

Futures-focused leaders must think ahead to create and lead by example and expose students to as much of what they will have to face in the real world as possible. This is necessary inside of schools, due to the simple fact of schools being typically a sheltered experience. Guiding students through and giving them the opportunity to work with standards, constraints, and changing expectations. Through these opportunities, students will learn the necessities of being a productive citizen soon to be entering their communities as adults.

Effective leaders recognize the same old same old, will not be the solution for student's in tomorrow's workforce. Systems, technologies, and jobs are constantly changing. Leaders must foster the shifting paradigms necessary for the schools of tomorrow by making the work real, bringing in examples from their own community, and taking students to the experience.

Future thinking leaders understand the skill sets for student in the next generation will change. Leaders must encourage, model, teach, and support teachers and curriculum to ensure students have skills ready for the work force they will be entering. Leaders must emphasize the need for students to have the ability to be an inventive thinker and empathetic citizen, as well as continue to develop communication skills. Students require both speaking and listening in one on one, small group and large group situations. Effective leaders encourage the teaching of effective use of internet resources. Students must be able to use the internet effectively, identifying credible resources, finding search engines for specific topics and results, and learning new technologies. Most importantly, leaders must inspire students to be compassionate citizens, through the development of motivation, persistence, flexible risk-taking, and interdependency.

Effective future-thinking leaders must recognize and share these skill sets with all stakeholders to ensure understanding and implementation. Leaders must train stakeholders, through communicating personal stories, supportive data, and modeling the effective strategies. Effective leaders must build it, believe it, and be it, in order for others to feel the same and move with the momentum.

External relationships align with the work of an effective future-thinking leader because they are immersed in the workforce we are preparing our students for. By remaining focused on the goal, and building relationships with the greater community, a broader range of community citizens will expand the opportunities awarded to students. Real life situations offer students the prospect of building connections between what they are learning in class and what it is like in the real world. Through connections with the greater community, we are able to model real world problems and allow students to build and lead solutions, further providing the real world connections students require to build motivation, determination, and realistic expectations. These connections grow students' learning and can ultimately provide experienced student workers to the greater community.

In my experience, Career and Technical Education courses allow students to foster ties to their community's businesses and citizens. The experiences in and out of the classroom are real, aligned to the job expectations, and provide students with a chance to build better goals that are more realistic based on their own experiences.