



Education and Workforce Development Ideas

Education is the Great Equalizer and a Civil Right of Every Youth

In order to secure the competitive nature of the U.S. economy it is incumbent upon us to ensure our children have the tools necessary to thrive in a 21st century global economy. If we fail - as Thomas Friedman postulates - the “Flat World” will be totally unforgiving to the undereducated. Investing in our youth by supporting lifelong learning and effective education and workforce development is the most important investment we can make in our country and our people.

Reform No Child Left Behind

The goals of NCLB are laudatory; unfortunately, it is under funded and relies too heavily on a top-down approach. Teachers, like all of us, thrive when they are treated as true professionals, encouraged to bring forth their gifts and talents when given the support and inspiration to use their skills, ingenuity and energy to change the lives of our students. NCLB has created a top-down, layered federal, state, and local system that is stifling teachers and local educators. The most promising federal efforts that support and encourage teachers are the federal small learning community grants. These grants commit teachers and school principals to embrace high expectations while also funding their efforts to create small, personalized environments – giving teachers and school leaders the ability to customize their curriculum to address the individual needs and goals of their students. NCLB should build on the goals of high expectations and closing the achievement gap but the rigidity of the act needs to be reduced. States and local districts should have more flexibility and be incentivized to establish innovative and personalized learning environments that incorporate rigor and relevance that is engaging for students. This is consistent with the position on teacher common planning time in the platform.

Supporting Teachers and Leaders

School site leaders are the foundation on which great schools are built. These leaders can and should come from the ranks of both administrators and teacher leaders. To compliment the call for creating an Infrastructure for Professional Development, we should bring together the best knowledge of educational leadership with the best of business and organizational



leadership. Innovative leadership constructs - such as those in New York, Memphis, and Chicago - engage the educational community and business community and universities to bring together these two disciplines from their schools of education and schools of business to develop school administrators into school leaders. This, in turn, would shift schools and school districts toward performance driven enterprises and away from compliance driven entities. The goal should be to create leaders that are dedicated to the best interests of students versus the status quo of striving to serve the adults involved in the system, namely the administrators.

Make Math and Science Education a National Priority

Math and Science can be engaging and relevant when innovative middle and high school teachers are able to work in math and science career-themed environments found in small schools with themes such as engineering, architecture, construction, digital media, etc. When teachers are encouraged to use project-based learning and applied learning with interdisciplinary approaches, students are motivated to enjoy and master math and science concepts. Professionals from these disciplines should be connected to high schools in order to help teachers make these subjects vibrant and relevant. The goal is to inspire students through direct interaction with successful professionals in these fields, showing them first-hand the exciting careers that put algebra, geometry, physics, and biology to work every day. Today's students need to understand the rewarding and successful careers, and the mathematical and scientific skills, that solve the world's challenges. (See Community Connections below in terms of policies to engage employers through intermediaries)

Zero to Five

It is fundamentally important that Preschool Child Care policy and bills such as Hirono HR 3289 and Clinton S1823 are passed to provide preschool for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status. By 2012, all parents should have access to quality preschool for their children. Businesses should be incentivized to establish and build parent friendly policies, quality childcare programs and public/private investment through tax credits and matching grants. (Presidential Early Learning Council)



Expand Summer Learning Opportunities

Northwestern University research reveals that early positive contact with labor markets help youth in both educational and career attainment. Enacting Senator Obama's STEP UP (S. 116) plan and complimenting it with summer and year round youth employment opportunities (Sen. Miller and Rep. Clyburn) will help train the future business leaders of tomorrow in the world of work. Summer and youth employment should be expanded and fully integrated into a STEP UP-type initiative where work experience and educational interventions are integrated. In Los Angeles, and other cities, this integrated approach to education and work is often referred to as Learn and Earn.

Making College Affordable for Everyone (Making a College Diploma Affordable)

In order to make financial aid more accessible, it is crucial that FAFSA EZ (FAFSA simplified) gets implemented quickly and effectively. The federal government should reward states that compliment federal financial aid with their own college financial aid and help in facilitating FAFSA EZ to state financial aid systems, ensuring that the youth and students most in need of assistance do not get denied financial aid because of the overly complex application processes at the state level as well.

For America's economy to thrive in the 21st century global workforce, we must do better than access and affordability – we must, and can, have both access and success. Implementing the transparency components of the Higher Education Act recently passed by Congress is a crucial first step. We should build on this implementation and reward those in the higher education community that improve their performance in serving high-need students by preparing them, graduating them, and helping them secure well-paying careers.

It is simply not good enough to say the doors of our communities and universities are open if the gates around them remain locked. Simplifying the financial aid process will help students gain access to a college education that will equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in the global economy. It is essential to cultivate a love of learning and the skills for learning in our students if they are to truly become lifelong



learners. Only when their education leads to career, personal and civic success have we succeeded as a nation.

We need to modernize FERPA and build longitudinal data systems that can help us all understand the movement of students from pre-K through post secondary and into the workplace. States should be encouraged to create systems, much like that of Florida's, that help policy makers, parents, and students understand completion and success rates and ensure all students graduate and succeed at all levels of education. We need systems that help us understand what is working and how to build on it. Knowledge of successful programs will help us challenge ourselves and our institutions when they are failing our youth.

With the commitment that all children deserve access to a world-class education, regardless of their neighborhood or zip code, we owe it to ourselves and our students to leverage the power and potential of the historically Black Colleges and Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Federal resources should be provided to higher educational institutions to expand and build their network and capacity, as their commitment to receive and successfully graduate African-American and Latino students is critical to our future as a country. Federal resources to all higher institutions, including research universities, should include a mix of incentives with requirements to partner with low-performing high schools and alternative secondary settings to raise high school graduation rates and increase enrollment rates to college.

America is a country built on the work and dreams of immigrants. While some of us are first-generation and some had ancestors on the Mayflower, we ALL had parents who wanted a better life for their children than the one they had. Passing the federal DREAM Act and rewarding states that maximize access to state aid for all youth, including immigrant youth, speaks to the very fiber of what it means to be American and believe in the American Dream.

Make America Competitive in a Global Economy and ALL Americans Realizing the Careers of their Dreams

Often, we look at the interests of labor and business as opposing forces and only seek out public investments as the way to solve these challenges. While we need to reinvest in public education at all levels (per policies



stated in platform), we also need to better mobilize the private sector to be full partners in building a 21st century workforce, increasing our human capital. It is our employers and labor organizations that first feel the pressure and effects of being unable to compete in a global economy.

The Workforce Investment Boards situated throughout the United States serve as an important tool in creating partners out of adversaries. These Boards have the potential to be strategic catalysts for aligning local Educational Institutions and Workforce systems to the economy. In many cases, the top-down regulation contains good intentions to promote accountability through performance measures, but the opportunity to have leaders in local communities act in a strategic role becomes primarily a limited role of oversight resulting in a waste of human capital and ingenuity. We propose a retooled Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that will grant more local autonomy and promote better connection to existing systems of Career Technical Education, workforce preparation and community college systems. The labor exchange role of WIA dollars should be a baseline of services upon which to build strong Workforce Investment Boards and Youth Councils that will draw leaders from each region for guidance and support; thus, rewarding local areas for building these systems and discouraging those that minimally oversee program dollars.

P-20 and Specifically Community College Alignment to the Economy

Employers need to be positioned to clearly and dynamically define which 21st century knowledge and skills are needed for the workforce of today and the future. This type of demand-driven input needs to align and connect to Community Colleges and all education segments.

Community Connections for Youth

At the federal level it is appropriate to ensure fiscal and programmatic accountability but as we strive to provide this design and oversight of federal spending, we build silos between programs and federal agencies, cutting off the flow of resources and information between correlating programs. To a point, this makes sense – however, our communities have real gangs, real people and real families that are increasingly more mobile and often cross-jurisdictional boundaries. We need a connected support instead of fragmented programs.

We have federal and state programs like Pell Grants, Food Stamps, EITC,



and Healthy Families that are meant to help, but are not connected due to the disjointed nature of the systems. We need to establish and stimulate interagency coherency at state and local levels, instead of those at the federal level that demand and mandate state and local government to work in their own silos to qualify for federal dollars.

We propose that investments at the national, state, and local levels should focus on building community capacity by supporting cross-system collaborative partnerships comprised of leaders from education, workforce, government, social services, and the private sector. Vibrant intermediaries need to be established and supported in our communities to serve as the implementation engine for locally defined initiatives, and make and manage connections for young people and the strategies used to support and prepare them for the future.

Strategies that Work:

Academic Achievement	Career Development	Employer Partnerships	Youth Development
High School Improvement	Quality Work-Based Learning	Industry Pipelines	After School
Multiple Pathways	Summer Jobs/Internships	Career Ladders	Out-of School Time
Small Learning Communities	Career Mentoring	Industry Clusters	Youth Leadership
Whole School Reform	Career Centers	Apprenticeship	
Career Academies	Literacy Training	Industry Certifications	
Pathway Programs	Occupational Training	Workplace Skills Standards	
College Fairs	Work Readiness		
College Readiness	Transitional Jobs		
	Job Placement		



Through the Community Connections for Youth Initiative, local intermediaries will support these efforts via the following activities:

Connect youth to the workplace and employers to classrooms.

Intermediaries engage employers as key partners in local efforts. They help connect education and training to economic development and support the workplace as a learning environment.

Improve high schools and the transition to college.

Intermediaries support educational improvement and help youth make the most of high school and post-secondary experiences.

Provide opportunities for our most vulnerable youth.

Intermediaries design and implement local initiatives to support successful transitions for foster youth, out-of-school youth, and others who are disconnected.

Engage employers and intentionally connect efforts to regional economies.

Intermediaries work to reflect the skills needed for success in the 21st century workplace in all programs and initiatives designed to promote youth success.

Infuse a youth development approach across all systems and programs.

Intermediaries promote and support youth development principles with all adults that touch the lives of young people. They seek to surround our schools and programs with nurturing, developmental experiences for youth.

Build collaborative systems and support their effective implementation.

Intermediaries leverage and align resources and services among multiple youth-serving efforts, and provide the operational supports to ensure the collective impacts of collaboration.

Improve and measure program practice.

Intermediaries build organizational and staff capacity in youth serving programs to collect and analyze information, using data to improve practices and measure the impact of their work.