

## **An Emphasis on Communication**

The ability to communicate is a skill that is being lost in our society. While the ability to be in contact with one another increases rapidly due to advances in technology, the actual amounts of communication decrease. The Oxford Dictionary defines communication as, “The successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings.” When a large portion of our communication is condensed into one-hundred forty character messages, much of its intended meaning is lost in transmission. The value of verbal communication has only increased since the proliferation of digital communication, as people are still expected to be able to interview for jobs and be able to communicate clearly and effectively as they work. Moving forward, all school districts should begin formally instructing their students in the critical skill of verbal communication.

In recent years, secondary education has shifted from preparing every student for college to allowing students to prepare themselves for whatever field they wish to work in. This new school of thought is largely embodied in Ford Next Generation Learning, and while it encourages educators to give students training in a field they will actually work in, it does not emphasize the importance of verbal communication to its students. This initiative trains students to become leaders in their fields, whether the field be construction or medicine. However, one of the most important aspects of being a leader is being able to communicate your vision to your team. The practice of allowing students to figure out in high school exactly what their career interests are, rather than later in life, allows financially disadvantaged students the opportunity to find a passion in a career, which is a massive benefit to historically poor schools. If a district only hopes to create a more content workforce, this system would be an adequate choice, but not if a district hopes to teach the next generation of leaders how to lead effectively.

Teaching the ability to communicate is compatible with a more career-focused system of learning, and needs to be treated with the same importance as career specific training in schools. The easiest method to implement a new emphasis on verbal communication would simply be to make taking a speech class a requirement for graduation. With an increased number of students in speech classes, there would need to be more teachers hired or trained to teach speech – an expense well worth the money. A more difficult to implement, but likely more effective, method would be to incorporate a focus on effective verbal communication into career-minded courses. This focus would be more effective than a traditional speech class because most students are not going to become orators, but all students will eventually be required to learn to communicate in a fashion dedicated to their chosen career. As employers frequently look for skills that set applicants apart, the ability to communicate would allow students in Missouri to become better equipped as employees and leaders in their fields. With an increased focus on verbal communication, students and companies based in Missouri would become more competitive for scholarships and jobs on a national level.