

Multiple Pathways to School Success

By Diane Trautman

Lack of motivation is a serious problem for many students. Unmotivated students tend to drop out. Roughly one in five students drop out of school between grades 9 and 12, according to the California Department of Education. Those who muddle through high school are often unprepared to enter the workforce.

Distractions and laziness may play a role, but students also tune out or drop out because traditional secondary schools often fail to link student learning with student interests and connect educational content with real-world applications.

Meanwhile, employers are clamoring for workers with the necessary training and technical skills, as well as the professional demeanor and soft skills so important in today's workplace.

In this environment, the Multiple Pathways approach is gaining support from a growing coalition that includes education, advocacy, research and policy organizations, as well as business, industry and trade groups.

Multiple Pathways is an integrated organizing approach that is designed to link student interests with job preparation, giving students a strong academic foundation and real-world experience that helps maximize their postsecondary options.

Each pathway is organized around a major industry sector — ideally, one that is strong in the community and offers potential for apprenticeship and future employment. There are four components: Academic training, which prepares students for college and other postsecondary programs. Technical training prepares students for high-skill, high-wage employment. A Work-based component complements classroom instruction through apprenticeships, internships, and school-based enterprises. And Support Services offer mentoring, career counseling, and remedial instruction.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, 41% of jobs in the state will require a four-year degree or higher by 2025 and more graduates will be needed to meet those demands. On the flip side, 59% of jobs in the state will not require a college degree, but will no doubt demand a solid core education that includes technical knowledge coupled with additional skills training or certifications.

Our children are seeking relevancy in their lives. We need to help them find and develop their talents. Multiple Pathways may be the best way to meet those needs.

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