



## **A Changing Workplace, A Changing World** Creating Schools that Focus on the Future

by Willard R. Daggett, Ed.D. and Raymond J. McNulty

**T**he Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is changing the ground rules for the governance of K-12 education. Not only does ESSA change the way that Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is measured, it creates new opportunities for innovation and emphasizes the importance of putting career ready on equal academic footing with college ready.

This emphasis raises key questions such as:

- What are the academic skills and knowledge that underpin our changing workplace?
- How can schools support the development of important attributes?
- What can we learn from transformations in the business sector that can inform our design of future-ready schools?

One critical factor in all of these questions is the role of technology.

### **Disruptive Innovation**

What has the smartphone replaced in your life? For many people, this one device has taken the place of our landlines, cameras, maps, photo albums, phone books, stereo systems, and more. This single example illustrates a profound transformation in how we live, work, and interact.

As much as technology has impacted our personal lives, it has had an even more profound impact on the workplace. Disruptive businesses, such as Uber, Airbnb, and Facebook have changed the face of transportation, lodging, and content, respectively. Uber is the most profitable transportation company in the world, without owning any cars at all, while Facebook has transformed our exchange of information, ideas, and media without creating any original content.

These technological changes have resulted in disturbing economic trends. Technology has already eliminated many entry-level jobs. Grocery store workers, bank tellers, tollbooth operators, customer service operators, and others already know what it's like to lose your job to kiosks, apps, and automated systems. On the other hand, the increase in knowledge-economy jobs at high salary levels has led to an increased demand for service sector opportunities such as house cleaning, child care, and food service. Unfortunately, these jobs do not pay enough for most service sector workers to be financially independent.

What has happened to entry-level jobs will soon expand to impact more medium-wage jobs; the middle class is already shrinking. As algorithms get "smarter," more and more jobs will continue to be replaced. If you lose your middle-class job and don't have the necessary skills to move toward a high-income career, you will find yourself struggling to survive.

### **Focusing on the Future**

Public education's role has been to prepare students for the middle class. What do we do when traditional middle-class opportunities no longer exist?

The answer, in part, lies in transforming our schools to align with the dramatic transformation that is occurring in the business world. We need to think about using technology as a lever for disruption in education, not just as a means for replacing paper, capturing students' attention, or speeding up data analysis. The businesses that are successful in today's economy don't see technology as an added expense or as a complication—they see it as central to their business, a way to drive quality up and costs down. Instead of saying "we can't afford to use new technologies to support our work," they say "we can't afford not to use them!"

Future-focused schools recognize the changing needs of the economy and the resulting need for a paradigm shift in education. They see technology as a value added, and as a way to make it possible for all students to gain the skills needed to innovate, create, and succeed in an economy with a shrinking middle class. So how do we move forward and create the disruptive, future-focused schools that will empower our students?

This is the question that we will explore in-depth at this summer's Model Schools Conference: *Taking Bold Measures: Creating Cultures of Innovation*. By drawing on the expertise, creativity, and success of schools that have already been engaging in transformative work, we can scale up and replicate these successes and create new possibilities for students at all schools. We look forward to providing you with tools, strategies, and the guidance to help you make bold, purposeful changes in your own school or district.

In addition, Dr. Daggett and Mr. McNulty are available to partner with you as you think about the possibilities and opportunities ahead. We would love to brainstorm with you and share the expertise we have gained from working with transformative schools around the country. For more information, contact Karen Wilkins at [KWilkins@LeaderEd.com](mailto:KWilkins@LeaderEd.com).

### About the Authors

**Bill Daggett** is the Founder and Chairman of the International Center for Leadership in Education.

**Ray McNulty** is a Senior Fellow at the International Center for Leadership In Education and the Dean of the School of Education, Southern New Hampshire University.

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