

Are Your Students **Future-Ready?**

Prepare students for today, tomorrow, and whatever comes next.

Many students worry about their future.

- ✓ They feel education hasn't kept up with tomorrow's job market.
- ✓ They wish they had better resources to prepare for life after graduation.
- ✓ They yearn for greater access to real-world content, career tools, and exposure to potential career paths.ⁱ

And most educators share these concerns...

Education is not evolving to meet future workplace needs.



67%
of students agree

72%
of educators agree



To close this concerning gap, schools must focus on three priorities:

1 Develop transferable skills for success in any post-graduation path.

2 Provide real-world, relevant content for personal connections with learning.

3 Offer career exploration to bridge education and employment.

Developing Transferable Skills

Students need strong interpersonal skills to thrive—like communication, adaptability, collaboration, and problem-solving. These human-centered skills are essential for navigating today's classrooms and tomorrow's evolving workforce.

Fast Facts

#1 Skill

Parents, teachers, and superintendents agree that life skills are the most important for future success.



There is a 25% gap

between how important students feel communication skills are and how they rate the quality of instruction for communication skills.

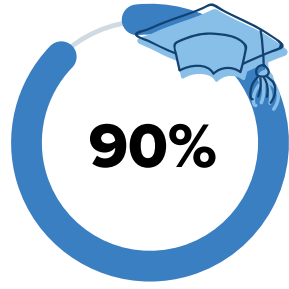


Only 60–71%

of students and teachers believe schools effectively teach essential life skills.



Did you know?

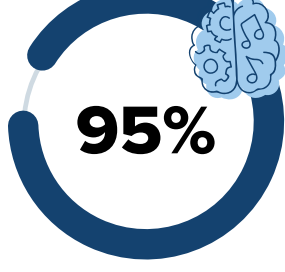


Approximately 90% of districts identify **communication** as a key **Portrait of a Graduate** skill.

About 95%

cite **critical thinking** or **problem-solving** as essential.

Other common skills include adaptability and collaboration.



Why It Matters

Employers value “soft skills” as much as technical expertise. In 2023, the most in-demand traits in new hires were **communication**, **flexibility**, and **critical thinking**.

Transferable skills are a key component of many **Portrait of a Graduate** frameworks nationwide, as districts agree that fostering these skills and attributes prepares students for success in school, life, and future careers.ⁱⁱ

Actionable Tip

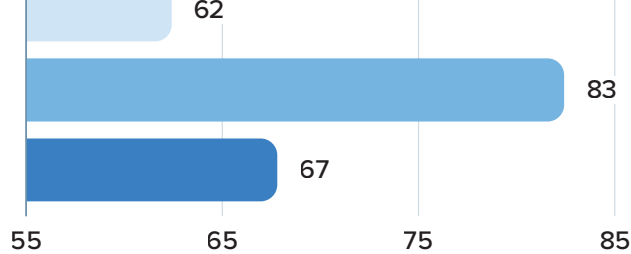
- ✓ **Practice Building Transferable Skills within Existing Teaching and Learning:** Use group projects and debates to build interpersonal skills.
- ✓ **Model and Reinforce the Value of Interpersonal Skills:** Teachers can model adaptability and a growth mindset during instruction and daily interactions.
- ✓ **Make Time to Practice Soft Skills in Later Grades:** Even older students need practice navigating relationships. Upper-grade teachers can provide opportunities for negotiation and problem-solving peers.

A Deeper Look

Middle school teachers rate developing communication and collaboration skills as the most challenging. These skills were not reported as a top challenge in other grade bands.

Percent of teachers that rate developing collaboration and communication skills as a top challenge

Elementary School Middle School High School



Connecting Students with Real-World Content

Students need clear pathways that link what they learn in school to real-world careers. By understanding the relevance of what they learn, students find greater meaning in their lessons and see how their knowledge applies beyond the classroom.

Fast Facts

63%

of students feel that the skills they are learning in school are not adequately preparing them for future job opportunities.



Nearly One in Four

students don't feel lessons have real-world relevance.



About 70%

of educators find it challenging to help students see the real-world application of the skills they are learning.



Why It Matters

[Research](#) shows that students exposed to real-world experiences during their education are less likely to disengage and more likely to achieve long-term success.

Did you know?

Parents cite lack of interest or motivation as the **#2 reason** for students missing school, second only to health issues.

Actionable Tip

- ✓ **Embed Real-World Relevance:** Design lessons that connect academic concepts to future careers. By aligning student interests with careers, they are better able to conceptualize how the skills they learn today will have meaning in the future.

Partnering with Industry Experts to Provide Career Exploration Opportunities

Students are eager for more career exploration, yet **they may not be getting the opportunities they need to explore what the future has to offer** and feel excited about the limitless possibilities ahead.

Fast Facts

85%

of educators believe external partnerships with corporations and community organizations are key to bridging the gap between classrooms and careers.



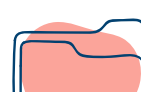
88%

of students want more exposure to different career paths.



8 of 10

students want more career resources.



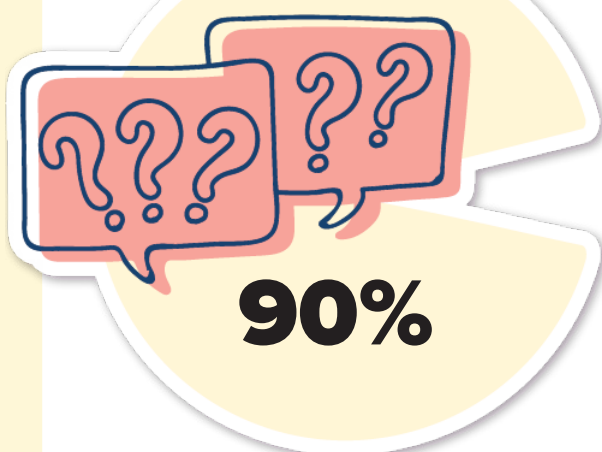
Why It Matters

Students are eager for more career exploration. Exploring what the future has to offer helps students feel excited about the possibilities ahead.

Employers increasingly value hands-on experience, such as internships or apprenticeships, alongside traditional academic credentials.

Actionable Tips

- ✓ **Connect with Professionals:** Invite industry experts into classrooms for experiences. Leverage virtual platforms to connect students with far-away industry professionals for interactive workshops and career talks.
- ✓ **Establish Long-Term Partnerships with Local Businesses and Organizations:** Many local and national organizations are eager to work with students and teachers to help develop skills for their respective industries.



Teachers and superintendents agree that schools should incorporate more community and industry involvement in classrooms.

Sources

i [Education Insights 2024-2025: Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow](#)

ii [Portrait of a Graduate Gallery: Future-Ready Visions](#)

Learn more about the current state of future readiness by reading [Education Insights 2024-2025: Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow](#).

To learn how Discovery Education programs prepare students for the future and ignite learning that lasts a lifetime, visit:

www.discoveryeducation.com/FutureReady