HIGH SCHOOL AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

XQ’S PLAN FOR PRODUCING “FUTURE READY” GRADUATES

ISSUE BRIEF: FEBRUARY 2019
INTRODUCTION

The world is changing. Automation is making it harder for people without complex skills to find well-paying jobs. And those same skills are becoming increasingly necessary for civic engagement and family life, as well. We must produce “future ready” graduates to employ our people and have healthy families and communities.

Changing education in the ways we’ve tried in the past won’t be enough. We must transform our high schools for the future of work. We must give teachers the tools they need, and we must make diplomas meaningful again.

We can start by offering incentives to design schools of the future, creating an “innovation” status that allows our high schools to try new things and innovate, and using pilot programs to seed innovation.

That’s why Business Forward has partnered with XQ, the nation’s leading organization dedicated to reimagining high schools across America so every student succeeds—no matter their race, gender, or zip code. XQ wants to see that change underway in every high school and in every community—all 14,000+ school districts—and offers free, open-source tools that every community can use to reimagine its high schools.

XQ launched in 2015 as an open call to the nation to rethink and redesign the American high school, inspiring more than 10,000 people to join locally-led teams to propose innovative, student-centered school designs. From these, 19 Super Schools are now turning their visions into reality.

47% OF AMERICAN JOBS WILL BE IMPACTED BY AUTOMATION.¹

99% OF JOBS CREATED DURING THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY WENT TO WORKERS WITH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OR TRAINING.²

72% OF AMERICANS SAY EDUCATION SHOULD BE A TOP PRIORITY FOR POLITICAL LEADERS.³

To view facts about high school and the future of work in your state, visit: WWW.XQSUPER SCHOOL.ORG/FUTURE

² Anthony P. Carnevale and others, “America’s Divided Recovery,” Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2016, https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/america-divided-recovery/
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WORK IS CHANGING.

By 2030, workplace demand for technological skills will increase by 60%, for creativity by 40%, for entrepreneurship by 33%, and for adaptability by 24%.4

The average young American will have at least 11 different jobs between the ages of 18 and 50.5

WORKERS MUST CHANGE.

2/3 of jobs are filled by workers with some college education.6

Academic knowledge + life skills + character

STATES MUST ACT.

Empower local communities to transform high schools

Make diplomas meaningful

Get teachers the tools they need

THE “ASK”

Innovation status = freedom to redesign schools

Grants, prizes = incentive for communities to get started

Pilot programs = identify what works, share best practices

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**HOW WORK IS CHANGING**

**CHANGE WILL BE CONSTANT.**

The average American will have at least 11 different jobs between the ages of 18-50.  

**JOBS WILL DEMAND MORE COMPLEX SKILLS.**

By 2030, workplace demand will increase by 60% for technological skills, 40% for creativity, 33% for entrepreneurship, and 24% for adaptability.

**MORE YOUNG PEOPLE WILL BE “CONTINGENT” WORKERS.**

They will work without benefits, and often remotely, with employers scaling their teams up or down to adapt to ever-changing conditions.

**THE PACE OF CHANGE COULD GET FASTER.**

47% of Americans have jobs where at least some tasks can be automated.

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**WHAT TOMORROW’S WORKERS WILL NEED**

**Solid knowledge, fundamental skills.** Reading, writing, numeracy and technological literacy will be ever more important to the continuous learning that will be required of virtually everybody.

**Life skills.** As more tasks are automated, the “essentially human” parts of work grow more important. Skills like empathy, problem-solving, and strategic decision-making are more valuable than ever, especially since so much work is done in teams.

**Character.** In a world where lifelong learning is required, tenacity, self-regulation, agency, growth mindset, empathy, and curiosity will grow more important. A related set of “global competencies” help workers succeed in our increasingly global economy.

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1. **A STRONG FOUNDATION OF ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE**
2. **THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO APPLY THAT KNOWLEDGE TO NON-Routine PROBLEMS AS THEY ARISE**
3. **A SET OF COMPETENCIES THAT ALLOW THEM TO WORK WELL AND ETHICALLY WITH OTHERS**
4. **A GREAT DEAL OF FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY**

4 out of 5 CEOs say that skills gaps in creativity and problem-solving make hiring difficult. ¹⁰

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EMPOWER LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Real progress occurs when local communities are empowered to design their own solutions. State leaders can encourage local innovators to take advantage of each community’s unique assets while drawing inspiration from research-based design principles and the best examples of what’s possible.

OFFER INCENTIVES TO DESIGN SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE

Use competitive grants or prizes for communities that submit the best proposals to redesign an existing high school or launch a new school based on an innovative design. Target a portion of grant funds to districts with high concentrations of poverty or students of color.

CREATE AN INNOVATION STATUS FOR TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS

Give traditional districts and schools the flexibility for ambitious innovation based on an approved design. Allow schools to allocate their budgets, make staffing decisions, and use time in different ways to implement innovative programs. State leaders must ensure that flexibility is coupled with responsible oversight and accountability.

USE PILOT PROGRAMS TO SEED INNOVATION

Test specific new approaches to high school education, such as competency-based learning, across a group of school districts. Pilots can identify common challenges, successful strategies, and conditions for success across differing communities. Create mechanisms for sharing lessons learned by developing professional learning communities across program participants.
MAKE DIPLOMAS MEANINGFUL

MODERNIZE CAREER TRAINING
Students who participate in high-quality career and technical education (CTE) are more likely to graduate, earn industry credentials, enroll in college, and have higher rates of employment and higher earnings. States should redesign CTE programs to prepare students for good jobs in growing fields, based on labor market data.

DEVELOP A PROFILE OF A GRADUATE
Define the broader set of skills and competencies students will need for success after high school, such as self-discipline, initiative, resilience, creativity, and problem-solving.

ALIGN COURSE REQUIREMENTS WITH COLLEGE READINESS
Only half of America’s high school graduates complete the courses necessary to be prepared for college. Align high school coursework requirements with the specific set of courses required to apply to your state’s public university system.

MAKE RIGOROUS COURSES AVAILABLE TO EVERY STUDENT
Nationwide, only 60 percent of high schools offer physics, 73 percent offer chemistry and 80 percent offer Algebra II. Students of color have even less access to such courses. Require districts to offer a rigorous high school curriculum, expand access to the courses students need, provide alternatives for students to take courses outside their schools.

REDEFINE “COURSE” TO BREAK FREE FROM SEAT TIME
Help students to develop practical, concrete skills in real world settings. Award credit for learning—demonstrated learning—no matter where or when the learning takes place.

CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO TAKE COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSES
Dual enrollment programs and Advanced Placement courses enable students earn college credits in high school, helping students develop skills, gain knowledge, and build confidence. They also reduce the time and cost for college.

SUPPORT STUDENTS
Some students need extra support to meet college- and career-ready expectations. And all students will need better personalized guidance to understand diploma requirements, to explore postsecondary college and career opportunities, and to plan for a successful future.

ALIGN ACCOUNTABILITY
Existing accountability systems, preoccupied with time-based credits and testing, will have to be brought into line with both the broadened goals of high school and additional forms of measurement.

ENSURE EQUITY
Analyze access to courses, quality teachers, and extracurricular opportunities to make sure that all groups of students are getting their fair share. Act when the data show inequities.
GET TEACHERS THE TOOLS THEY NEED

1. INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING TOOLS AND RESOURCES
2. MOBILIZE EXPERTISE AND SPUR INVESTMENT TO CREATE NEW SOLUTIONS
3. HELP EDUCATORS NAVIGATE THE MARKET
4. PERSONALIZE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
5. UPGRADE EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION
ABOUT XQ

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