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Educators Agree: Curriculum Needs to Include Teaching Modern Workforce Skills, Says New Report from ASA and Burning Glass Technologies

Research examines current efforts to address skill development in middle and high school, offers guidance on classroom implementation

BOSTON – October 8, 2020 – American Student Assistance® ([ASA](#)) and [Burning Glass Technologies](#) today released a new report, *The View from the Schoolhouse: How Middle and High School Educators See the Skills Shaping the Modern Economy*, which analyzed teacher attitudes – prior to and since the start of the pandemic – toward incorporating high-demand workforce skills, or “new foundational skills,” into school curriculum. The survey revealed that more than half of educators believe these skills, such as analyzing data and critical thinking, will be essential for students but say there is a gap in students effectively learning these skills.

The report, released during this year’s virtual ASU GSV Summit, is the first large-scale investigation of the perceived importance of these skills by educators, and the extent to which middle and high schools are teaching these skills effectively. For the survey, 12 related new foundational skills identified by Burning Glass were classified into three categories: human and team-centered problem-solving competencies, digital building blocks, and skills for navigating the workplace.

More than half of educators believe that employers will regard these skills as “essential” (77%, 68% and 50%, respectively) by the time their students are looking for a job. For six of the 12 skills identified within the three categories, between 53% and 81% of educators deemed it “essential” that schools offer students the opportunity to learn the skill.

What’s more, one-third to one-half of middle school educators believe these skills should be integrated into the curriculum. Yet, only a quarter of educators (25%) believe that their school is doing an excellent job at preparing students for job opportunities and an almost equal share (22%) feel their school is doing a poor job at preparing students.

This difference creates an educational opportunity gap for students, especially students of color or low-income backgrounds, who may lack exposure to quality skill development. The survey found that:

- Majority Black-student classrooms are often twice as likely to experience this opportunity gap
- Majority Latinx-student classrooms are 50% more likely to experience the opportunity gap
- Gaps are two to four times as large for classrooms where 75% or more of students receive free or reduced lunch compared to classrooms with 25% or less

The outbreak of COVID-19, however, may prove to be a catalyst for closing these opportunity gaps and including new foundational skills in daily curriculum. In a follow-up survey conducted after the COVID-19 outbreak, 94% of educators say that COVID-19 has highlighted the need to teach digital skills.

“Throughout 2020 we have all learned that changes in the world and the workplace can occur when we least expect it. The curriculum in our schools must also evolve to keep up with this fluctuating landscape so they can prepare students for the future,” said **Jean Eddy, ASA President and CEO**. “Educators understand how critical these skills and experiential learning are to student success. At ASA we’re committed to ensuring all students have opportunities to build these skills and the social capital they need to thrive in life.”

Additional report findings include:

- Two-thirds of teachers and nearly nine out of 10 school counselors and administrators saying they feel they could personally take steps to increase the teaching of these skills in their schools and classrooms
- 88% of educators believe that career exploration and experiential learning are productive avenues to better teach these skills
- Educators will struggle with implementation when the curricular suggestions are vague, such as “skills of the future” or “career and technical skills”

“Most Americans still enter the workforce directly after high school. Those graduates, just as much as those who are college-bound, should start their careers with the new foundational skills that will serve them well in any workplace,” said **Matt Sigelman, CEO of Burning Glass Technologies**. “An understanding of how to work together effectively, operate within an increasingly digital environment, and apply their skills to business problems will not only give students a better start but will also grow even more valuable as they rise in their careers. But for students to be able to acquire these skills, educators need help bringing them into the curriculum.”

The report provides recommendations to implement the strategies and practices that will close these gaps and reverse trends of economic decline including:

- Traditional skill testing
- Metrics and benchmarks for learning outcomes
- Professional development goals for teachers and administrators
- Career exploration and experiential learning opportunities through internships, apprenticeships, college and employer site visits, and industry days in high school

Analysis for the report paired labor market data with two rounds of educator surveys to investigate the demand for new foundational skills and the prevalence and nature of education of these skills at the middle and high school level. The first round of surveys was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the second round was conducted in the fifth month of the crisis, allowing educators to reflect on how the pandemic has affected their perspectives on these skills.

To view the full report, visit: <https://www.asa.org/research-study/digital-economy-is-shaping-foundational-skills-for-students/>

About American Student Assistance® (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit committed to helping kids know themselves, know their options, and make informed choices to achieve their education and career goals. ASA® has a 60-year legacy of working directly with students to increase their access to higher education through loans and financial education. ASA has turned its experience into impactful solutions for students in grades 6-12 to help them pursue their dreams. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-us

About Burning Glass Technologies

Burning Glass Technologies is an analytics software company that has cracked the genetic code of an ever-changing labor market. Powered by the world's largest and most sophisticated database of labor market data and talent, we deliver real-time data and breakthrough planning tools that inform careers, define academic programs, and shape workforces. To learn more, visit www.burning-glass.com.

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