

In what ways would you change how your School District prepares graduating students for life as young adults?

This spring, millions of students across the country will graduate high school and move on with their lives. While high school is definitely a difficult stage of life, adulthood will prove to be even harder for most graduates. The challenges of finding a job, paying for college, and succeeding on your own are hard to manage. High school may prepare students with the knowledge and basic skills that students need to survive in the “real world”, but many students still graduate feeling unprepared to take on this new stage of life.

In the past few years, our school district has taken amazing strides to prepare students for life as young adults. The mandatory personal finance class helped me personally to better understand what getting a mortgage, paying for college, or filing my taxes will look like in the future. I feel confident that I will be able to manage my finances as a young adult. The new Leadworthy class is immensely beneficial to the professional development of students. This class teaches students about job interviews, public speaking, and writing resumés. These skills are crucial to the success of students in the workforce and in further education. The availability of Advanced Placement and college credit courses has also allowed students to be proactive in their educational career. Many students are able to graduate high school with several completed college credits, giving them a jump start on their studies. With the recent addition of a career counselor in our school, students have more guidance in planning their future as young adults.

All of these improvements are steps in the right direction, but there is always more that can be done. One of the hardest things about preparing for adult life is the struggle to discover what career you are passionate about. Students who plan to attend college have to decide

what they will major in before they have ever experienced what it is like to work in that field. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, over 30% of college students change their major at least once in their first three years of college. The percentage increases for students who had initially declared majors in STEM fields. Students need to be more confident in their choice of career, so they can avoid having to change their course of study and waste their time and money on courses that aren't necessary for their new major.

Our school district can help students be more prepared for their future by encouraging participation in job shadowing and internship programs. Many students have after-school jobs or are student athletes, which prevents them from being able to use time after school hours to investigate job shadowing opportunities and careers they may be interested in. If our school could offer a class that would allow students to discover their interests and explore different careers, they would be better prepared for their future. Our community has many local businesses and organizations that would be perfect for job shadowing. The school board could form a network of local businesses that are willing to provide job shadowing opportunities and provide a list of those businesses and their contact information to the students. For example, a student interested in becoming a veterinarian, could look at the list of job shadowing opportunities and contact the local veterinary clinic to set up a time during their scheduled class to meet with the veterinarian. They could work with the veterinarian for a few weeks and then decide if they want to continue in that career path or not. Allowing students to discover which careers are not well-suited to them now, will set them up for success in their adult life.

School districts across the country are recognizing the importance of preparing students for the realities of adult life. Our school district has made major improvements in this area in

the past couple of years. However, the addition of job shadowing opportunities will help students solidify their future plans before declaring a career path that they will not find satisfying. Job shadowing would set students up for a successful future.

Source: Leu, Katherine. "Beginning College Students Who Change Their Majors Within 3 Years of Enrollment." The National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education, Dec. 2017.