

# VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

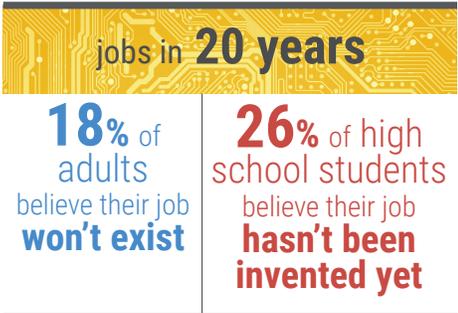
The future of work and education is the hot topic in editorial pages and conferences. But how much do we understand about what the people most directly impacted feel about these issues?

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation commissioned the first national survey to understand the perspectives of employers, parents, and high school students on the future of education and work.

More than 2,000 participants responded to the online survey, increasing our understanding of where the groups differ and where they agree.

The responses were surprising, and at times, highlighted gaps between how employers, parents, and high school students prioritize what they see as the skills needed to be successful in the workplace and available research on factors related to long-term outcomes like employments and wages. The

Kauffman Foundation values both research and the perspectives of local communities as part of its grantmaking and program priorities.



## The future is now.

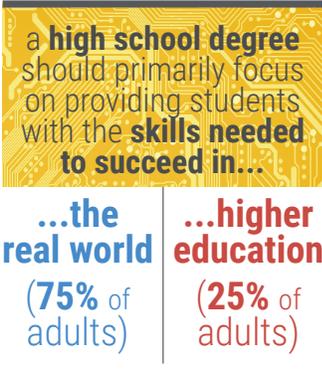
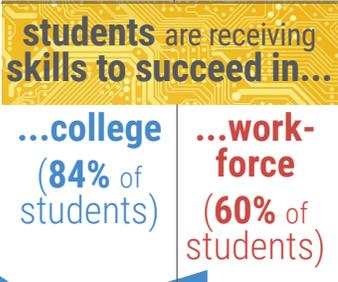
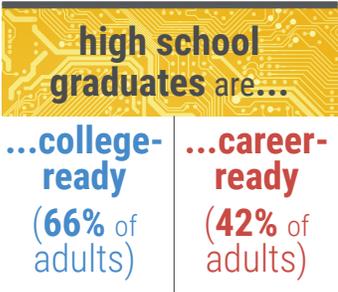
**Many recognize that the world of work is changing.**

Roughly one-in-five adults (18%) believe their job won't exist in 20 years, and over a quarter (26%) of high school students believe the job they will hold in 20 years hasn't even been invented yet.

## Real World Learning is recognized as essential.

**The overwhelming majority of the adults – independent of income status – think that high school did not prepare them for their current job.**

Three-fourths of adults say “a high school degree should primarily focus on providing students with the skills needed to succeed in the real world” (which could include higher education), while just one-fourth of adults think “a high school degree should primarily focus on providing students with the skills needed to succeed in higher education.”



Two-thirds (66%) of adults, including parents, say that “college-ready” describes students graduating high school in the U.S. “somewhat” or “very well,” but just 42% believe that “career-ready” describes high school graduates. Among surveyed students, 84% feel they are receiving the skills needed to succeed in college, yet only 60% felt like they have the skills required for the workforce.

**High school students are perceived as being less prepared to join the workforce than their parents’ or grandparents’ generations.** Adults, parents, and even employers see this decline in preparedness with over 70% of adults saying that high school





graduates in the 1950s and 1980s were prepared to succeed in the workforce, but less than half of adults (49%) believe that students graduating high school today are even “somewhat” prepared to succeed.

**When asked for open answers, real world exposure was important to parents, students, and employers.** Interestingly, the three groups placed a greater emphasis on internships, entrepreneurial skills, and financial literacy for workforce competitiveness than on high school graduation standards, raising student GPAs, or increasing schoolwide test scores.

### What students want:

**Students recognize the importance of technology skills necessary for the future.** In general, survey participants focused on highly technical industries like computer science, health care, and engineering as the fastest growing industries. However, as more automation becomes possible with AI, employers are putting a higher emphasis on skills that only humans can provide, like creativity and perseverance. Cultivating a culture within schools to foster employability skills, getting students in real world learning opportunities, and providing new insights and information on how to navigate the future will be essential for the growth and development of a new generation of change-makers.

### What parents want:

**Parents overall are open to the learning opportunities real world learning experiences bring to students.** The survey showed differing priorities for white parents and parents of color. Overall, parents of color were far more focused on traditional routes of formal education like a four-year college degree. White parents say they want educators to place more emphasis on teaching skills like communication, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and self-management.

### What employers want:

Despite popular perception, and perhaps due to the tight labor market, 84% of white-collar employers are open to hiring someone with just a high school diploma, especially if that person has relevant experience (76% have hired someone with just a high school degree), but students are not getting that message. High school students believe that flying cars in ten years are equally as likely as a president with just a high school degree.

**Independent of sector, size, or type (white collar, blue collar, or service industry), employers see experience (especially an internship in their field) and a technical certificate as more influential in making a hiring decision than a college or high school degree.** Employability skills (e.g. communication, work-ethic, self-determination, creativity, problem solving) all ranked extremely high.

