



New Jersey School Boards Association

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APPENDIX I

WHITE PAPER: Preparing the Non-College-Bound Student for the Post-Secondary World



June 12, 2018

WHITE PAPER:
**Preparing the Non-College-Bound Student
for the Post-Secondary World**



The New Jersey School Boards Association is a federation of the state's local boards of education and includes the majority of New Jersey's charter schools as associate members. NJSBA provides training, advocacy and support to advance public education and promote the achievement of all students through effective governance.

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Preparing the Non-College-Bound Student for the Post-Secondary World

How well are we preparing non-college-bound students for “post-secondary life”?

The concern has intensified over the years among educators and employers. For New Jersey, it involves an increasingly complex set of factors:

- Educational options for the non-college-bound learner;
- Adequate academic preparation for both college-bound and career-bound students;
- Effective career training that builds skills in areas ranging from the construction trades to allied health, the environment, and information technology;
- Collaboration among K-12 educational programs, county career and technical education (CTE) schools and community colleges, and
- Inclusion of employers, representatives of business and industry and other post-secondary career providers, such as the U.S. military, in collaborative efforts.

In a recent article, based on his presentation to a May 31, 2018 educators’ forum sponsored by *The New York Times*, former New York City Mayor **Michael R. Bloomberg**, founder of Bloomberg LP and the Bloomberg Philanthropies, described the challenge:

One side thinks that every student should get an acceptance letter from a four-year college. The other argues that college is overrated and that we should focus on preparing young people for well-paid careers that don’t require a four-year education. The truth is that this isn’t an either/or situation. We need to do both: put more focus on college *and* careers, so students have a real choice.

Yet right now, we’re not doing either one very well.¹

For several decades the definition of academic success upon high school graduation has focused on admission to a four-year college. Yet, nationwide statistics from a variety of sources show that a large proportion of college enrollees do not earn bachelor’s degrees within six years.

The U.S Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics indicates that, in 2015, approximately 70 percent of high school graduates enrolled in college immediately upon graduation.² A study by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that, of 2015’s immediate college enrollees, 78.2 percent returned to college for their sophomore year either at the same institution or another school.³

¹ Bloomberg, Michael R. “The False Choice That Holds Our Kids Back.” *Bloomberg.com*, Bloomberg, 31 May 2018, www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-05-31/michael-bloomberg-education-for-college-and-career-readiness. Accessed June 8, 2018.

² “The Condition of Education - Postsecondary Education - Postsecondary Students - Immediate College Enrollment Rate - Indicator January (2018).” Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2001-2002, E.D. Tab. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cpa.asp. Accessed June 11, 2018.

³ “First-Year Persistence and Retention Rates, Fall 2016.” National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. December 18, 2017. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport28-first-year-persistence-and-retention/>. Accessed June 11, 2018.

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The NCES data also show the following:

- The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2010 was 60 percent. That is, by 2016 some 60 percent of students had completed a bachelor's degree at the same institution where they started in 2010.
- At two-year degree-granting institutions overall, 30 percent of first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began seeking a certificate or associate's degree in fall 2013 attained it within 150 percent of the normal time required for completion of these programs. (An example of completing a credential within 150 percent of the normal time is completing a two-year degree within three years).⁴

A presentation by representatives of **The College Board** to the New Jersey School Boards Association's Equity Council⁵ on May 29, 2018 addressed the situation succinctly

For every 100 ninth graders, 83 earn a high school diploma, 58 immediately enter college, 38 return to college for sophomore year, and 21 earn a bachelor's degree in six years. Seventy-nine will not earn a bachelor's degree.⁶

The statistics came from several sources, including the NCES, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Student Clearinghouse, and The College Board. Additionally, the presentation showed substantial gaps related to wealth, race and future income:

- 82 percent of students whose family income exceeds \$100,000 started college immediately after high school, compared with 58 percent of students from the lowest income level (below \$20,582).
- Degree attainment varies by race. For example, 26% percent of Hispanic and 31 percent of black individuals completed at least an associate degree, compared to 54 percent of white individuals.
- Earnings of full-time workers with bachelor's degrees were 67 percent higher than that for high school graduates without post-secondary degrees.⁷

In the fall of 2017, the New Jersey School Boards Association created a Task Force on Educational Options for Non-College Bound Learners. The group consists of educators, local board of education members, and representatives of business and industry, workforce development and higher education.

⁴ "The Condition of Education - Postsecondary Education - Programs, Courses, and Completions - Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates - Indicator May (2018)." Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2001-2002, E.D. Tab. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_ctr.asp. Accessed June 11, 2018.

⁵ Formed in 2018, the NJSBA Equity Council considers research and best practices in curriculum, educational opportunity, school climate and school district policy to advance student achievement.

⁶ The College Board, New York, NY, "College & Career Pathway Today" (presentation, New Jersey School Boards Association Equity Council, Trenton, NJ, May 29, 2018).

⁷ *Ibid.*

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The task force is expected to issue its final report in the summer of 2018. Its purpose is to:

- (a) Study the current status of education programs and post-secondary training and career opportunities for non-college-bound high school students;
- (b) Identify strategies to expand program options, and
- (c) Recommend appropriate action by local school boards, NJSBA, and other governmental entities involved in education.

The New Jersey School Boards Association is the only state organization of its kind that has undertaken such a project. Creation of the task force was prompted by the same concern expressed by Michael Bloomberg on May 31:

We have to do more to help both groups—those at risk of dropping out, and those who get a diploma but don't go on to college—learn skills that they can put to use in the work force, in jobs that won't be automated out of existence. I'm thinking of jobs in plumbing, automotive mechanics and construction....

Almost one-third of new job openings require a skill of some sort—not a bachelor's degree. And in many cases, employers are struggling to fill these jobs, which hurts economic growth.

...few places are teaching skills that are required for new jobs that are in demand, like lab technicians and help-desk operators. These jobs are no less important than jobs that require bachelor's degrees...⁸

Career and technical education in New Jersey is provided through three vehicles: 21 county-based CTE school districts; the state's comprehensive high schools, and community colleges. "As of 2016, traditional district-based high schools [in New Jersey] served about 48,000 students in CTE programs, about 50 percent more than the CTE-specific county vocational schools."⁹

In its deliberations, the task force has identified several concerns about the provision of CTE:

- A focus by the 21 county-based CTE school on selective college-prep academies in the sciences and technology, reducing options for students who are not immediately college bound;
- A lack of funding for traditional public school districts to provide hands-on CTE programming in the trades, health-related fields, environmental science, information technology, hospitality management and other areas;
- Geographical and demographic disparities in the extent and type of CTE offerings;
- A lack of coordination and communication among K-12 school districts and county CTE districts, leading to a lack of student and parental awareness of available educational opportunities; and
- A need to increase the number of teachers certified in traditional CTE trade areas.

⁸ Bloomberg, "The False Choice That Holds Our Kids Back."

⁹ Smarick, Andy. "The Evolving High School CTE: New Jersey's Distinctive Approach to Career Education," American Enterprise Institute, November 2017, 26, <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/The-Evolving-High-School-CTE.pdf>. Accessed June 11, 2018.

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A November 2017 report by the **American Enterprise Institute** on career and technical education in New Jersey described the county-based CTE schools as flexible and responsive to students, local business and industry, and the community. Nonetheless, the report noted that the system may not always meet all needs.

A school designed to develop employees for certain industries may not be well suited to helping students maximize the number of transferrable college credits they earn. A selective-admission school for high-achieving, college-bound students might end up with a student body that does not reflect its community's racial and economic diversity.¹⁰

A recent report by the **Brookings Institute** provides an ideal definition of CTE.

CTE encompasses a wide range of activities intended to simultaneously provide students with skills demanded in the labor market while preparing them for post-secondary degrees in technical fields. Activities include not only specific career-oriented classes, but also internships, apprenticeships and in-school programs designed to foster work readiness.

CTE advocates cite several goals of career-oriented learning experiences. For non-college-bound students, CTE can provide hands-on training that translates directly to attractive careers upon graduation. Work-related or internship-like experiences that are often a part of CTE can teach students the "soft skills" necessary in the labor market. Finally, by integrating academic skills into a "real world" context, advocates claim that CTE can motivate students to attend school more frequently and be more engaged, and therefore improve core academic skills.¹¹

To attain balanced CTE program for all students, regardless of where they attend school, the NJSBA task force is considering recommending several strategies:

- Promoting effective communication between county CTE school districts and traditional school districts. Such an effort can lead to productive collaboration and effective partnerships that benefit students from both county and local school districts. It can also inform teachers, parents and students about available educational options.
- Securing financial opportunities for traditional public school districts to expand CTE funding. Federal funding is directed toward the county-based CTE school districts, and not comprehensive high schools. In 2016, a New Jersey pilot program, "Building Capacity for Career Pathways," offered grants for comprehensive high schools. That funding is no longer available.
- Collaborating with business, industry and labor unions to establish apprenticeships, internships and micro-credentialing for students to meet standards related to academic goals and the demands of the labor market.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

¹¹ Jacob, Brian A. "What We Know about Career and Technical Education in High School." Brookings. October 4, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-we-know-about-career-and-technical-education-in-high-school/>. Accessed June 6, 2018.

A FOCUS ON COLLABORATION

A major goal of the New Jersey School Boards Association's current Strategic Plan¹² is for "every New Jersey student to have the tools to be successful in pursuit of their chosen life goals in a safe, healthy, caring climate." Toward that goal, NJSBA has built relationships with a wide range of organizations—within the education community, in higher education, and in the business and non-profit sectors. Three of these initiatives might serve as models—and be part of a strategy—to address the needs of students who are not immediately bound for four-year colleges.

NJSBA-U.S. Army Partnership

For our students, the STEAM areas (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics) will be key to success in higher education and the workplace. The New Jersey School Boards Association is the only state school boards association with staff dedicated to training and consultation with school districts on STEAM education.

Each year, NJSBA's STEAM and Sustainable Schools Specialist consults with, and provides training to, school districts throughout the state in the development of policies and practices to establish integrated STEAM education programs in K-through-12 programs.

The U.S. Army has been a valuable partner in this effort. Through its unique partnership with NJSBA, the Army fully funds the placement of a STEAM education fellow on our staff to assist the Association's STEAM education specialist in training, direct consultation and related activities. For example, the STEAM education fellow participates in the "Are You I-STEAM Ready?" training programs, which take place five times a year. He also coordinates NJSBA's annual STEAM Tank Challenge, co-sponsored by the Army, which this year attracted 400 student teams to design inventions, solve problems, and improve technology.

As part of this collaborative relationship, NJSBA encourages school districts to inform students and parents about the post-secondary educational and career opportunities available through the U.S. Army and other branches of service.¹³ The Army's commanding general for recruitment recently visited NJSBA and affirmed his commitment to replicating this partnership in other states.¹⁴

¹² "Vision 2020: Strategic Plan 2018-2020," New Jersey School Boards Association. November 3, 2017. <https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2018-2020-plan-flat-2-revised.pdf>. Accessed June 12, 2018.

¹³ "Praise for NJSBA-U.S. Army Partnership." New Jersey School Boards Association. February 07, 2018. <https://www.njsba.org/news-publications/school-board-notes/february-6-2018-vol-xli-no-25/praise-new-jerseys-military-opportunities-day-2/>. Accessed June 11, 2018.

¹⁴ "Military STEAM Programs Discussed at NJSBA." New Jersey School Boards Association. May 15, 2018. <https://www.njsba.org/news-publications/school-board-notes/may-15-2018-vol-xli-no-39/military-i-steam-programs-discussed-at-njsba/>. Accessed June 11, 2018.

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Sustainable Jersey for Schools

NJSBA is a founding partner, with the Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey, of Sustainable Jersey for Schools.¹⁵

This voluntary certification program has resulted in “greener” schools and classrooms, environmentally astute communities, and healthier environments for the children of New Jersey, while enabling school districts to cut operating costs.

Launched in 2014, Sustainable Jersey for Schools provides schools with training, financial support and advocacy. Today, the program encompasses 302 school districts, approximately 53 percent of the state’s total. One hundred ninety-four schools have been certified.

Since its founding, Sustainable Jersey for Schools has engaged additional partners, including the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, and the New Jersey School Buildings and Grounds Association. Corporate New Jersey supports the program as well.

A “priority” certification area is Student Learning. It includes a component on career and technical education, which delves into environmental-related areas and promotes student understanding of the core principles of sustainability.

In addition to its commitment to Sustainable Jersey, NJSBA is the only state school boards association with staff dedicated to research, training and consultation in sustainable practices.

Future Ready Schools—New Jersey

Launched in 2016, Future Ready Schools—NJ¹⁶ is a collaborative effort of NJSBA, the New Jersey Institute of Technology and the New Jersey Department of Education.

The program advances digital education in the state’s public schools by fostering best practices and cooperation among schools and providing resources to support teachers in changing instructional strategy.

This voluntary certification program sets benchmarks in three areas that are essential for a school to be “Future Ready”: leadership; education and classroom practice; and technology and support services. Within the course of a year, NJSBA provides four “Are You Future Ready?” working sessions that engage schools in the program and help them assess their progress in digital learning.

A Future Ready Schools—NJ project coordinator, who is on the staff of the New Jersey Institute of Technology, spends two days per week at NJSBA headquarters. He advises school districts on the certification program and its benchmarks, participates in training programs, and facilitates collaboration among the three founding organizations.

¹⁵ Sustainable Jersey for Schools. <http://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/>. Accessed June 12, 2018.

¹⁶ Future Ready Schools - New Jersey. <http://www.frsnj.org/>. Accessed June 12, 2018.

MOVING FORWARD

NJSBA is a federation of all of the state’s local school boards, including those that govern the county-based CTE districts. Our Association, therefore, is well-positioned to help public comprehensive high schools, CTE schools and charter schools meet the needs both of college-bound and non-college-bound students. These initiatives can be modeled after and can draw upon various elements of the U.S. Army partnership, Sustainable Jersey for Schools, and Future Ready Schools—New Jersey. They could involve the following:

- Securing funding for an NJSBA-based consultant, who would guide local school districts in establishing policies and developing educational choices for the non-college bound student or those who are not immediately college bound after high school graduation.
- Identifying resources, including grants, available from the state and federal governments, as well as private funders, to enable comprehensive high schools to develop training programs for the non-college bound student or those who are not immediately college bound;
- Working with employers in identifying the skills required by the labor market and balancing these factors with academic goals and the educational needs of the individual student;
- Facilitating cooperation among traditional public school districts, New Jersey’s 21 county-based CTE districts and community colleges to ensure communication to parents and students about the availability of CTE offerings;
- Working with the state education agency, the business community and labor organizations to establish credentialing for apprenticeships and other work-related experiences.
- With other stakeholders in K-12 and higher education, seek ways to increase opportunities for practitioners of the traditional trades to obtain teaching certification for employment in the public school.