together, parents and business leaders brainstormed a number of strategies for helping students to become more career ready:

- In general, create opportunities that get students to businesses versus businesses to schools,
- Provide opportunities for students to tour businesses in elementary school (specifically 5th grade), and again throughout middle and high school,
- Provide students with exposure to careers,
- Offer job shadow days,
- Host career fairs,
- Provide more hands-on exposure/experience, and project-based learning,
- Host an information fair to inform teachers about career opportunities, and
- Improve communication between schools and businesses.

Parents also identified what they need from businesses to help their children, including:

- Resource that lists available career opportunities,
- Activities hosted by businesses on early release days, and
- Information about worked-based learning opportunities—from exposure to experience in a career field.

The conversation in Westfield was grounded in practicality: the importance of informing students of the available career options within their own community, helping them understand there are multiple pathways to a successful career, and finding ways to better prepare them for the workplace. Yet, time and know-how were consistently mentioned as barriers. “People seem to be too busy,” said one business leader; a sentiment echoed by nodding heads throughout the room. Another noted, “I don’t know how to get in touch with the people who could make

this happen” when discussing the importance of helping students connect their passion to a career path. Thus, a key discussion point was around improved communication among businesses, parents, students, and schools (teachers in particular).

The topic of parent responsibility was also woven throughout the conversation: business leaders and parents alike mentioned the importance of families taking on a bigger role in preparing students for careers, largely through the development of soft skills.

“I would like to know if employers could have mentors available to guide our children as they figure out what interests them and what they might want to do with their lives.”

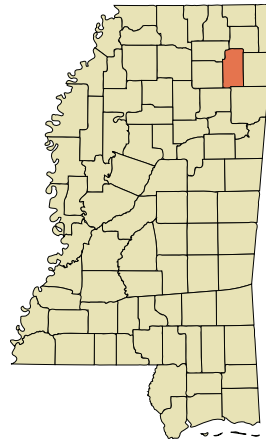
A central focus of the conversation about solutions also addressed work-based learning opportunities. Most participants had themselves garnered work experience in high school, and felt this was critical to helping students to be ready for life after high school. Participants suggested volunteering, high school internships, co-op opportunities, and making sure students have a chance to explore interests and do meaningful work.

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents

Tupelo, MS

On October 27, 2017 the CREATE Foundation hosted the listening tour at their headquarters in downtown Tupelo.⁵⁸

The discussion among parents and business leaders covered topics such as goals and expectations for students after high school graduation, strategies for achieving career readiness, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders including business leaders, parents, and schools.



Goals & Expectations

Parents that participated in the group discussion shared a number of goals for their children after high school:

- To obtain professional/vocational education, and develop vocational skills,
- To be able to support themselves financially,
- To be self-sufficient,
- To serve others, and
- To understand that education doesn't end.

Business leaders that participated in the group discussion shared the following goals for employees:

- To be punctual,
- To be approachable,
- To be trainable,
- To go above and beyond,
- To be service-oriented,
- To be a team player,
- To demonstrate leadership skills,
- To possess intangible attributes, such as gut instinct,
- To have strong communication skills (verbal and written), including interpersonal and social media skills,
- To be accountable,
- To exhibit resilience,
- To exhibit drive, motivation,
- To be conscientiousness, and
- To show initiative.

Tupelo

Nearly 39,000 people reside in Tupelo, located in Northeast Mississippi, a rural majority state.⁵⁹ Tupelo is home to the North Mississippi Medical Center, the largest non-metropolitan hospital in the United States. Major industries also include furniture manufacturing, banking, and auto manufacturing.⁶⁰

Lee County Major Employers

TOP EMPLOYERS

North Mississippi Health Services	4,286
Cooper Tire and Rubber Company	1,625
Lane Furniture Industries	1,401
Tupelo Public School District	1,200
MTD Products	1,150
JESCO, Inc.	1,000
Wal-Mart, Sam's	979
Lee County Schools	931
BancorpSouth	800
Philips	650

TOP MANUFACTURING EMPLOYERS

Cooper Tire and Rubber Company	1,625
Lane Furniture Industries	1,401
MTD Products	1,150
H.M. Richards	650
Philips	650
Advanced Innovations	490
Auto Parts Manufacturing Mississippi	440
Tecumseh Products Company	400
Martinrea Automotive Structures	300
Omega Motion	300

INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYERS

Company	Manufacturing Type	Employees	Country of Origin
Philips	Commercial and Industrial Light Fixtures	650	Netherlands
Auto Parts Manufacturing Mississippi	Resin Parts, Instrument Panels, Welding, Stamping	400	Japan
Martinrea Automotive Structures	Automotive Component Parts	300	Canada
A W Manufacturing	Upholstered Furniture	230	Canada
Hunter Douglas Metals & Distribution	Window Fashions	130	Netherlands
Norbord MS, LLC	Oriented Strand Board (OSB)	125	Canada
Home Decor Innovations	Mirrors and Mirrored Doors	80	Canada
Okin America Inc.	Linear Actuators for Seating, Bedding, Ergo Tables	65	Switzerland
Limoss	Actuators	20	Germany
Wey Valve	Industrial Gate Valves	20	Switzerland

Community Development Foundation 398 East Main Street CDF Center, Tupelo, MS 38804

Looking at demographics:

- Sixty percent of Tupelo residents are White, 37 percent Black or African American, 1 percent Asian, and 2 percent other; just over 3 percent are Hispanic or Latino, of any race.⁶¹
- The median household income is \$43,000.⁶²
- Roughly 22 percent of the population of Tupelo lives in poverty.⁶³
- The unemployment rate in December 2017 for Lee County (Tupelo figures not available) was 3.4 percent.⁶⁴

On the education front:

- Eighty-seven percent of residents have earned a high school diploma; nearly 30 percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.⁶⁵
- The main school district is Tupelo Public School District, which serves 6,900 students across 13 schools.⁶⁶ The graduation rate for the district is 88 percent.⁶⁷

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents

There was also a practical, vocational focus to the discussion of goals among the participants in Tupelo. Parents spoke little of postsecondary education during the session, instead focusing on the importance of acquiring specific skills for entry into the workforce. Participants expressed strong support for the public schools, and the role of the school in creating opportunity for students. Yet, the current accountability focus of schools was discussed at length, with parents and business leaders alike expressing concern over the negative effect of standards-based reform on schools, teachers, and students.

In sharing goals, one business leader asked, “How do we change the paradigm away from test scores and college entrance to make CTE and career readiness just as important as college?”

Another common theme throughout the discussion of goals and aspirations for students: the importance of service, and instilling that in students. Many of the participants had either served in the military themselves, or had family members who served. But beyond military service, it was apparent that service is a cultural value in Tupelo.

Strategies for Achieving Career Readiness

Together, parents and business leaders brainstormed a number of strategies for helping students to become more career ready:

- Have schools provide exposure to careers,
- Host a career expo fair in 8th, 10th, and 11th grades,
- Provide students with access to counseling, career coaches, and/or mentors,
- Provide bus service funding for after school activities that are career focused,
- Address relevance in school curriculum,
- Encourage participation in CTE,
- Engage parents early,
- Engage the business community (currently operates in isolation), and
- Encourage business to pay for training.

Many participants acknowledged the hardships of the most at-risk students, when addressing solutions: “We have a number of kids who have never left Tupelo,” noted one parent when discussing exposure to different careers and postsecondary options. Solutions focused on creating opportunities for all students that connect to the school day, including after school activities, while keeping in mind the costs and logistics associated with these types of activities. Participants in the Tupelo session also raised the importance of expanding early childhood education as a broader strategy for improving student outcomes within the community.

Finally, parents and business leaders discussed the need for better communication among stakeholders. One business leader noted, “We participate in job fairs and accept all invitations to speak with classes of middle schools, high schools, community colleges, and colleges. We offer internships. This all gets to students, but we don’t necessarily reach parents.” Another business leader echoed a desire to identify a venue to be able to talk to parents as groups.

Marysville, OH

On November 6, 2017 the Union County Chamber of Commerce and Union County Community Improvement Corporation hosted the listening tour at the Honda Heritage Center.⁶⁸

The discussion among parents and business leaders covered topics such as goals and expectations for students after high school graduation, strategies for achieving career readiness, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders including business leaders, parents, and schools.

Goals & Expectations

Parents that participated in the group discussion shared a number of goals for their children after high school:

- To have opportunities for career exploration, mentoring, job shadowing, work experience,
- To have a sense of direction,
- To find balance,
- To possess financial management skills,
- To find a job they love,
- To be continuous learners,
- To be independent,
- To be able to support themselves,
- To be happy,
- To possess strong social/emotional skills,
- To have engaged in developmentally-appropriate experiences, and
- To exhibit self-discipline.

Business leaders that participated in the group discussion shared the following goals for employees:

- To be a good steward of the community,
- To demonstrate soft skills,
- To exhibit self-motivation,



- To be engaged,
- To have a strong work ethic,
- To have a positive attitude,
- To be honest,
- To exhibit critical thinking skills,
- To be a continuous learner,
- To be loyal,
- To have a customer-focused mindset,
- To be able to handle difficult situations,
- To have conflict management skills,
- To possess high emotional intelligence, and
- To have the ability to multitask.

Marysville participants had a mix of opinions on several topics which grew out of the initial list of goals and aspirations. There was disagreement over the readiness of 18-year-olds to enter the workforce, resulting in lack of agreement over pathways that put students in the workforce immediately following high school graduation versus 2- or 4-year degree programs. As one parent noted, “most 18-year-olds are not equipped with the social/emotional skills to enter into the workforce.” Others felt exposure helps: one business leader hires students ages 14–18 on a part-time basis to build readiness skills for entry into the workforce immediately following high school. There was also concern with potential pitfalls of tracking students in a way that might limit career options after graduation. Despite the lack of agreement over some of the ‘when’ and ‘how’ aspects, participants favored students gaining some entry-level work experience.

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents

Marysville

A small town located in central Ohio, Marysville is home to 23,000 people.⁶⁹ Honda is the largest employer, with over 7,110 employees.⁷⁰ Scotts Miracle-Gro Company is also headquartered in Marysville, as are several R&D operations.⁷¹

Looking at demographics:

- Ninety percent of Marysville residents are White, 4 percent Black or African American, 3 percent Asian, and 3 percent other; 2 percent are Hispanic or Latino, of any race.⁷²
- The median household income is \$62,000.⁷³
- Roughly 9 percent of the population of Marysville lives in poverty.⁷⁴
- The unemployment rate in December 2017 for nearby Columbus (Marysville figures not available) was 3.7 percent.⁷⁵

On the education front:

- Eighty-nine percent of residents have earned a high school diploma; 27 percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.⁷⁶
- The main school district is Marysville Exempted School District, which serves 5,100 students across 9 schools.⁷⁷ The graduation rate for the district is 96 percent, and 76 percent go on to higher education.⁷⁸



Strategies for Achieving Career Readiness

Together, parents and business leaders brainstormed a number of strategies for helping students to become more career ready:

- Create mentoring opportunities,
- Improve guidance so it is more focused on career, not necessarily guidance counselors, perhaps another line of staff,
- Develop soft skills (parent role),
- Business to host career fairs,
- Business to provide rigorous internships,
- Address fear of legal concerns (safety first mentality) regarding take your kid to work day,
- Provide meaningful work experiences,
- Change the mindset of schools, to begin career exploration in elementary school,
- Business to connect directly with parents,
- Provide career exploration opportunities,
- Better inform parents,
- Improve messaging to community about jobs, and
- Address, what does success look like?

There was a strong emphasis on how to provide students with the guidance, mentoring, and coaching needed to explore career pathways. Participants discussed the idea of a new type of staff position within schools, designed specifically to focus on career readiness, including serving as an intermediary for stakeholders, while offering guidance to students. Also, better coordination and communication to share information about careers, pathways, and opportunities with students, parents, and schools. Social media was mentioned as an alternative, as was communication via the school, however there was general acknowledgement of “parent overload of information/communication, which gets lost in the shuffle.”

One business leader noted, “We need to be able to talk to parents about alternate pathways (other than 4-year college) at a younger age than high school. Students and parents should be thinking about these options in middle school.”

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents

Norfolk, VA

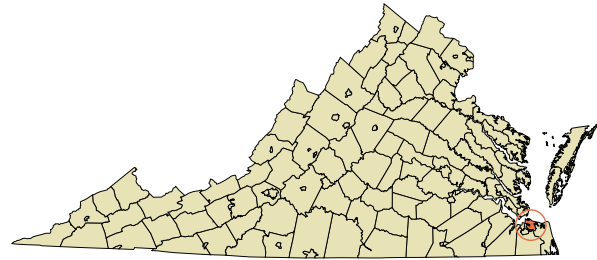
On February 1, 2018 the United Way of South Hampton Roads hosted the final stop on the listening tour.⁷⁹

The discussion among parents and business leaders covered topics such as goals and expectations for students after high school graduation, strategies for achieving career readiness, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders including business leaders, parents, and schools.

Goals & Expectations

Parents that participated in the group discussion shared a number of goals for their children after high school:

- To succeed in life,
- To love what you do,
- To be happy, confident in choices,
- To be resilient, independent, at peace (reduce anxiety),
- To make choices based on values we've instilled in them,
- To be courageous in making decisions, take chances,
- To make mistakes early,
- To exhibit strong family foundation, values, and
- To be a good steward of the community, community service.



Business leaders that participated in the group discussion shared the following goals for employees:

- To be able to follow directions,
- To exhibit critical/creative thinking skills,
- To have strong professional communication skills,
- To be able to fit into corporate culture,
- To manage conflict,
- To possess people skills,
- To be flexible/adaptable,
- To have good persuasion skills,
- To understand generational perspectives/differences,
- To exhibit problem solving,
- To be resilient,
- To have self-awareness,
- To be confident,
- To have a positive attitude
- To exhibit honesty, integrity, good character,
- To accept feedback,
- To possess time management skills,
- To shows initiative, and
- To demonstrate soft skills.

Norfolk

Home to the largest navy base in the world, more than 245,000 people reside in Norfolk.⁸⁰ Leading industries aside from the military include healthcare and government.⁸¹

FULL AND PART-TIME EMPLOYEES BY INDUSTRY BY PLACE OF WORK, 2012

	Norfolk 2012	Percent	Region 2012	Percent
TOTAL JOBS	207,851	100.0%	1,000,809	100.0%
<i>Construction</i>	5,562	2.7%	45,990	4.6%
<i>Manufacturing</i>	6,668	3.2%	52,998	5.3%
<i>Wholesale Trade</i>	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
<i>Retail Trade</i>	12,923	6.2%	99,399	9.9%
<i>Transportation/Warehousing</i>	9,717	4.7%	(D)	(D)
<i>Information</i>	3,041	1.5%	(D)	(D)
<i>Finance and Insurance</i>	7,332	3.5%	37,668	3.8%
<i>Real Estate</i>	5,534	2.7%	(D)	(D)
<i>Professional/Tech. Svcs.</i>	10,608	5.1%	59,340	5.9%
<i>Management of Companies</i>	2,037	1.0%	9,439	0.9%
<i>Administrative and Waste Services</i>	8,653	4.2%	55,896	5.6%
<i>Educational Services</i>	4,683	2.3%	18,184	1.8%
<i>Health Care and Social Assistance</i>	23,789	11.4%	94,395	9.4%
<i>Arts, Entertainment and Recreation</i>	2,341	1.1%	(D)	(D)
<i>Accommodation/Food Service</i>	11,162	5.4%	(D)	(D)
<i>Other Services</i>	7,997	3.8%	(D)	(D)
<i>Federal Civilian</i>	16,832	8.1%	51,619	5.2%
<i>Military</i>	43,636	21.0%	88,339	8.8%
<i>State government</i>	7,803	3.8%	(D)	(D)
<i>Local government</i>	12,856	6.2%	77,744	7.8%

Note: The region is the Norfolk-Virginia Beach-Newport News, VA-NC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

(D) - not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information, but the estimates for this item are included in the totals

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, updated May 5, 2014

Looking at demographics:

- Forty-nine percent of Norfolk residents are White, 43 percent Black or African American, 4 percent Asian, and 4 percent other; 8 percent are Hispanic or Latino, of any race.⁸²
- The median household income is \$45,000.⁸³
- Roughly 21 percent of the population of Norfolk lives in poverty.⁸⁴
- The unemployment rate in December 2017 for Norfolk was 3.9 percent.⁸⁵

On the education front:

- Eighty-eight percent of residents have earned a high school diploma; nearly 27 percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.⁸⁶
- The main school district is Norfolk Public Schools, which serves 33,000 students.⁸⁷ The graduation rate for the district is 81 percent.⁸⁸

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents

Participants discussed communication skills at length, particularly the ability to communicate in a professional manner via email. Participants also spoke of the importance of students learning to understand and interact appropriately with other generations in the workplace (e.g., non-digital natives), as well as different audiences (peers, parents, employers, customers). As one business leader put it, “students need to understand that they can’t communicate with their boss the same way they communicate with their friends.”

Strategies for Achieving Career Readiness

Together, parents and business leaders brainstormed a number of strategies for helping students to become more career ready:

- Educate parents to address the information gap,
- Provide life skills to students,
- Encourage/allow kids to fail,
- Improve collaboration between business/education to provide more hands-on learning, shadowing in schools,
- Host PTA discussion of workforce vs. academic,
- Make use of available online career tools,
- Create guarantees between schools/employers,
- Address licensure so business can get into schools,
- Ensure systems are collaborating (connect K-12, postsecondary, business, community,)
- Improve career guidance in middle and high school, and
- Adjust parent mindset to focus on developing core values and adjust expectations that 4-year programs are not for all children.

Participants noted that parents often don’t have what is needed to help students narrow their focus, particularly around career pathways. As with other communities, information overload was mentioned, as was the time barrier. Participants also discussed the importance of getting parents information that helps them to understand and accept the different pathways a student can take towards a successful career.

As one parent noted, “It’s okay not to go directly to a 4-year college; the journey is important.”

Parents and business leaders alike expressed concern over the mission of schools and the emphasis on adult accountability. In particular, participants discussed the need for schools to be a place where students are allowed to fail, and learn from it. As one parent noted, “the list of goals for new employees is achieved by failing, and learning from it.”

Recommendations

The common thread running throughout the five communities was a goal of helping students navigate a path toward a successful, rewarding career. Below are recommendations for community action drawn from the many ideas shared by participants throughout the listening tour:

Coordination & Collaboration Among Stakeholders

In each community the notion of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders was discussed to some degree. From Oakland, where business leaders expressed frustration over the lack of a single, community-based intermediary to help them connect and inform students, parents, and educators, to Norfolk, where there was a strong sense that the regional government needs improved coordinating, along with other sectors, such as business, K-12, and postsecondary.

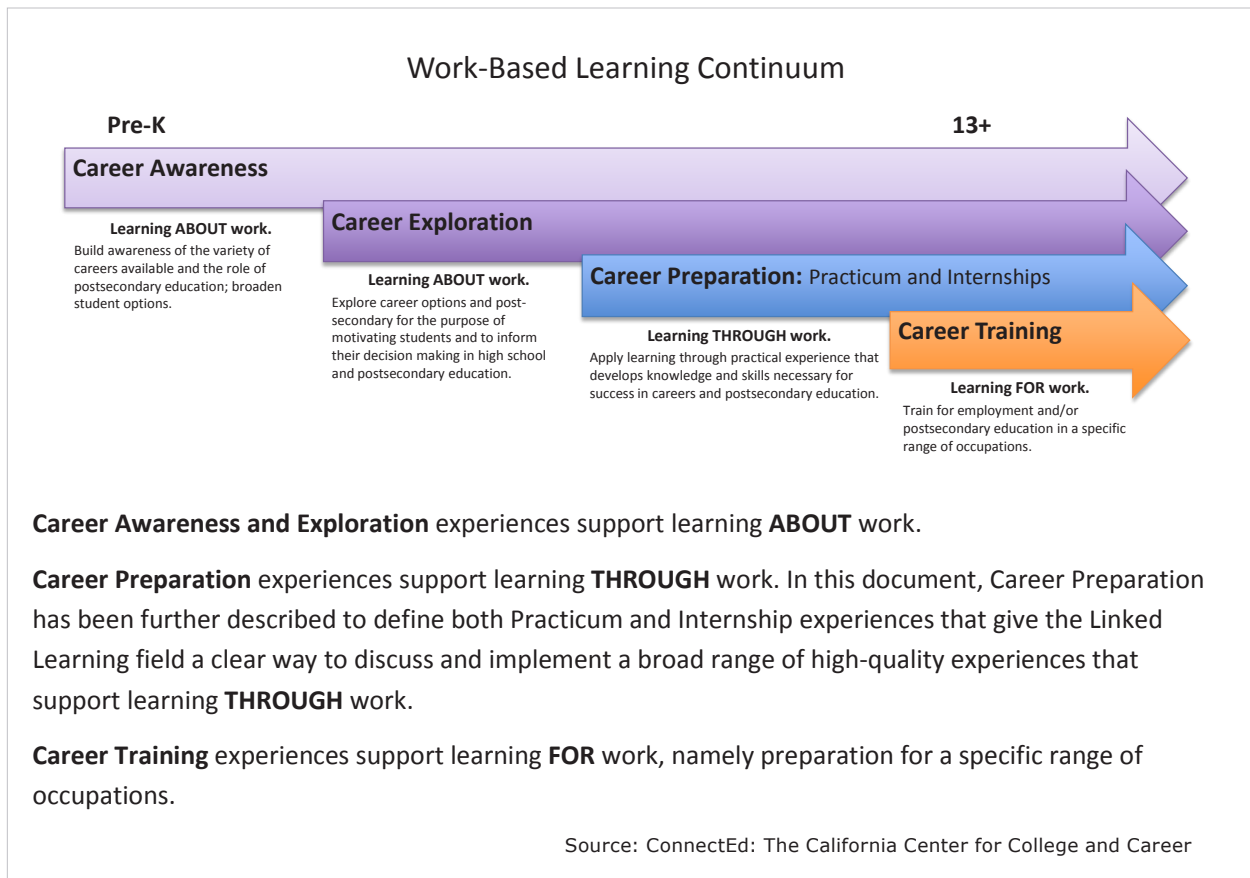
Communication Among Stakeholders

Within minutes of beginning each listening tour it was evident in hearing the conversation among parents and business leaders that these two stakeholder groups communicate little, if at all, even in the smallest of communities. Strengthening communication was mentioned without fail in each group. Parents are interested in receiving information to help their children, but acknowledge that time is a challenge so what type of communication, how often, and for what purpose may vary from parent-to-parent, community-to-community. Communities need an intermediary to serve as a conduit for gathering and sharing information, as well as a strategic plan for communicating information about career pathways and available career opportunities. It is vital to provide opportunities for parents, business leaders, and students to connect in-person at various points in their education career to build knowledge and understanding of what employers are looking for in the hiring process, and what parents and students need from them in order to work toward that target.

Tools, Resources, & Supports to Identify Career Pathways

On a more global scale, students, parents, and businesses need tools, resources, and supports to help them develop a community-based plan for addressing career readiness. In the interim, communities on the listening tour universally identified one specific support as an urgent need: counselors and/or mentors who provide support to students in identifying and charting a career pathway, whether it's at the school level, or in an afterschool program that taps local business leaders as mentors. Participants were intrigued by the idea of building a new, innovative infrastructure of guidance staff at the school or elsewhere to advise students. This was viewed as a vital, but missing support for students, parents, and employers, and one that could make a substantial difference. Parents want to help their children identify a career pathway, but expressed a lack of knowledge and understanding of available tools and resources. Inserting a support person who can serve as a conduit for all stakeholders just makes good sense.

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents



Work-Based Learning Opportunities

All five communities also support the notion of work-based learning as a key to success. Discussions focused on providing students with opportunities to experience the full continuum, beginning as early as elementary school: awareness, exploration, preparation, and training.

Development of Soft Skills

If business leaders were to convey one single message to parents and students: soft skills matter, and can make or break your chance of being successful in the workplace. This theme repeated throughout the listening tour, with business leaders creating lengthy lists of the soft skills they value most. The list varied from one community to the next but frequently mentioned skills included: being honest, being motivated, showing resilience, having a positive attitude, being a continuous learner, being service-oriented, the ability to problem solve and manage conflict, and possessing time management skills. Parents and families were seen as vital to teaching, modeling, and reinforcing these skills. Educators were as well.

Conclusion

There are a number of resources that could benefit communities interested in improving career readiness outcomes for students. A tool that guides communities through many of the questions posed by the facilitator on the “listening tour” would allow a much greater number of local leaders to engage stakeholders and build momentum around the issue. Tools for next steps would also benefit these communities. At the close of each discussion along the tour, participants broke into one-on-one conversations about how to continue this dialogue and take action on some of the ideas raised. Yet, as participants often expressed: the issue is important, but everyone is busy. Outlining steps, and setting timelines and benchmarks can be helpful to community leaders who want to take the initiative, but don’t have the resources to build out a project plan. Another tool that communities are sorely in need of: a guide for developing a strategic plan for communicating among stakeholders that includes identification of an intermediary and addresses how to close information gaps between business, parents, and others.

The listening tour stopped in only five communities, but the common goals and aspirations shared from community-to-community revealed a shared hope for students as they chart a course for the future. Throughout the listening tour, parents and business leaders echoed the value of coming together to discuss the topic of career readiness. In each discussion, there was a deep understanding that the success or failure of students to thrive in the workplace impacts everyone, from the individual student, to their parents, their neighbors, and more globally, the entire community and economy. These conversations were small in size and scope, yet it was clear participants share common goals and aspirations, and ideas for improving the career readiness of students.



Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents

Appendix A

Parent Survey

Thank you for taking part in a brief survey to understand how to support the career readiness of students. All responses are anonymous.

1. Who has the greatest influence over your son's/daughter's plans for getting a job after school or other education training? Please rank order from 1 to 7.
 - a. My son/daughter _____
 - b. Me/Parent(s) _____
 - c. Teachers _____
 - d. School? counselors _____
 - e. Coaches _____
 - f. Friends/Peers _____
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
2. How prepared do you feel to help your son/daughter identify a job pathway? (A pathway includes education and training programs that enable an individual to secure a job or advance in their chosen field.) Please circle your response.
 - a. Fully prepared
 - b. Somewhat prepared
 - c. Somewhat unprepared
 - d. Unprepared
3. What information would you like to know from employers to help your son/daughter identify and succeed in a job pathway? Please use the space below.
4. What is the best way for employers to communicate this information to you? Please use the space below.
5. Please indicate the number of children you have in each level of school.
 - a. Middle school _____
 - b. High school _____
 - c. Postsecondary: certificate program _____
 - d. Postsecondary: 2-year program _____
 - e. Postsecondary: 4-year program _____
 - f. Military _____
 - g. Work _____
 - h. Other _____
6. If you have children in middle or high school, please indicate the name of the school(s) each student attends in the space below. Include the names of any magnet or career programs (e.g., CTE, vocational, or certificate) your child is participating in, as well.

Thank you for your time and input!

Business Leader Survey

Thank you for taking part in our survey to understand how to support the career readiness of students. All responses are anonymous.

1. Do you feel business provides parents in your community with the necessary information to help their son/daughter identify and secure a job pathway? (A pathway includes education and training programs that enable an individual to secure a job or advance in their chosen field.) Please circle your response.
 - a. Parents are provided with enough information to help their son/daughter
 - b. Parents are provided with some information to help their son/daughter, but more is needed
 - c. Parents are provided with little-to-no information to help their son/daughter
2. What strategies does your business use to inform parents in your community about the knowledge, skills, and education requirements for positions within your company (e.g., host student fairs at local high schools, offer internships, conduct guest presentations in local schools)? Please use the space below.
3. What barriers prevent you from communicating with parents in your region about the knowledge, skills, and education requirements for positions within your company? Please use the space below.

Thank you for your time and input!

Building Supports for Successful Transitions Into the Workforce: Community Conversations with Business Leaders & Parents

Endnotes

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- 30 Pew Research Center, [The Rising Cost of Not Going to College](#).
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, [The Foundation’s Approach to Career Readiness](#).
- 33 The sessions occurred during the workday, and participants—business and parents alike—were cognizant that many of them did not represent the diversity of students, or families in their community, who might have different viewpoints and experiences, but were unable to attend.
- 34 [California Forward](#) inspires better decision-making by governments at all levels in order to: grow middle-class jobs; promote cost-effective public services; and create accountability for results. [Rise Together Bay Area](#) is a coalition of over 200 partners working to create economic opportunity and prosperity for all through collective action, shifting systems that are no longer working, and redefining what is possible for Bay Area residents. [All-In Alameda County](#) is a multi-stakeholder collaborative including people living in Alameda County communities, business owners, nonprofit leaders, government agency staff, and elected officials, all working together to end poverty.

- 35 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Oakland city, California](#).
- 36 Port of Oakland, [History](#).
- 37 City of Oakland, [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report](#).
- 38 U.S. Census Bureau, *Community Facts: Oakland city, California*.
- 39 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Oakland city, California](#).
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Economy at a Glance Oakland-Fremont-Hayward, CA](#).
- 42 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Oakland city, California](#).
- 43 Oakland Unified School District, [Fast Facts 2017-2018](#).
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 All of the parents participating in the discussion earned professional degrees, which is not representative of educational attainment figures for the broader Oakland population.
- 46 California's A-G requirements refers to the subjects, and number of years of each, that are required to meet the subject requirement for admission to the University of California to ensure that students have attained a body of general knowledge that will provide breadth and perspective to new, more advanced study. The A-G requirements are a driving force in high school curriculum and graduation requirements statewide.
- 47 [The Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce](#) develops and fosters a prosperous business environment by serving, protecting and promoting our members through advocacy, education, information, marketing, and networking programs and activities.
- 48 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Westfield city, Massachusetts](#).
- 49 City of Westfield, [About Westfield](#).
- 50 Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, [Westfield Community Profile](#).
- 51 U.S. Census Bureau, *Community Facts: Westfield city, Massachusetts*.
- 52 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Westfield city, Massachusetts](#).
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Springfield, MA-CT, Area Economic Summary](#).
- 55 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Westfield city, Massachusetts](#).
- 56 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, [Westfield Profile](#).
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 The [CREATE Foundation](#) is committed to improving the quality of life for the people of Northeast Mississippi through building permanent community endowment assets; encouraging philanthropy and managing charitable funds contributed by individuals, families, organizations, and corporations; strengthening regional community development capacity; providing leadership on key community issues; and impacting the region through gifts and targeted grant-making.
- 59 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Tupelo city, Mississippi](#).
- 60 Wikipedia, [Tupelo, Mississippi](#).
- 61 U.S. Census Bureau, *Community Facts: Tupelo city, Mississippi*.
- 62 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Tupelo city, Mississippi](#).
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map](#).
- 65 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Tupelo city, Mississippi](#).
- 66 Tupelo Public School District, [Fast Facts About Our District](#).
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 The [Union County Chamber of Commerce and Union County Community Improvement Corporation](#) serve as the primary point of contact for companies looking to expand an existing business or relocate a new business to the County by working together with our local, regional and state economic development partners to ensure that the community attracts balanced and sustainable industrial, commercial, and residential development.
- 69 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Marysville city, Ohio](#).
- 70 Union County Chamber of Commerce and Union County Community Improvement Corporation, [Homepage](#).
- 71 Wikipedia, [Marysville, OH](#).
- 72 U.S. Census Bureau, *Community Facts: Marysville city, Ohio*.
- 73 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Marysville city, Ohio](#).
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Columbus, OH](#).
- 76 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Marysville city, Ohio](#).
- 77 Marysville Exempted School District, [About Our District](#).
- 78 Marysville Exempted School District, [Superintendent Message](#).
- 79 The [United Way of South Hampton Roads](#) works with companies, governments, nonprofits and other organizations to address complex challenges in our community. Our partners contribute more than money. Their ideas, volunteer power, in-kind support and more are helping build stronger communities.

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- 80 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Norfolk city, Virginia](#).
- 81 City of Norfolk, [Demographic Profile For Norfolk and the Hampton Roads Region](#).
- 82 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Norfolk city, Virginia](#).
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA/NC](#).
- 86 U.S. Census Bureau, [Quick Facts Norfolk city, Virginia](#).
- 87 Norfolk Public Schools, [About NPS](#).
- 88 Ibid.



REPORT

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