

Work is College Prep

How Work-Based Learning Prepares
Students for Success



HERE to HERE Policy Brief

Fall 2019

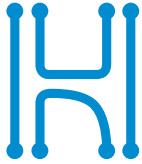
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HERE TO HERE Policy Brief | Fall 2019

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HERE TO HERE

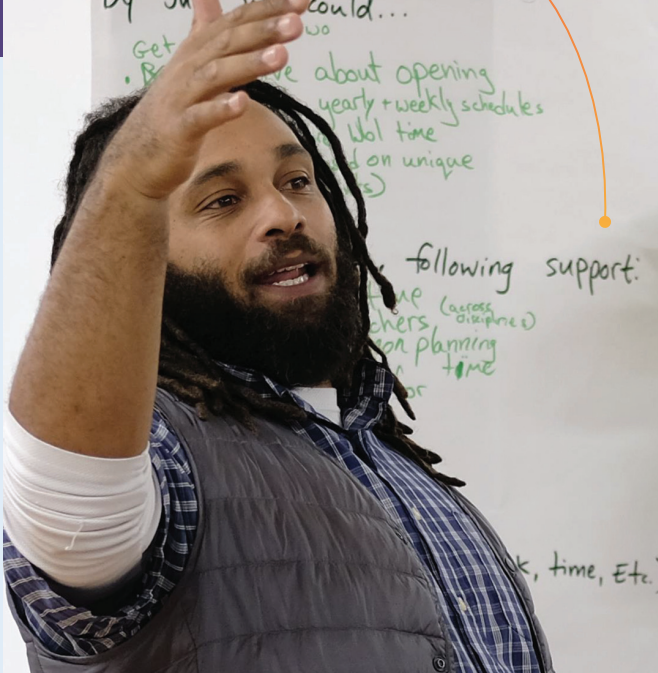
HERE to HERE is a Bronx-based nonprofit that unites employers, educators, and community-based organizations to connect young people to family-sustaining careers and create a thriving, inclusive economy. HERE to HERE was developed through feedback from the community and DreamYard, Big Picture Learning, and the Dimon Foundation's shared commitment to enhance opportunities for young people.

DreamYard

DreamYard collaborates with Bronx youth, families and schools to build pathways to equity and opportunity through the arts.



BIG PICTURE For over 20 years, Big Picture Learning has worked to put students at the center of their own learning. Today, hundreds of BPL network schools in the United States and around the world work together and in their communities to reimagine and reshape education.



What if we are thinking about work the wrong way? What if the pathway to successful access, admission, and completion of college is built with Work-Based Learning experiences that provide the knowledge, agency, networks, and skills students need to make smart, informed postsecondary decisions? What if work experience helps them stay engaged and increase their school performance?

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop their employability. WBL promotes students learning about work, learning through work, and learning for work.

Introduction

For many high school students, the end of summer marks the end of their summer jobs and internships. And while many young people largely sought work to put money in their pockets, they also gained a valuable range of skills and experiences that will benefit them long after their wages are spent.

The positive effects of summer job participation are immediate and visible to teachers upon returning to the classroom. Firstly, research shows students who work over summer experience less learning loss – the decline in academic skill that typically occurs in the months when school is not in session and which disproportionately affects low-income youth. Secondly, upon returning to the classroom, guidance counselors and teachers find that students who engaged in summer work draw on their experience as they explore college and other postsecondary options. When summer jobs are related to personal interest, students are better able to visualize and plan next steps toward achieving professional goals.

But all too often the boost summer jobs provide, both in the high school classroom and in making informed college-bound choices, fades too quickly because we do not help students connect summer learnings to the classroom. The traditional routine of high school learning focuses on academic activities and does not connect them to careers students might explore in college and beyond. Work is largely positioned as something detached from and unrelated to school. Many students who seek continued employment during the school year are discouraged and told to concentrate on their academic work, plan for the future, and avoid distraction.

In recent years, educators, policy makers, and community-based organizations (CBOs) have increased efforts to build a career focus into the postsecondary planning of graduating high school students. This policy brief from HERE to HERE investigates how we might reconsider college and career as interrelated in important ways. More specifically, this paper suggests a shift in discussion from “College and Career Prep” to “Career as College Prep”, a more flexible model that benefits all students.

HERE to HERE is deeply invested in this dialogue. As a Bronx-based nonprofit, HERE to HERE enhances paths to rewarding careers for young people by uniting employers, educators, and CBOs in the Bronx and New York City. Our vision is a thriving, inclusive economy driven by meaningful relationships between young people and employers.

We are developing partnerships with a network of Bronx high schools that are actively embedding WBL into the design of their schools and providing the professional development, coaching, resources, and best practices to support WBL and Career Pathways development. HERE to HERE is also partnering with employers who are actively committed to engaging with educators to help prepare New York City’s young people, especially those from low-income neighborhoods, for the careers of today and tomorrow.

Career Pathways are structured programs that help students develop industry-specific knowledge, networks, agency, and skills that enable them to work while in school, gain transferrable skills, and increase their earning power.

The Problem of College Completion

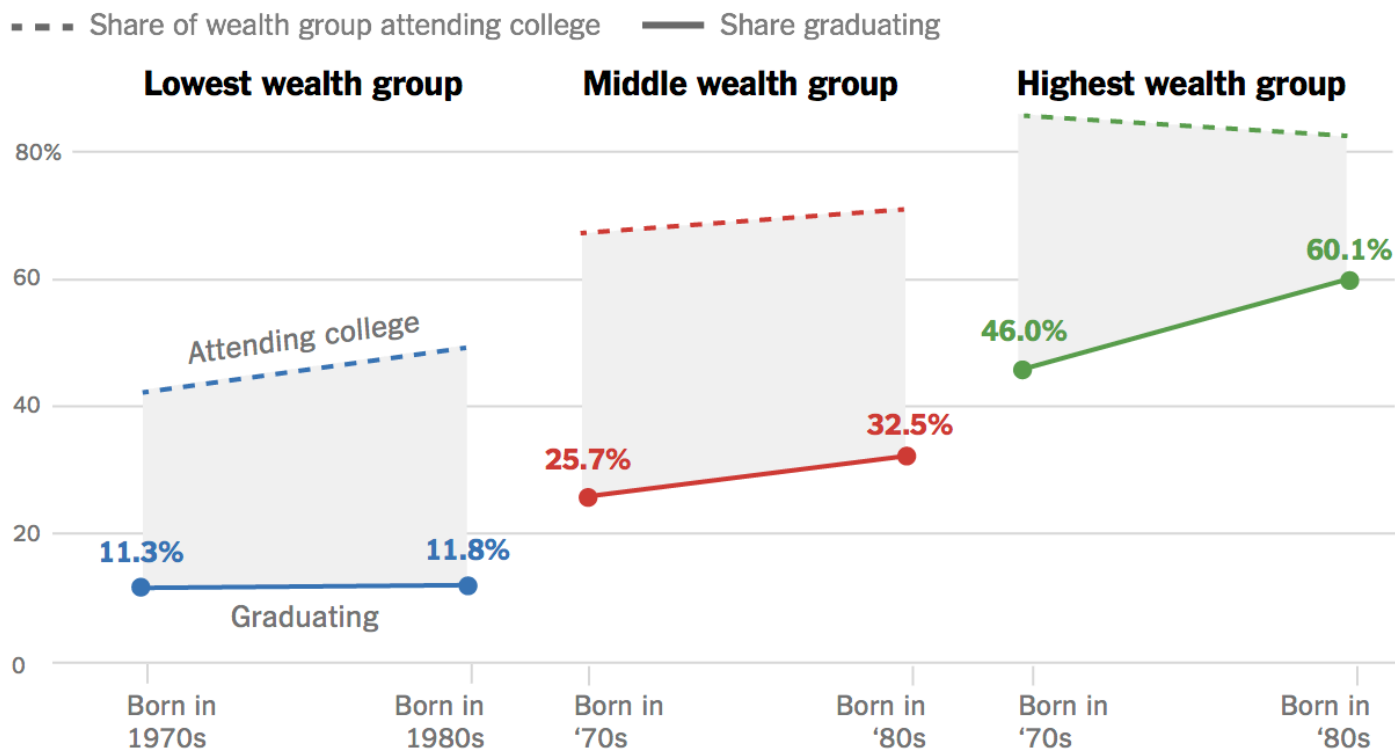
The effort to ensure college access for all emerges from data showing that average earnings are notably higher for individuals with four-year college degrees [1].

Known broadly as College for All, this movement received major support with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in the early 2000s, which focused federal education policy on ensuring that all high school students had the academic abilities to achieve in college [2]. NCLB's emphasis on the academic side of college preparation came at the expense of what had been a growing School-to-Work movement, supported by 1994 legislation aimed at expanding the role of career exploration and preparation in high school [3].

College enrollment increased under NCLB, as intended, but the policy also had severe unintended consequences. Although college enrollment increased in low-, middle-, and high-income groups, there was not a reciprocal, income-wide increase in graduation rates to match. Middle- and high-income groups saw a dual increase in enrollment and completion or a decrease in the gap between college enrollment and college completion – but low-income groups saw almost no increase in college completion rates, effectively widening the gap. NCLB's income-wide success in raising enrollment is therefore misleading, as lower income students did not share the same academic experience or success as other wealth groups.

More Students, and Yet...

For the poorest wealth group, college attendance has risen, but college graduation has not.

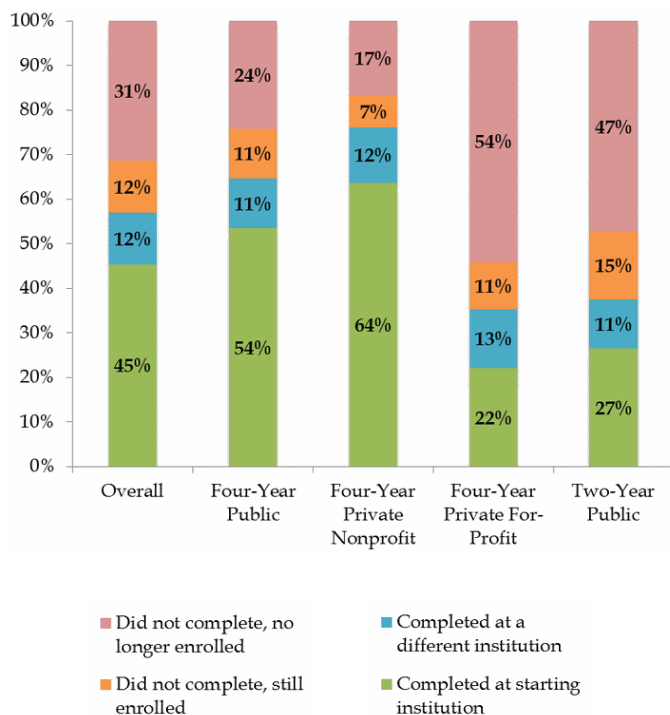


Note: Wealth categories are based on a person's parents' wealth when the person was 10-14 years old. Lowest wealth group is the bottom 40 percent of households; middle wealth is the middle 40 percent; upper wealth is the top 20 percent. Educational outcomes are at age 25. Source: Fabian Pfeffer, "Growing Wealth Gaps in Education," the journal Demography. | By The New York Times

[6] Image source: New York Times

The gap between enrollment and completion has continued to shrink for middle- and high-income students over the past two decades but remained stagnant for low-income students. Despite increased college-going nationwide, college outcomes for students, especially low-income students, remain unsatisfactory. On average only 57% of students who attend college complete a degree within six years [4].

Six-Year College Completion Rates by Institution Type
Students First Enrolled in Fall 2011



[4] Image source: Forbes

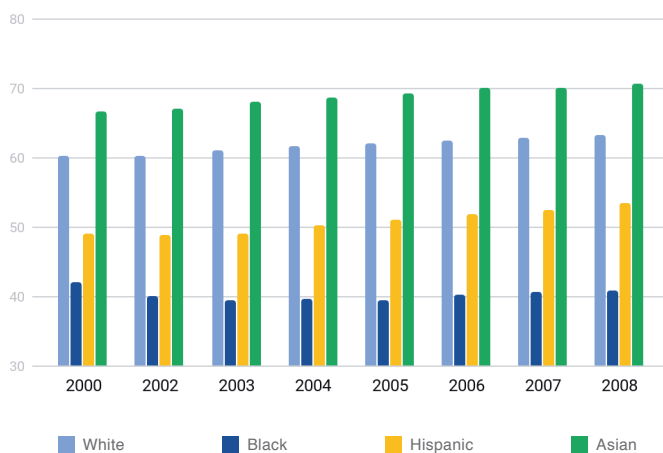


For community college enrollees, predominantly low-income students, the amount of admitted students attaining degrees within six years drops to 11% [5]. Black and Hispanic students, regardless of college type attended, are more likely to leave school without a degree than with a degree [6].

Here in New York City, only 55% of recent college enrollees attain a degree within six years, according to a recent CUNY finding. For NYC community college enrollees, only 23% attain AA degrees, and only 11% attain BA or BA-equivalent degrees [7]. Overall, roughly 68% of students who enrolled in a public college in New York City between 2007 and 2011, received no degree, often leaving students with loan debt, few in-roads to jobs salaried at \$50,000 or more, and a significant feeling of failure.

Disproportionately, these financial and psychological burdens are placed on low-income students, as the gap between enrollment and graduation continues to decrease for students from high wealth households, and grow for students from the lowest wealth households. Although more students are enrolling in college, we cannot consider enrollment alone a success when it is routinely accompanied by incredibly low rates of completion, financial burden, feeling of failure, and greater inequity. Something needs to change to better serve young people, employers, and the economy.

Six-Year College Completion Rates (Percentage) by Race/Ethnicity at Four-Year Schools



[6] Image data source: NCES



Work-Based Learning in Practice

Commonly cited data about greater earnings for college graduates masks the fact that many enrollees do not complete college and that earnings vary widely across programs of study.

A 2018 finding from the National Center for Education Statistics suggests college completion outcomes and post-college earnings vary significantly across these programs (8). According to a 2011 New York University study, availability of resources such as knowledge of labor markets and prospective earnings for various jobs are critical to decision-making — further amplifying the fact that lack of resources is a primary reason why students fail to complete and or secure family-sustaining jobs (9).

Supporters of Career Pathways (CP) and WBL argue that integrating work and career into high school curriculum design offers a path toward improving postsecondary outcomes. Both revise the focus from college as a destination in and of itself, to college as a pathway to a successful livelihood and career (10). Through this policy brief, HERE to HERE outlines how embracing CP and WBL is in fact the optimal strategy for college preparation and success.

The following themes frame how New York City high schools, with the support of employer partnerships, policy makers, and CBO allies, can help students develop intentional postsecondary plans, launch promising careers, and increase postsecondary completion rates:

■ College as a route, not a destination

Building system-wide support for college and/or career exploration brings educators, employers, CBOs, policy makers, students, and families into partnership to promote a variety of career paths.

■ WBL as an intentional part of college prep

Increasing focus on and support for the college decision through Work-Based Learning provides students with the professional skills, coaching, resources, and best practices needed to foster intentional, informed postsecondary decisions and the knowledge, networks, agency, and skills critical for college success.

■ Expanded earning power as a goal

Increasing student earning power at every age through training and employer-valued credentials offers young people the economic wherewithal to remain in school. All New York City students, regardless of income, race, academic achievement, or type of high school they attend, would benefit from these approaches. Each student developing a stronger understanding of the labor market and the tools needed to succeed in the working world is fundamental to education. Although education is often equated with opportunity, this is only true if education includes acquiring the knowledge, networks, agency, and skills needed to secure a first job with a promising career trajectory.



■ College as a route, not a destination

One possible explanation for the college completion problem is that, in an effort to increase enrollment, we have lost sight of if and where college fits into a student's career and life trajectory.

Postsecondary education prepares students with direct, technical training and indirect, personal development, but a college degree is neither an endpoint nor the only option.

Robert Schwartz, Professor of Education at Harvard University and an advisor to HERE to HERE, has helped lead the movement to push many states, regions, and cities to embrace career pathways [10]. Such restructuring recognizes that college is an instrument for career success, but by no means the only one. Some students may want or need to pursue employment during, instead of, or before enrolling in college, and all students would benefit from preparation. Robert Schwartz argues that college has received too much focus as a destination for students, rather than a route to long-term career development, and that a broader articulation is necessary if we are to ensure that young people are equipped for more than just college enrollment.

“Given the rising costs of four-year colleges and universities and the no-longer guaranteed return on investment, most parents would applaud a school district that helped its students develop enough of a career plan to choose colleges and majors with at least one eye on the labor market outcomes of their graduates.... Given an average student debt burden today of just under \$28,000, no one who undergoes the time and expense of earning a four-year degree should have to discover only upon graduation that his or her degree has little value in the labor market” [10].

Schwartz and others underscore that an employee-valued postsecondary credential is increasingly important in today and tomorrow's economy. A report from the Georgetown University Center for Education and Workforce indicates that by 2020, 65% of all jobs will require some sort of postsecondary credential [11]. This percentage is even higher for jobs with family sustaining wages. In short, high school is not enough. But that doesn't mean that college for all is the answer. We need to do a better job of matching students with the right training and credentials.

How are ecosystems like this developed? What are the meaningful relationships, structures, and steps necessary for students to make informed postsecondary decisions? HERE to HERE believes in a market-responsive, passion-driven series of strategies that can launch students into careers at whatever point they choose, and ideally while they are still connected to the education system.

Students should have the opportunity to consider multiple postsecondary options, including two-year, four-year, and certification programs, and high schools should support student decisions with post-graduate plans that outline, at minimum, the next two years.

Making thoughtful, deliberate postsecondary decisions demands not just educators, but also public officials and employers co-design a system that better serves both students and employers. System-wide commitment to meaningful WBL and CP for high school students can help reduce persistent racial and socioeconomic disparities in high school graduation rates, college completion rates, and employment and earnings outcomes. Additionally, it encourages students and employers to build meaningful relationships. Such relationships benefit the students because they have direct access to hiring managers who are tuned into the nuances of the labor market, as well as employers who then have access to a promising, largely untapped talent pool.

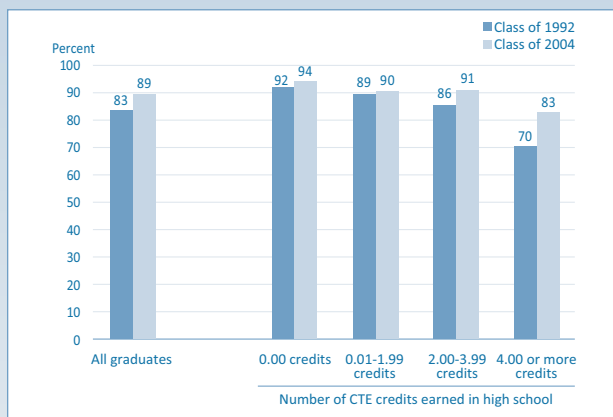


■ WBL as an intentional part of college prep

Adding “And Careers” is a useful first step in reframing how we think about preparing young people, but we should not stop there.

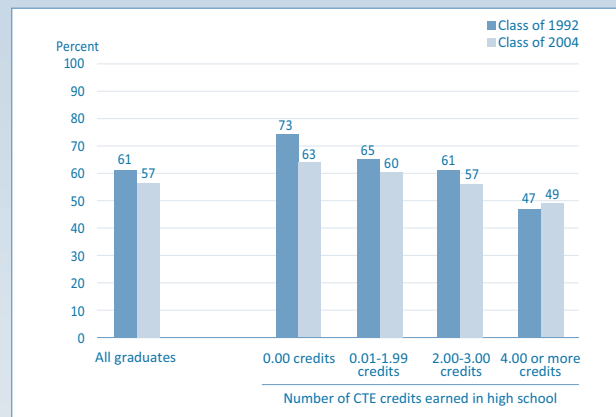


FIGURE 1. Percentage of public high school graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education within 8 years of graduation, overall and by high school career and technical education (CTE) credits: High school classes of 1992 and 2004



NOTE: Standard errors for estimates can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tablesh147.asp>.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), Fourth Follow-up, 2000, and its High School Transcript Public-Use File; Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2012), Third Follow-up, 2012, and its High School Transcript Public-Use File.

FIGURE 2. Percentage of public high school graduates who earned a postsecondary credential within 8 years of graduation, overall and by high school career and technical education (CTE) credits: High school classes of 1992 and 2004



NOTE: Standard errors for estimates can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tablesh147.asp>.
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Both nationally and in New York City, new data shows students who participate in career and technical education (CTE) programs during high school are more likely to enroll in college and/or meet metrics or college readiness [12].

More robust research is needed to better understand how different types of WBL can influence college, but several states and localities, already convinced of its value, are investing in efforts to provide students with these opportunities with the belief that work-based learning will improve outcomes:

Tennessee is expanding career readiness programming in high schools as an explicit part of the state’s effort to increase college degree attainment [13]. As of 2016, new grant programs supporting CTE were adopted in California and Massachusetts, among other states.

In the same year, Oregon created funding that allocated \$800 per high school student annually for CTE programs, dual credit, and dropout prevention. Arizona restored its previously decreased CTE budget. Oklahoma authorized district-specific WBL relationships with businesses. North Carolina waived tuition for high school students participating in apprenticeships at postsecondary institutions. In Colorado, CareerWise, a scaffolded apprenticeship-integrated education model, is leveraging WBL to ensure career success for students and highly trained talent for employers.

Source: Futures and Options

In New York, in addition to developing WBL and CP initiatives like P-Tech High Schools, Career Clue, and the Industry Scholars Program, the Board of Regents recently expanded its Career Development & Occupational Studies (CDOS) pathway, once only available to some students, to all students [14]. Across the country schools are investing in students by implementing WBL programs, standards, and policy changes.

Implementation of WBL and CP requires partners from across the education and employment infrastructure working together to establish and support these experiences.

CDOS, or Career Development & Occupational Studies, is a credential designed to indicate a student’s readiness for entry-level employment. The credential is given to the student upon graduation from high school.



■ Expanded earning power as a goal

WBL experiences are critical to preparing students for postsecondary decisions and driving them toward meaningful careers.

These experiences are also important financially, as they provide students with paid work, as well as the chance to acquire the knowledge, networks, agency, and skills to advance to higher-earning positions. Young adults often want or need to begin earning before or during college. Furthermore, exiting college without work experience tends to yield lower earning power than exiting college with experience.

The economic disparities that result for young people who cannot access the labor market are significant, growing, and impact future economic advancement. Here in the South Bronx, young adults earn on average \$24,000/year, almost \$10,000 lower than their counterparts in NYC [\$32,000].

Recognizing the value and the need for students to earn both before and during college, high schools are beginning to embed WBL and CP opportunities into the high school experience that can increase a student's earning power.

Some high schools are identifying ways for their students to gain industry-value credentials. HERO High in the Bronx introduced certification programs to their existing high school and college degree programs to enhance students' work readiness and career options. Working in partnership with Hostos Community College's Office of Adult and Continuing Education (ACE), the programs identified three certification and work programs that allowed students to

receive not only wages while in school, but critical, career-securing credentials.

The three certifications programs identified were an Emergency Medical Technician program (EMT) for academically-prepared 12th and 13th grade students, a Certified Medical Assistant program (CMA) for middle-range 12th and 13th grade students, which included an externship, and a Licensed Practical Nurse Program (LPN) for students in grade 14 who have completed the majority of their Associates Community Health degree. The EMT program began fall 2017, and the CMA program began in winter 2018.

HERO High's example addresses two student needs – skill development and financial stability. It also helps employers in the health care sector fill much needed, understaffed positions. HERO's EMT, CMA, and LPN programs are one way in which schools are leveraging community connections, responding to regional labor markets, and supporting students in WBL. Elsewhere, schools are engaging gig economy-related work experiences to fill in-demand IT roles, leveraging SYEP, and looking to expand youth apprenticeship.

Far too many low-income students do not get the high school and postsecondary credentials needed to secure a family sustaining career. One of the main reasons for this is they need and/or choose to drop-out to earn money. What if educational institutions embraced the need to work as a learning opportunity? What if they designed high schools in a way that promoted work by braiding earning and learning together as, for example, the Cristo Rey network of schools has successfully done. Imagine if one of the measures of a school's success considered improvements to a student's earning power.

Conclusion

The decision high school graduates make about if, when, and where they will attend college, or what their program of study might be, has high stakes, as evidenced by low college completion rates, labor market attachment, and wage data. We need framework and resource investments that look beyond academic achievement, to ensure high school students make more informed decisions.

The evidence overwhelmingly shows that focusing only on academics is inefficient. It fails far too many high school students, and it also lacks the nuance and breadth required for students to make informed decisions. Several states and cities, including New York City have already begun working on a talent development framework for high school, postsecondary institutions, and employers that encourages key components of WBL and CP including career awareness, exploration and planning, preparation, and training. Implementing this approach will result not only in more informed postsecondary decisions, but also a greater percentage of students gaining market-valued postsecondary credentials and securing a family sustaining job.

The current reality, however, is stark. Only one in four young people receives work experience by age 17, and young people from middle-income families are three times more likely than young people from low-income families to get these early, formative work experiences [10]. We know that young people from higher income backgrounds have greater resources and access to internships, summer programs, and other WBL opportunities. Moreover, this early disparity factors into postsecondary decisions, and greater disparities down the road.

Investment in WBL and CP for low-income students varies tremendously from district to district and school to school. Generally, additional investments in low-income schools focus on supports related to academics, attendance, and extracurricular activities. Too often WBL and CP are considered as an afterthought rather than as a strategy to level the playing field.

Right now, because high schools do not focus on WBL and CPs, too many students are making postsecondary decisions through the very narrow lenses of their immediate surroundings and academic success. WBL and CP equips students with important information about the labor market, colleges and programs, careers, networks, required skills and levels of education, advanced training, and which postsecondary programs position them well for promising careers. Importantly, WBL and CP also helps students understand their own motivations, interests, passions, and agency.

Systemic implementation of WBL and CP, by helping students gain critical knowledge, networks, agency, and skills, offers a real chance to level the playing field.

The time is now to invest in Work-Based Learning and Career Pathways for high school students, not as an alternative, not as an addendum to college preparation, but as an intentional way to improve postsecondary decision-making and longer-term outcomes.

Let's rethink the role of work as the predictor, rather than the result, of improved high school completion rates, college readiness, and postsecondary outcomes. "Work is College Prep," offers educators and policymakers the opportunity to focus on WBL and CP to promote high expectations for all students.



To learn more about HERE to HERE, visit heretohere.org

To connect to HERE to HERE's High School practice, contact
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Who is HERE to HERE and how are we working to enact these ideas?

HERE to HERE is a Bronx-based nonprofit that creates and enhances pathways to rewarding jobs for young people from high school through age 25 and employers seeking talent. In high schools, HERE to HERE works with Big Picture Learning and DreamYard in a growing number of Bronx high schools to help students access real-world work experience, build their own professional networks, and analyze and understand the labor market, while providing resources to teachers and school staff to implement and expand programs that support work-based learning.

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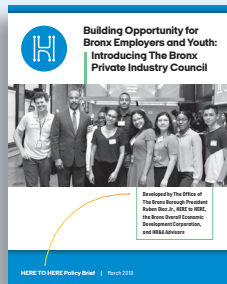
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Why do you think internships
are important?

- Networking
- New experir

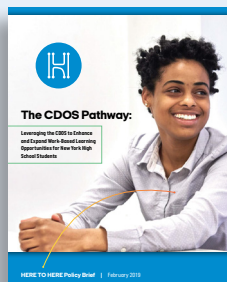
Other HERE to HERE Publications:



REPORT | October 10, 2019

Building Opportunity for Bronx Employers and Youth

In partnership with the Office of The Bronx Borough President, BOEDC, and HERE to HERE, the Bronx Private Industry Council, introduced in this paper, will strengthen connections between employers and students to support a thriving economy, continued innovation, and opportunities that drive students toward rewarding, family-sustaining careers.



REPORT | October 10, 2019

The CDOS Pathway

Work-based learning activities greatly improve high school retention and graduation rates, and postsecondary preparedness. The Career Development Occupational Studies commencement credential, or CDOS, utilizes many of the same resources, staffing, and infrastructure as other work-based learning programs. Given recent changes to CDOS policy that expands eligibility of the credential to all high school students, the CDOS represents a powerful avenue for educators, policymakers, and organizations interested in expanding work-based learning opportunities for students in New York City High Schools.

Partner Publications



RESOURCES | March 1, 2015

Gold Standard: The Swiss Vocational Education and Training System

Switzerland is one of several European countries with a so-called “dual” vocational education and training (VET) system in which students combine learning in school with learning in workplace settings. In Switzerland and in Germany, Austria, Denmark and Norway between 30 and 70 percent of students in upper secondary school participate in such systems. While each of the dual system countries has its own strengths and distinctive characteristics, for a variety of reasons we think that the Swiss VET system is arguably the strongest in Europe.



RESOURCES | October 10, 2019

Bain & Company: Making The Leap

We are in the midst of an economic revolution; rapid advances in technology are changing the way we live and work. Automation will soon displace in excess of 2.5 million workers per year—a labor market disruption far greater than any we’ve experienced in the past. While many jobs are going away, others—many of them good jobs that provide an opportunity for well-paid and fulfilling careers—are still plentiful. Our education system has struggled to adapt to this new world and, so far, is failing the test. There is a mismatch between the skills and experiences required to succeed in these good jobs and the capabilities we are developing in our students.



RESOURCES | August 1, 2019

CareerReady NYC

With the labor market rapidly changing as a result of automation and the emergence of the gig economy, young people in low-income communities have the most to gain by mastering key “durable skills” for workplace success, such as critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and self-advocacy.



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