

APPROACH THREE >>The Central Texas Community

Our local economy is founded on innovation and entrepreneurship and we need to create a business AND education climate that foster the principles, creates jobs and can fill jobs for these local businesses. Partnerships between business and education promise Central Texas more immediate local prosperity while strengthening our future and our community ties.

In Support

- The prosperity of our community depends on the viability of its local businesses. We want to maintain the kind of healthy community our children will want to live in.
- Students are motivated to succeed when they see job opportunities that are tangible and within reach.
- Federal educational mandates focused on global competitiveness take local leaders, parents and teachers out of the decision-making process. This approach gives us more control over educational objectives.



What Can Be Done?

- Businesses can collaborate with schools to help students and teachers make a variety of connections between classroom instruction and future work demands.
- K-12 schools can build strong connections with Austin Community College, which is uniquely able to respond to changing needs in the local economy.
- Educators can teach local, real-world, problem-based, team-focused examples.
- Texas can align P-16 curricula to meet regional and statewide workforce needs rather than a generic federal standard.
- Community resources, such as libraries and museums, can feature the importance of local business and industry to the community's history and prosperity.
- Businesses and local business programs can volunteer in the classroom to teach about innovation, entrepreneurship and problem solving.

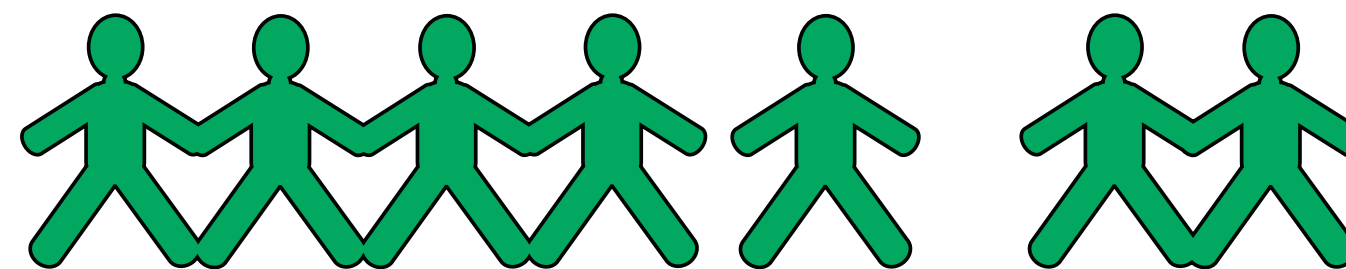
What Critics Say

- Local businesses should not determine the educational objectives of our public schools.
- The local economy does not exist in isolation from the global economy.
- Global forces beyond our control will affect our future. We have to be prepared for an array of possibilities.

Likely Trade-Offs

- The heavy emphasis on meeting local business demands in designing a school curriculum may risk stifling the ability of young people to develop in the ways that best suit them.
- A continuing inward focus by the region may limit the vision and creativity needed to grow and change to meet new demands and opportunities.

Graduates Are Made. Not Born.

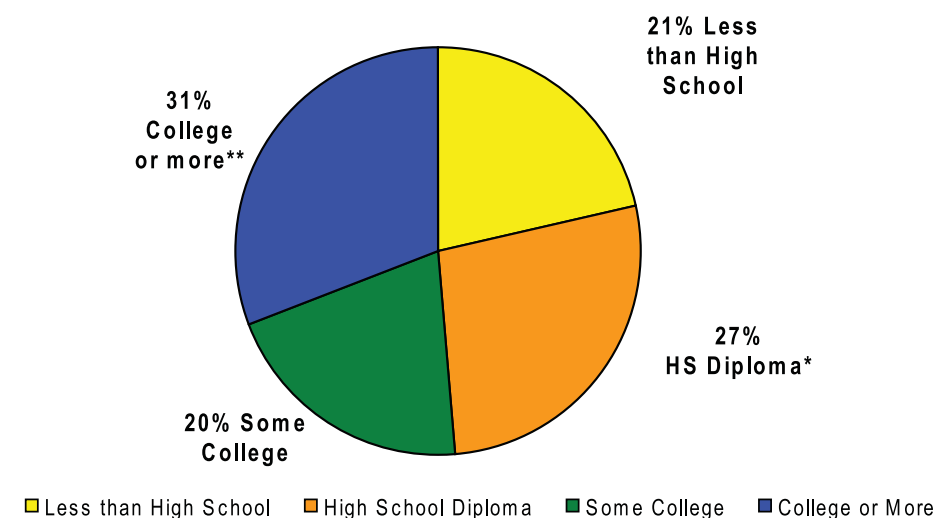


Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Jobs.

Comparing Approaches

THE WORKPLACE our parents and grandparents contemplated as they went through school was a relatively stable landscape where the choices they made were often lifetime commitments. Today's workplace offers no such stability. The global economy and rapid advances in technology have made the job market into a place of shifting sands, difficult to negotiate and tricky to prepare for. The job you have this year may well have moved to India by this time next year. Or it may be done right here... by a robot. We also know that the most versatile workers have the greatest opportunity for success.

Texas Today: Almost Half Have a High School Diploma or Less



Source: U.S. Census – American Community Survey, 2006

EC-2.08

Here in Central Texas, we can make and implement decisions that equip our children with the critical skills that allow them to thrive in our innovation-based, service oriented, entrepreneurial economy. But we may have to make trade-offs in how we have traditionally educated our students, what resources we have and what we reasonably expect to achieve. The following approaches offer foundational skills, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) priorities or community first options as pathways to education economic success for our children.

APPROACH ONE >>A Firm Foundation

Employers want workers who show up, take responsibility, and work well with others. Business and industry can train workers for specific tasks. Communities, families, and schools must teach the problem-solving skills, character traits, strong communication and a sound work ethic that will serve employees well at any level in an increasingly competitive workplace.

In Support

- Workers today may change four or five times over their employment history.
- Basic work skills and capacities to work with others are transferable to any job.
- Building these capacities is everyone's responsibility - not just the responsibility of schools.
- Communities profit from citizens who have a strong foundation, no matter what the jobs of tomorrow looks like.



What Can Be Done?

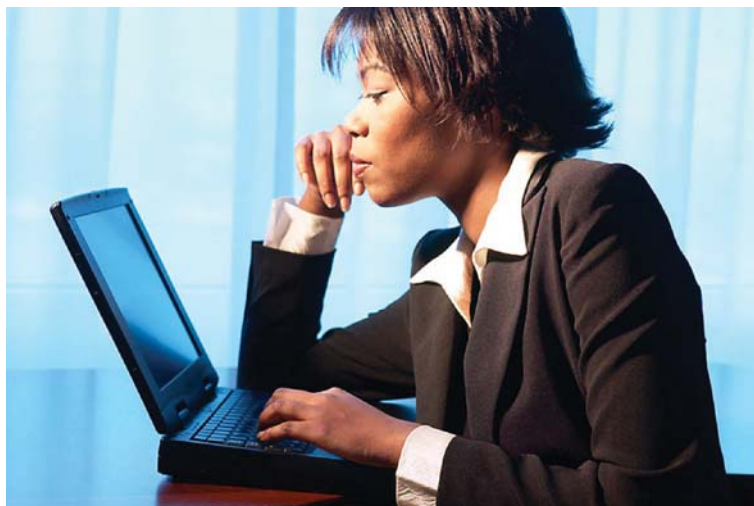
- Teachers can integrate stronger character education and workplace preparedness in the K-12 curriculum.
- School districts can offer more arts and other elective courses that help young people learn cooperative problem-solving skills.
- Businesses and community agencies can offer internship opportunities to help teach and reinforce basic workplace skills to students.
- Parents, businesses and schools can encourage volunteerism in the community.
- Community organizations (such as athletic leagues, choral and drama groups, faith-based organizations, libraries and museums) can orient programs toward character development, teamwork, strong communications and other transferable skills.

What Critics Say

- This approach may be necessary but not sufficient. When China is producing four times as many engineers as the U.S., basic work skills alone will not prepare our children to succeed.
- Many businesses are unwilling to add the cost of training employees in the specialized skills they need. Graduates must be employable "Day One" and may need more than basic job skills to get jobs.
- Character education is a parental responsibility. Schools need to focus on a strong academic foundation.

Likely Trade-Offs

- Some capacities advanced by Approach One, such as teamwork and leadership, are not as easily measured as math or reading. Communities would have to step away from the mind-set that looks toward standardized testing to validate success. Educators, community leaders and parents would have to live with the uncertainties of measuring success over a longer period of time.
- By attempting to provide everyone with a base set of desirable attributes, we may not offer our best and brightest students maximum opportunities to realize their potential.



APPROACH TWO >>Academic Achievement

The United States is losing ground in the global marketplace. Rigorous education with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is the key to productive workers and to U.S. global competitiveness. Schools and communities should emphasize and reward academic rigor. Success for individuals and the nation demands high standards and accountability for meeting them.

In Support

- Quantitative measurement not only provides guidelines for improvement, but creates the capacity to reward success.
- Emphasis on STEM courses are the keys to regaining economic leadership in the global marketplace, especially in competitive regions like Central Texas
- A rigorous background in math, science and complex problem solving gives young people the best chance for upwardly mobile careers.



What Can Be Done?

- Parents can emphasize the importance of a rigorous education for future success in the workforce.
- High schools can offer advanced-level courses that teach college-level material and critical-thinking skills.
- High-tech businesses can partner with schools to provide professional development and other technical assistance to teachers.
- Educators can introduce interactive technologies into the classroom, beginning in elementary school.
- Community organizations can emphasize the importance of math, science, and technology, and they can offer young people introductory and continuing opportunities for experiences in those fields.

What Critics Say

- Our primary concern is the economic health of our local community, not global competition.
- This approach ignores the large number of jobs that do not require high-tech skills.
- This approach also ignores the large number of students who do not have the aptitude for, or interest in, science and math.
- Employers often prioritize initiative, communications and teamwork over technical experience.

Likely Trade-Offs

- The primary bottleneck in achieving such higher outcomes is not having enough well qualified STEM teachers.
- Highly interactive project-based learning environments where students tend to excel in STEM are expensive. Focusing on success in these areas takes critical resources away from the basics.
- By emphasizing and rewarding achievement in these fields that often require additional college education, we may widen the gap between those who can meet these demands and those who drop out because they can't.

Graduates Are Made. Not Born.



Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Jobs.

