



Contra Costa Council
Workforce Development/Education Task Force

2008 - 2013
POLICY PAPER

New technologies, an aging workforce, and the rapidly changing global economy have created a pressing need for a seamless system of rigorous and relevant education for high school students. In today's knowledge and innovation-based economy, the skills necessary for success in the workplace have converged with those needed for success in college. Secondary schools and higher education must be better connected with industry to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and the essential core, technical and soft skills critical for success in both college *and* careers.

The education system is an important part of our county's infrastructure, and as such has a direct impact on the economic vitality of the region. Excellence in education is demonstrated by a system that seeks continuous improvement and is relevant and responsive to workforce development needs now and in the future. This system begins with early childhood education (ECE) and continues through lifelong learning opportunities.

The Workforce Development/Education Task Force Mission is to improve workforce preparation by:

- strengthening partnerships between industry and education, public agencies and community organizations
- fostering a better understanding of the educational issues common to business and the education community
- identifying common initiatives that will increase the supply of well-qualified workers
- promoting activities, programs, and events that bring together Contra Costa County's educators and business leaders to discuss and identify issues/concerns about the need for an educated workforce
- recognizing individuals and organizations that engage in on-going collaboration
- facilitating joint-task force meetings

Issues Confronting Education/Workforce Preparation in Contra Costa County

The Task Force will focus on key issues identified by the following studies:

Getting Down to Facts

- ❖ The lack of a predictable funding system for public education (ECE-graduate) that is less susceptible to the economic fluctuations of state, federal, and local economic conditions.
- ❖ A 300% increase in the number of English Language Learners in Contra Costa County schools in recent years.
- ❖ The lack of a qualified pool of teachers reflecting the demographic shifts in our student population to replace those who will be retiring in the next five years.
- ❖ A shortage of qualified math/science teachers.
- ❖ The current gap in academic achievement and essential skills between students from families at the highest income levels and those from families at the lowest.
- ❖ A shortage of technology and cutting-edge equipment in schools.

PACE Report

- ❖ A decrease in the college matriculation rate among high school graduates in a time when 60% of all-new jobs require postsecondary education and training.

Campaign for College Opportunity

- ❖ Expansion of equitable access to public postsecondary and baccalaureate education for county residents.
- ❖ School and college facilities that are not adequate to meet the growing student population in Contra Costa County to provide learning environment reflecting 21st century needs.

The Task Force seeks to improve workforce preparation by strengthening partnerships between industry, education, public agencies, and community organizations to:

1. Promote and foster a better understanding of the educational issues common to business and the education community, to identify common initiatives that will increase economic vitality and the supply of well-qualified workers.
ACTION: Support activities, programs, and events that bring together educators and business leaders to discuss and identify issues/concerns about the need for an educated workforce.
Recognize individuals and organizations that engage in on-going collaboration.
Facilitate joint-task force meetings.
2. Expand and enhance sustainable business/education collaboration to secure a skilled workforce pipeline and meet the current and emerging education and training needs of high wage/high skill industries in Contra Costa County including health care, construction, environmental science, energy systems, biotechnology, information technology, manufacturing, clean technology, and financial services.
ACTION: Encourage collaboration between the Contra Costa Council and the Contra Costa Workforce Development Board.
Convene regular meetings of the Workforce Development/Education Task Force by industry sector to increase industry and business involvement.
Foster an organizational (ECE-16, business, labor and government) structure that supports a more collaborative system focused on student success connected to real people doing real things in the Contra Costa workforce.
3. Nurture the development of a seamless education system that ensures students transition in, through, and out of postsecondary education and training as their needs change.
ACTION: Advocate on behalf of education interests relating to local/state/federal legislative initiatives on education, specifically related to funding education and workforce preparation.
Support the integration of technology into the curriculum.
Support the integration of career, technical, and essential skill applications with high academic standards into the learning process.
Support the community college as an economically viable resource for training, workforce preparation, transfer preparation, and economic development, and leverage its position to bring federal workforce development and training funds to Contra Costa County.
Foster strategic, collaborative efforts between ECE, K-12, 2 and 4-year colleges, Adult Ed, ROP, apprenticeship programs, private education institution, and industry that facilitate successful educational transitions, workforce development, and training opportunities for students.
Promote science and math in ECE -16 curriculum to increase the number of students who obtain degrees in science, technology, engineering and math disciplines.

Monitor the implementation of the California CTE Plan.

Advocate for strategies and investments related to delivery systems with high schools including career-integrated education, ROP, smaller learning communities, etc.

Promote the importance of educator training and professional development opportunities that connect educators with business and industry.

Inform California education reform through the education portion of the state budget.

Monitor and advance state policy and legislative development.

Engage in face-to-face conversations with key legislators and policy makers.

Explore tensions and synergy between legislative policy, research and funding issues in ECE.

4. Promote policies, best practices and strategies that help close the achievement gap.

ACTION: Support meaningful legislation that supports closing the achievement gap.

Promote high school career pathways/academies and career-integrated education connected to strategic, high growth industry sectors.

Promote strategies that support collaborative teaching strategies, smaller learning communities, and the involvement of students in civic engagement and project-based learning activities that engage students, enhance life and career skills, and increase academic success.

Partner with industry on collaborative efforts that support best practices and strategies to close the achievement gap.

5. Promote quality early childhood education (ECE) in supporting school readiness and the development of essential skills.

ACTION: Develop and distribute issue papers on the value of quality early childhood education.

Support legislation that strengthens Contra Costa's system of early care and education.

Promulgate relevant articles through the Council's web site.

Engage First Five.

Promote the preparation of quality ECE educators.

6. Strengthen the higher education system to support a sustainable economy and enhance the quality of life.

ACTION: Support world class educational opportunities that provide quality, affordable, and accessible, life-long learning that is student-centered and focused on skill levels required for the business, industry, educational, and governmental needs of our regional economy.

Advocate for collaborative higher education strategies that link economic development and a healthy workforce and increase the economic vitality of the region.

Expand opportunities that lead to the development of an applied research base that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship, support existing and emerging business/industry clusters, and fosters a sustainable regional advantage.

Increase articulation between community colleges and 4-year institutions and provide support structures to remove barriers, increase access, and heighten student persistence.

Promote efforts to provide high quality teachers to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse workforce.