

# WORKFORCE READINESS INITIATIVE

Meeting Summary Report  
Stakeholders Strategy Meeting  
The University Club, Washington, D.C.  
June 26-27, 2007



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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is a summary of the key issues and action points that emerged from the Workforce Readiness Initiative Stakeholders Strategy Meeting held June 26–27, 2007 in Washington, D.C. Attendees included representatives of Fortune 100 companies, public school teachers, and community education/service organizations, as well as local and federal government officials. The meeting was considered off the record to encourage open and frank exchanges. As promised, this report synthesizes the results with no specific individual attribution of statements, comments, or ideas. An initial draft of this report was circulated to attendees for comment and this final version reflects their responses and reactions. For the definition of terms and skills referred to in this report, see Appendix A.

## MEETING GOALS

This “extended brainstorming session” brought together representatives from the business, education, government, non-government, and philanthropic sectors. It aimed to provide perspectives and develop discussion points, as well as create a set of broad recommendations and proposals for a CEO convening on workforce readiness. In other words, the output of this Stakeholders Strategy Meeting will provide critical information for that CEO gathering.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles Mitchell, who prepared this summary report, is the executive director of publishing at The Conference Board and publisher of The Conference Board Review magazine. A former journalist and foreign correspondent based in South Africa, Kenya, and the Soviet Union, he is the author of several books dealing with international business travel, cultures, customs, and etiquette.

# Workforce Readiness Initiative

Summary Report<sup>©</sup>

**Stakeholders Strategy Meeting**

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# Agreement on the Big Picture

While participants expressed many perspectives during the meeting, they reached a consensus on certain truisms dealing with workforce readiness, the education system, and the role that business can play.

A theme underpinning all exchanges at the conference: stop the blame game. The business and education sectors view each other with suspicion. It is time to move forward by developing a shared sense of responsibility around workforce readiness. Building trust and working together, not apportioning blame for previous perceived failures or shortcomings, is the way forward.

Other points of agreement:

- Urgency: We need to begin today to fix the problems that will extend far into the future, and maintain that long-term focus and commitment. No more faddish programs please. Everyone, it seems, prefers a quick fix rather than incubating sustainable (but perhaps not media-grabbing), lasting reform. This must change.
- Competency is no longer the ticket to success in the workforce; it is the price of admission.
- Applied or “soft skills” (e.g., the ability to communicate, to think creatively) are now considered essential. The basics of the “Three Rs” are necessary but not sufficient to succeed on the job.
- We must redefine school success beyond the acquiring of basic skills and include assessments for teamwork, civic involvement, professionalism, communication, and analytical thinking.
- All sectors need to reinvent how they think about learning. In an era of globalization, learning cannot stop at the end of the school day. The 8 a.m.–2 p.m. and off-for-summer school schedule is an artifact of an agricultural economy. It is no longer in sync with household or business schedules, and must be complemented by other educational experiences (e.g., after school, community service, work experience).
- We must invest early and often to develop a love of life-long learning. One universal goal should be community-wide collaboration to create a seamless learning system that features multiple ways of learning in different environments, including the workplace, throughout one’s life.
- All sectors must work to build trust and overcome the lens of suspicion through which they view each other. Success cannot happen without true collaboration across areas. But the onus is not on the private sector alone. Education systems and governments must rethink their strategies and tactics as well.
- The private sector responds much more quickly to changes in the environment than either governments or entrenched institutions, such as education systems. Like business, government and schools need to continue reinventing and reeducating themselves if they want to remain relevant in a world of fast-paced economic change and ensure their populations have access to a level employment playing field.
- Far too many children are not receiving early and continuing support for their learning and development at home. Cognitive, social, and emotional development in years 0–5 provides the foundation for future achievement. Educators outside the home are disarmed if learning is not valued in the students’ larger world.

## What Is the Appropriate Role for Business to Improve Workforce Readiness?

Telescoping on the role that business can play, these four points surfaced repeatedly:

1. Leadership is critical: Business possesses a bully pulpit and if it gets behind an issue, it can force real changes in behavior. Get businesses, and especially CEOs, behind this issue and change will come. It will take strong civic and business leadership to effect reform in an education system fraught with inertia.
2. The current focus is too scattered. Businesses must align themselves both internally and externally to deal effectively with the education and workforce readiness issue. The business sector must speak with one voice and deliver one message to maximize impact and move the needle.
3. Corporate philanthropy alone cannot improve workforce readiness. Truly collaborative long-term public/private partnerships that look at effecting systemic change will eventually have the greatest impact. Just throwing money at the problem hasn't worked in the past and won't work in the future.
4. Companies rarely leverage their greatest assets when supporting educational programs— their own expertise in their core competencies. The old model of funding schools and scholarships is no longer enough. Corporations need to realize they bring a unique set of capabilities and expertise to the partnership table— something that no other sector has. It is important for corporations to share not just cash, but also other resources at least as valuable—time, talent, and experience.

# Moving the Needle— Actions with Impact

The conference's open exchanges during general and breakout sessions complemented the “big picture truisms” by generating an abundance of strategies and learnings.

Participants were asked to consider answers and solutions for these critical questions:

- The business and education communities view each other with suspicion. How can we encourage companies to engage in education issues and make the most of their experiences in a productive way without being viewed as arrogant by the education community?
- Where and how should businesses direct their money? Where in the educational cycle should companies engage? Should businesses compete or collaborate?
- What can CEOs do?

During frank discussion of these questions, participants brainstormed more than 300 strategic and tactical actions businesses can use to attack the workforce readiness issue and improve the education system as it relates to this issue. The list sorts into three tiers of influence:

1. Use their bully pulpit and speak with a unified voice to drive change in national policy and societal norms.
2. Support change on the “front lines”—at the local and state levels where they are significant employers and can directly engage with teachers and community group educators, as well as legislators and policy-makers.
3. Encourage employees as agents of change within schools and school districts, and as life-long learners themselves.

What follows is a summary of key actions, both strategic and tactical, raised by participants.

## 1 Use their bully pulpit and speak with a unified voice

### Strategic

- Publicize. Public relations campaigns have changed national norms on smoking and drunk driving. The same can be done for the value

placed on education and workforce readiness. Business has the bully pulpit; if it gets behind an issue, it can force changes in behavior. Use this power to lead the charge in the workforce readiness arena.

- Help raise the awareness and prestige of the teaching profession. Morale building and social status is meaningful, and business can play a role in keeping the best teachers in the profession.
- Unify. Across the business community, concern is being raised about workforce readiness, but the voices are not in unison. Business organizations must create a common call for action to maximize impact. If the myriad business organizations coalesce around a single agenda, change will happen.
- Lobby. A nationally coordinated advocacy strategy that is focused on workforce readiness as a competitiveness priority can turn talk into action.

### Tactical

- Fund media programming that will make “teacher of the year” awards as big as the Oscars or the Emmy Awards.
- Get the word out on how workforce readiness, global competitiveness, and education relate to each other. Create media talking points for your top executives about the enormity of the crisis. Use them to create public awareness through public forums, op-ed pieces, and television appearances.
- Leverage membership in multiple business groups to collate agendas on workforce readiness across business networks. Force these groups’ administrative staff to cooperate on promoting a uniform message of action and business need.

## 2 Support change on the “front lines”

### Strategic

- The impact a single corporation can have on the legislative agenda by voicing its opinion is large, especially in its home state. If all major corporations in one state united to improve local/regional workforce readiness, then the achievement bar would be raised state by state.
- Corporate philanthropy alone is not enough to move the needle when it comes to having an impact on workforce readiness. Just because companies give money does not mean they are engaged enough to actually drive change in the system. They must also give support and gravity to make district-wide improvement efforts.
- Today, too few corporate investments in education focus on the real nuts and bolts of what it takes to improve the system and make it more responsive to workforce readiness issues. Speak to the front line. Identify local/state needs by understanding the challenges of those who are producing the educational “product.”
- Disincentives often exist for teachers to spend time on the critical applied skills mentioned in The Conference Board’s report *Are They Really Ready to Work?*. What can businesses do to direct focus toward these skills? Because “what gets measured gets taught,” there is an opportunity for business (in cooperation with their home state education sector) to provide major investments in assessment tools that could measure the very skills they demand. But it may be up to the business community to help create and administer, in addition to help fund, such tests. This could be expensive and would require a long-term and deep commitment.

### Tactical

- Ask teachers “How can I help?”; teachers say they love that. By asking, you will keep good teachers motivated and also begin the journey to understanding systematic challenges from the bottom up.
- Create a clearinghouse of effective innovative practices and programs. There are innovations out there that work, but there is also a lot of garbage. Highlight what works and what produces results.
- Open your professional development classes to teachers and administrators on a *pro bono* basis (especially web-based development classes). Bring teachers to observe key business processes (e.g., a strategy meeting) to understand why applied skills are needed. Create internships and externships for teachers.
- Evolve the role of human resources professionals to manage school/corporate and mentor/volunteer opportunities.
- Visit a school and experience it. Great decisions and building movements can’t be made without some first-hand experience.
- Help schools and teachers gain the context they need to make the content relevant to students. Share your company’s performance criteria and measurements with schools so they can build aspects into their curriculum. Identify the skill sets you value and base hiring decisions on, and give these to local schools districts to incorporate. Allow students at many levels to experience your corporate culture.

- Praise teachers and encourage respect for the profession. Companies should support teacher awards in the community and then shout it from the roof tops and factory floors. Treat teachers like heroes and reward/celebrate academics on the same scale as athletics.
- Encourage staff development of educators cooperatively with business to infuse work readiness issues into teacher preparations and education programs.
- Have businesses represented on curriculum planning initiatives at schools.
- Recruit and embed more real-world business practitioners into schools and other community-based educational programs.

### 3 Encourage employees as agents of change and life-long learners

#### Strategic

- Contribute more than just money. Business is a sector rich in skills, capable people, and energy. Encourage and motivate your people to get involved in the education community. (A note to the education sector: Let them do it.)
- Bring the business world to the kids since they often have little understanding or experience with the world of work.
- Align programs internally. Commission an internal analysis of all education, workforce readiness-related, and enterprise-wide human capital programs so they too can speak with one consistent voice. Make them strategic, and reduce overlap and duplication.

#### Tactical

- Create a Parents' University or a Grandparents' University or a Caregivers' University to help employees who are parents or guardians better and more effectively promote their charges' development.
- Encourage and provide incentives to employees to get involved in school-related events and issues, including serving on local school boards, the local PTA or other such organizations, and attend regular parent-teacher meetings.
- Create and support "career clubs" and student jobs fairs where employees can mentor and advise future workforce entrants.

# What CEOs Can Do

While business leadership on workforce readiness can emanate from many levels of the corporation, none is more powerful than the top of the house.

Participants of the Stakeholders Strategy Meeting discussed the CEO, specifically, as an individual agent of change. Here's a top-line summary of participant suggestions.

CEOs must:

*Lead.* They must use the bully pulpit and inspire employees to get involved. Don't assume that someone in your company has the answer. Instead, get involved—go back to your non-governmental partners, talk directly to educators. Talk to discover programs that are already working or may have worked in the past and then sit down as equal partners with your new cross-sector associates.

*Speak with one voice.* CEOs must work closely with peers and the business sector overall to ensure that they speak with one coherent and consistent voice on education and how it relates to workforce readiness. Right now the message is diluted and dispersed. It needs to be managed. Having the CEOs of major corporations speaking in unison on a specific issue will have enormous impact. Get workforce readiness and the teaching of applied skills in schools on the national agenda.

*Elevate education and the workforce readiness issue within their own organizations.* CEOs have enormous influence over their employee base and organizational values, and they often respond best to ideas that they can use internally. CEOs can certainly galvanize their own employees around specific issues. Poll them about education, workforce, and parental issues, and act on the results. Help to educate corporate boards of directors and other stockholders on the enormity of the issue.

*Make change happen through legislation.* Perhaps the greatest impact CEOs can have on long-term systemic change is using their leadership skills and influence to establish legislative priorities that make workforce readiness a mandatory issue. Get involved in the 2008 presidential campaign. Lobby state and federal legislators on the importance of including applied skills in curriculum standards and assessment.

*Take advantage of the ability to convene at a high level.* Breakdown the fiefdoms. Bring all the smart minds together to take action. CEOs are often highly influential individuals within the community. Use this influence to convene meetings and cross-sector collaborations at the very highest level. And offer resources, such as staff time and physical meeting venues, to make such gatherings happen. Drive the agenda toward workforce readiness.

*Demonstrate through example.* Support, through personal action and organizational incentives, a culture of life-long learning within the company. Demonstrate the values you expect of new workforce entrants. Media allows these up-and-coming employees to watch and eventually model your (collective) actions.

# Additional Lessons Learned

## What Business Wants to Hear

One challenge faced by those in the broad role of educating the next generation of workforce entrants is how to frame the education issue to attract the the business community's attention and support. Some actions educators within schools and community programs can take to engage businesses:

- Make the point abundantly clear that education is an economic issue, and connect the dots between education and workforce readiness. Make workforce readiness a bottom-line issue for companies, and show its impact on ROI and profits. Force a change in perception; businesses need to invest, not for good will, but for economic development.
- Change the language of the debate from the usual K-12 reform to one that focuses on competitiveness. This transforms education into a global business issue and creates a renewed sense of urgency. While they may be the two sides of the same the coin, it is global competitiveness, not K-12 reform, that will resonate with the business community.
- Remind the business community that it pays taxes that fund education (a lot of taxes), and as a “consumer” of graduates, it should have a say in how the system meets its demands. Would businesses hold back input and remain silent if they were dealing with perceived performance issues from a more traditional vendor or supplier of critical inputs?
- Develop a shared sense of responsibility around workforce readiness. While business may view this as primarily a responsibility of the education community, it is important to remind the business sector that it too has a critical role to play. Link education to the notion of sustainability, now one of the emerging issues for global business. After all, isn't education the glue that holds the sustainability idea together?
- Speak in terms of objectives, strategy, and return on investment. Business will be engaged if stakeholders couch their impact on workforce readiness in terms that businesses understand—economic and global competitiveness, profit/bottom-line impact, pilot project demonstrations, and, data, data, data.

## What Educators Want to See

### Content and Context – Bring the World to Us

Those representing the educator community spoke in a singular voice when it came to the issue of content and context: While teachers are very good at teaching the curriculum they are given (content), they find it much more difficult to put that content in a real-world business framework (context). The business community can help solve this conundrum by opening its doors to teachers and those educating through after-school and community-based initiatives. This can make abstract lessons relevant to students. In this day of tight school budgets and fewer field trips, programs that bring the business context to the classroom are in greater need of support. Some suggestions:

- Offer paid internships for educators so they have exposure outside their insular academic world.
- Bring in educators to observe key business processes, such as strategy meetings, to understand why applied skills are needed.
- Support students in real work experience, not only in large corporations but also in small firms and “hip” industries.
- Provide local employees for “career clubs” or job fairs at schools and community programs.

### Align Priorities and Incentives

Several teachers pointed out that the incentives set by their institutions often make it far from clear whose responsibility it is to teach applied skills. After all, making students workforce ready is not the only goal or priority of the traditional K-12 system. While many teachers said they do try incorporating applied skills such as teamwork and collaboration into their curriculum, they sometimes feel they have to choose between teaching students how to thrive in the real world and teaching them to pass state-wide assessment tests. Teaching to the test, they said, often serves as a roadblock to spending more time on applied skills.

As one veteran teacher commented, the findings contained in the report *Are They Really Ready to Work?* were a cry from the business community that the system as is has not been working. (For a summary of the report’s findings see Appendix B).

### Direct Involvement of Front Line Educators

Public/private partnerships can be effective, but be ready to listen to your partners. Don’t be arrogant.

### Behaviors We Need to Adopt

- Stop the blame game. Build trust, work together, and focus on the risk that an un-ready workforce presents to our collective and individual futures.
- Develop a shared sense of responsibility around workforce readiness.
- Engage students with real-world connections and applications that set the achievement bar high, while demonstrating to them and their parents that workforce readiness is a better bet to invest in than trying to strike it rich with a lottery ticket or a pro-sports or supermodel contract.
- Start holding corporations responsible (through media outlets and public pressure) for becoming involved in educating for workforce readiness. Such public pressure on the environmental front has companies striving to “be green”; it can work here too.

## The Public/Private Partnership Challenge

Public/private partnerships are another way for businesses to be involved. These do not have to be one-on-one groupings but rather broader cross-sector partnerships that foster collaboration *between* companies and *with* non-governmental organizations *and* education organizations and systems.

The seemingly competing priorities, the differences in language and culture, varying sensitivities, and even political views, means that building such cross-sector partnerships is a challenge in itself. To overcome the innate suspicion that exists, it is critical that businesses involve non-governmental organizations and educators very early in the planning process and at every subsequent stage of the implementation process. Hold off on the urge to be critical. As one teacher put it “We think of the education system as a sibling. You can beat up on your little brother all the time, and believe me we do beat up on the education system. But when an outsider comes and tries to beat up on our sibling, well, we come to our little brother’s defense every time.”

Business can sometimes be disappointed with the lack of rigor when it comes to data tracking and accountability measures in such partnerships. Analyzing facts and numbers is something business does every day to make informed data-driven decisions that can be supported by the evidence. Objectives are clearly defined and then impartially assessed or “graded.” Educators are used to grading others. Partnerships with business need to involve grading standards that focus on transparent evaluation of the success of funded programs or initiatives. If business wants to be involved in the education space, it will want rigorous tracking and accountability measures and its stakeholder partners should be ready to respond to such requests.

## Get Involved Early

When should business get involved in the education cycle to improve workforce readiness? The consensus from participants was clear—*as early as possible*. After all, elementary school or pre-K children are indeed part of the emerging workforce. And it makes sense to get involved at the earliest of stages of child development, given the evidence identifying those as key formative years. Life influences, even during the first five years of life, can significantly impact the odds of success in school and lifelong educational achievement.

As one speaker pointed out, one of the challenges faced by the education system is that every child’s environment outside the classroom is different. Some children are better prepared to start and stay in school than others. In the case of at-risk children, for example, the school system is often asked to provide more intensive services to help remedy the outcomes of social problems it did not create.

How can the business community get involved early? It must look to maximize the early years to take full advantage of how quickly children are learning—in and out of school. Corporations should look to their own workforce as parents, guardians, and mentors, and work through partnerships with NGOs or schools, to reach out to those employees and provide them the necessary information and tools to be effective in their roles as parents. One simple example: a company-hosted website that features trusted links so parents have access to the information and resources that will help them in their most important role—being their child’s first and most important teacher.

## Overcoming the Barriers to a Successful Partnership

According to INSEAD professors Rolando M. Tomasini and Luk N. Van Wassenhove, obstacles to successful cross-sector partnerships come as a result of the cultural differences between sectors. There are five key challenges that partners should focus on and work through to ensure a prosperous cross-sector partnership:

- developing mutual understanding
- creating transparency and accountability
- making the level of commitment
- assigning roles and responsibilities
- managing the relationship

### Strategies to overcome the challenges:

- Develop engagement rules that define the needs in advance and that can be fulfilled by the partnership, along with protocols and guidelines to agree on service levels and clarify expectations at the different levels and stages.
- Agree on responsible public relations and communication strategies to avoid conflicting messages that could compromise the validity of either party.
- Determine areas to leverage competencies and allow each party to focus on where it makes the highest impact from its contribution, rather than each one trying to do the most (or the most visible) at each point.
- Know that building the relationship and getting to know each other takes significant investment by both sides. Pre-negotiated collaborations minimize the risk of mistakes, lower assumptions and potential confusions, and provide an opportunity to set clearer expectations with your partner.

### Comparing Candidates

To objectively compare potential partners, look at:

- Organizational fit—get an overview of the candidate's structure, size, areas of operations, services provided, costs, income sources, growth rate, and potential. Do core competencies match and how compatible are your strategies for the future?
- Image/interest and attitude—look at detailed descriptions of potential partners' image, reputation, and political engagement. Do they have past successes in this area?
- Marketing and communications—include a list of VIPs associated with the marketing efforts of possible partners. Evaluate the value and possibilities of shared marketing and communications in a partnership.
- Logistics—ask candidates to describe their current practices, skills and knowledge, sources used, and timelines involved.
- Opportunities—give candidates a chance to express what they envision as opportunities for the future and outline their outstanding needs and skills they lack.

Source: Adapted from The Conference Board, Executive Action No. 189 "Overcoming the Barriers to a Successful Cross-Sector Partnership" and Executive Action No. 168 "Moving the World—A Case Study in CSR Partnership" both by Rolando M. Tomasini and Luk N. Van Wassenhove.

## About the Consortium Participants

**The Conference Board** creates and disseminates knowledge about management and the marketplace to help businesses strengthen their performance and better serve society. Working as a global, independent membership organization in the public interest, we conduct research, convene conferences, make forecasts, assess trends, publish information and analysis, and bring executives together to learn from one another. The Conference Board is a not-for-profit organization and holds 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status in the United States. Available online at: [www.conference-board.org](http://www.conference-board.org).

**Corporate Voices for Working Families** is a non-partisan, non-profit corporate membership organization created to bring the private sector voice into the public dialogue on issues affecting working families. Collectively, our 52 partner companies employ more than 4 million individuals throughout all 50 states, with annual net revenues of \$1 trillion. More than 70% of our partner companies are listed in the Fortune 500, and all share *leadership* positions in developing family support policies for their own workforces. This experience is the primary asset Corporate Voices brings to the ongoing dialogue with policy makers and other stakeholders.

**The Partnership for 21st Century Skills** has emerged as the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child's success as a citizen and worker in the 21st century. The Partnership encourages schools, districts, and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change. Available online at: [www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)

**The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)** is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 210,000 individual members, the Society's mission is to serve the needs of HR professionals by providing the most essential and comprehensive resources available. As an influential voice, the Society's mission is also to advance the human resource profession to ensure that HR is recognized as an essential partner in developing and executing organizational strategy. Founded in 1948, SHRM currently has more than 550 affiliated chapters within the United States and members in more than 100 countries.



CHARLES STEWART  
MOTT FOUNDATION

The **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**, established in 1926 in Flint, Michigan, is a private philanthropy committed to supporting projects that promote a just, equitable, and sustainable society. It supports nonprofit programs throughout the U.S. and, on a limited geographic basis, internationally. Grantmaking is focused in four programs: Civil Society, Environment, Flint Area and Pathways Out of Poverty.

**Annual Giving:** \$107.3 million in 2006

**Annual Giving in Education** (Flint Area and Pathways Out of Poverty Programs),  
2006: \$21.8 million

**Focus of Education Grantmaking:** Educational access and opportunity; district and system reform; quality and sustainable out-of-school learning programs; curriculum and facility development of Flint area institutions of higher education.

Mott's education grantmaking is largely conducted through two formal programs: Flint Area and Pathways Out of Poverty (POP). Via the Flint Area program, Mott partners with, and where appropriate, assists the public schools in Flint and surrounding Genesee County in developing strategies for addressing future academic, fiscal, and operational challenges, while building public interest in and respect for effective schools. Mott's longstanding support for community schools and out-of-school programs, particularly those with tutoring, mentoring or academic components, remains a priority in its hometown. Also of interest are initiatives that explore

links between art and academic content and provide an avenue for future collaboration between local schools and cultural institutions. Finally, the Foundation continues its longstanding support of program and facility development among area institutions of higher education.

Grantmaking via the POP program reflects the Mott Foundation's belief that education, economic opportunity, and community engagement are critical to helping low-income families move toward greater prosperity. Education-related grantmaking is made through the program's Improving Community Education component and includes support for:

- **Community driven reform:** Developing effective community-driven reform strategies that increase student achievement across a school district and at the state or regional level.
- **Vulnerable youth:** Expanding effective educational opportunities for vulnerable youth that prepare them for both college and careers.
- **Learning beyond the classroom:** Enabling national, statewide, and regional initiatives to promote sustainable, community-driven, expanded learning opportunities that support both academic achievement and positive youth development, especially for traditionally underserved children and youth.

**[www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org)**

***DOW CORNING***

**Dow Corning Corporation** is the global leader in silicon-based innovation—from research to application—serving approximately 25,000 customers around the world in nearly every industry, from electronics to solar energy to personal care and textiles.

“As a science and technology-based company, we consider it part of our responsibility to encourage the next generation of problem-solvers, innovators, and technology pioneers,” says Dow Corning president, chairman and CEO Stephanie Burns, Ph.D. “Our support for education and community understanding of the sciences is in the best interest of our industry, our nation, and our planet.”

Believing that math and science literacy are keys to strengthening learning, the company is actively involved in scores of classroom science activities, scholarships, science fairs, grants for teacher innovation projects, and even a children’s book about a Dow Corning chemist. The company’s efforts are worldwide. However, even local data indicates more is needed. The effort to excite and encourage students to take on the rigors of science requires a common coalition of like-minded thought leaders, including educators, parents, industry, and government.

Dow Corning and the Dow Corning Foundation are proud to sponsor the Workforce Readiness Project and especially to convene conversations with educators and others who are committed to building collaborations that lead to discovering solutions.

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# Appendix A

## Definitions

This report uses the term “soft” or “applied” skills interchangeably, as did participants at the meeting. When this report refers to “soft” or “applied” skills it means, but is not limited to, those skills that were included in the report *Are They Really Ready To Work?*, published by The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management.

## Applied Skills\*

**Oral communications**—Articulate thoughts, ideas clearly and effectively; have public speaking skills.

**Written communications**—Write memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.

**Teamwork/collaboration**—Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers; be able to work with diverse teams, negotiate and manage conflicts.

**Diversity**—Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, races, ages, gender, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints.

**Information technology application**—Select and use appropriate technology to accomplish a given task, apply computing skills to problem-solving.

**Leadership**—Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals; use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others.

**Critical thinking/problem solving**— Exercise sound reasoning and analytical thinking; use knowledge, facts, and data to solve workplace problems; apply math and science concepts to problem solving.

**Creativity/innovation**—Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work; communicate new ideas to others; integrate knowledge across different disciplines.

**Lifelong learning/self direction**—Be able to continuously acquire new knowledge and skills; monitor one’s own learning needs; be able to learn from one’s mistakes.

**Professionalism/work ethic**—Demonstrate personal accountability, effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time and workload management.

**Ethics/social responsibility**—Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior; act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind.

## Basic Knowledge/Skills\*\*

English language (spoken)

Reading comprehension (in English)

Writing in English (grammar, spelling, etc.)

Government/economics

Humanities/arts

Foreign languages

History/geography

Science

Mathematics

\* The list of applied skills was derived primarily from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. In addition, several members of The Conference Board’s Business and Education Council were consulted.

\*\* For the most part, this list of basic knowledge and skill areas includes the core academic subjects as identified by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

# Appendix B

## Are They Really Ready to Work?

### Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce

#### Summary

The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management jointly surveyed more than 400 employers across the United States. These employers articulate the skill sets that new entrants—recently hired graduates from high school, two-year colleges or technical schools, and four-year colleges—need to succeed in the workplace. Among the most important skills cited by employers:

- Professionalism/work ethic
- Communications
- Teamwork/collaboration
- Critical thinking/problem solving

When asked to assess new workforce entrants, employers report that many of the new entrants lack skills essential to job success. Employers expect young people to arrive in the workplace with a set of basic and applied skills, and the Workforce Readiness Report Card makes clear that the reality is not matching expectations.

Only for the four-year college-educated entrants to the workforce is the Excellence List longer than the Deficiency List on the Report Card.

The Workforce Readiness Report Card for new entrants with a high school diploma does not have a single item in the Excellence List. All 10 skills that a majority of employer respondents rate as “very important” to workforce success are on the Deficiency List.

For two-year college-educated entrants, one “very important” applied skill—information technology application—appears on the Excellence List, while seven skills appear on the Deficiency List.

A combination of basic knowledge and applied skills are perceived to be critical for new entrants' success in the 21st century U.S. workforce, but when basic knowledge and applied skills rankings are combined for each educational level, the top four “most important” are almost always applied.

**Professionalism/work ethic, teamwork/collaboration and oral communications** are rated as the three “most important” applied skills needed by entrants into today's workforce.

**Knowledge of foreign languages** will “increase in importance” in the next five years, more than any other basic skill, according to more than 60 percent of the employer respondents.

**Making appropriate choices concerning health and wellness** is the number one emerging content area for future graduates entering the U.S. workforce as reported by three-quarters of the employer respondents.

**Creativity/innovation** is projected to “increase in importance” for future workforce entrants, according to more than 70 percent of employer respondents. Currently, however, more than half of employer respondents report new workforce entrants with a high school diploma to be “deficient” in this skill set, and relatively few consider two-year and four-year-college-educated entrants to be “excellent.”

## Appendix B continued

### Workforce Readiness Report Card for New Entrants to Workforce

Assessment of new workforce entrant readiness on “very important” skills (basic knowledge and applied skills rated as “very important” by a majority of employer respondents). “Very Important” skills are placed on the Deficiency/Excellence Lists if at least 1 in 5 respondents report entrant readiness as “deficient”/“excellent.”

#### High School Graduates

##### Deficiency

Written Communications . . . . .	80.9%
Professionalism/Work Ethic . . . . .	70.3
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving . . . . .	69.6
Oral Communications . . . . .	52.7
Ethics/Social Responsibility . . . . .	44.1
Reading Comprehension . . . . .	38.4
Teamwork/Collaboration . . . . .	34.6
Diversity . . . . .	27.9
Information Technology Application . . . . .	21.5
English Language . . . . .	21.0

##### Excellence

No skills are on the Excellence List for new entrants with a high school diploma.

#### Two-Year College/Technical School Graduates

##### Deficiency

Written Communications . . . . .	47.3%
Writing in English . . . . .	46.4
Lifelong Learning/Self Direction . . . . .	27.9
Creativity/Innovation . . . . .	27.6
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving . . . . .	22.8
Oral Communications . . . . .	21.3
Ethics/Social Responsibility . . . . .	21.0

##### Excellence

Information Technology Application . . . . .	25.1%
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#### Four-Year College Graduates

##### Deficiency

Written Communications . . . . .	27.8%
Writing in English . . . . .	26.2
Leadership . . . . .	23.8

##### Excellence

Information Technology Application . . . . .	46.3%
Diversity . . . . .	28.3
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving . . . . .	27.6
English Language . . . . .	26.2
Lifelong Learning/Self Direction . . . . .	25.9
Reading Comprehension . . . . .	25.9
Oral Communications . . . . .	24.8
Teamwork/Collaboration . . . . .	24.6
Creativity/Innovation . . . . .	21.5

#### “Very Important” Skills Considered for:

**High School Graduates Report Card** (% very important): Professionalism/Work Ethic (80.3%); Teamwork/Collaboration (74.7%); Oral Communications (70.3%); Ethics/Social Responsibility (63.4%); Reading Comprehension (62.5%); English Language (61.8%); Critical Thinking/Problem Solving (57.5%); Information Technology (53.0%); Written Communications (52.7%); Diversity (52.1%)

**Two-Year College/Technical School Graduates Report Card** (% very important): Professionalism/Work Ethic (83.4%); Teamwork/Collaboration (82.7%); Oral Communications (82.0%); Critical thinking/Problem Solving (72.7%); Reading Comprehension (71.6%); Written Communications (71.5%); English Language (70.6%); Ethics/Social Responsibility (70.6%); Information Technology (68.6%); Writing in English (64.9%); Lifelong Learning/Self Direction (58.3%); Diversity (56.9%); Creativity/Innovation (54.2%)

**Four-Year College Graduates Report Card** (% very important): Oral Communications (95.4%); Teamwork/Collaboration (94.4%); Professionalism/Work Ethic (93.8%); Written Communications (93.1%); Critical Thinking/Problem Solving (92.1%); Writing in English (89.7%); English Language (88.0%); Reading Comprehension (87.0%); Ethics/Social Responsibility (85.6%); Leadership (81.8%); Information Technology (81.0%); Creativity/Innovation (81.0%); Lifelong Learning/Self Direction (78.3%); Diversity (71.8%); Mathematics (64.2%)

Percentages calculated from among the number of respondents to each question.

Number of respondents varied for each question, ranging from 347 to 357 for high school graduates; 351 to 360 for two-year college/ technical school graduates; 400 to 413 for four-year college/university graduates.

# Appendix C

## Agenda

### Stakeholders Strategy Meeting

June 26 – 27, 2007

The University Club

1135 16th Street NW, Washington, DC

## Tuesday, June 26, 2007

### Welcoming Remarks

*Goals and objectives for the meeting*

Jonathan Spector

*President and Chief Executive Officer*

The Conference Board

### Setting the Context

Linda Barrington

*Research Director*

The Conference Board

Ms. Barrington will discuss

***Are They Really Ready to Work?***

Donna M. Klein

*President and Chief Executive Officer*

Corporate Voices for Working Families

Ms. Klein will discuss ***A New Day for Learning***

### Framing the Conversation

This panel of business executives, non-profit leaders and educators will discuss the issues facing corporate America in the area of Workforce Readiness. They will respond to the results of several key reports including *Are They Really Ready to Work* and *A New Day for Learning*, and give their perspectives on the options that senior executives should consider.

#### **Moderator:**

Jonathan Spector

*President and Chief Executive Officer*

The Conference Board

*Panelists will represent the following perspectives:*

### Community Involvement

Daniel J. Cardinali

*President*

Communities in Schools, Inc.

### Higher Education

Brian K. Fitzgerald

*Executive Director*

Business-Higher Education Forum

### Framing Education Broadly

Milton Goldberg

*Member*

Time, Learning and

Afterschool Taskforce

### Teaching Community

Andrea Peterson

*Music Teacher and*

*2007 National Teacher of the Year*

Monte Cristo Elementary School

Granite Falls, WA

### Educator Response Panel

We will hear from educators — traditional classroom teachers, an administrator, an afterschool educator — who will respond to the previous framing panel, and provide insights into the concerns and needs within the education community.

#### **Moderator:**

Thomas H. Lane, Ph.D., CChem, CSci, FRSC

*Director, Global Science and Technology Outreach and Research Scientist*

Dow Corning Corporation

## Appendix C continued

### Panelists:

Heather Johnson, M.Ed.  
*National Board Certified Teacher*  
 Middle School Language Arts Teacher, NJ

Tim McGuire  
*Chemistry and Biology Teacher*  
 Bullock Creek High School: Midland, MI

Deborah VanSumeren  
*Curriculum Coach*  
 Bay City Public Schools: Bay City, MI

Gwynn Hughes  
*Executive Director*  
 Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership, Quincy, MA

### Small Group Discussions

#### Question 1 - What do we do differently to improve workforce readiness?

To assure diverse opinions and a challenging discussion, attendees will be assigned to groups based on their affiliations. Each group will be asked to debate a series of possibilities as well as craft their own suggestions.

#### Group facilitators:

Mary Wright Benner  
*Program Director*  
 The Conference Board

Randy W. Fiser  
*Executive Vice President, Programs*  
 Corporate Voices for Working Families

Cathryn Haines  
*Commercialization and Portfolio Manager*  
*Advanced Technologies and Ventures Business*  
 Dow Corning Corporation

Elyse Rosenblum  
*Director of Education Programs*  
 Corporate Voices for Working Families

Greg Striebel  
*Supply Chain Quality Specialist -*  
*Six Sigma Black Belt*  
 Dow Corning Corporation

### Recap of Question 1 and Presentation

How do those who are convinced a new idea needs to be acted upon get those around them to see the need for the change? How to you make the case to the most senior leader? And perhaps more importantly, how do help that senior leader convince the middle manager that the change is a good idea? This evening we will explore the following questions:

- How do we create a compelling argument around the solutions we develop to CEOs and other corporate stakeholders?
- How do we ensure effective engagement of all stakeholders (educators, service providers, non-profits, communities, students, families etc.)?
- What to we do now – how do we create the kind of coalitions and partnerships that are critical to the success of any of the initiatives proposed?

John Kania  
*Managing Director*  
 FSG Social Impact Advisors

## Wednesday, June 27, 2007

### Framing the Solution

Harold O. Levy  
*Former Chancellor and CEO*  
The New York City Schools

### Report out from previous day

### Small Group Discussion

Question 2 – What can CEOs do to improve workforce readiness?

New groups will again be created to discuss what CEOs can do personally and organizationally to make change.

### Final report out

### Summarizing the Discussion

Over lunch, corporate representatives will discuss the outcomes of the day and help to prioritize the outcomes.


### Moderator:

Donna M. Klein  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*  
Corporate Voices for Working Families

### Panelists:

Ann Wilson Cramer  
*Director – IBM North America*  
IBM Corporate Citizenship and  
Corporate Affairs

Rebecca Voorwinde  
*Corporate Social Responsibility*  
*Project Manager*  
Ernst & Young, LLP



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