



# Manufacturing Matters

## WORKFORCE IMPLEMENTING TEXAS' EDUCATION REFORMS

TAM and the Jobs for Texas Coalition have worked tirelessly to help make implementation of House Bill 5 (2013 Texas Legislature) a success.

Partnering with stakeholders in local communities, the coalition organized many **Business & Education Workforce Symposiums** across the state in 2014, bringing together people from business, school districts, chamber groups, higher education partners, regional education service centers, and local workforce development boards to collaborate, share best practices, and identify challenges and opportunities.

In advocating for House Bill 5, the Jobs for Texas Coalition pushed for more applied and experiential learning to be taught in high school, including more career and technical education (CTE), dual credit courses, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. That kind of relevance to both the workforce and higher education will yield:

- *A lower high school dropout rate;*
- *More students interested in education at all levels;*
- *A significant closing of the skills gap; and*
- *Ultimately, a lower unemployment rate.*

Several topics were discussed at length during these symposiums:

### Benefits of Education Reforms

- ▶ **A lower high school dropout rate;**
- ▶ **More students interested in education at all levels;**
- ▶ **A significant closing of the skills gap; and**
- ▶ **Ultimately, a lower unemployment rate.**

>> Many educators pointed out that House Bill 5 did not come with any additional funding for local school districts to implement CTE and vocational training. This underscores the need for school districts to collaborate with partners in higher education, business & industry, and other school districts on course offerings.

>> Educators worry that school districts may need to reallocate resources for counseling so that all students are properly served when exploring endorsements, coursework and graduation pathways.

>> Educators worry that they may not have enough qualified teachers to teach many of the business and industry courses. This underscores the need to encourage more

business and industry experts – especially those who are nearing retirement – to pursue teaching, and to possibly ease the transition by streamlining and reducing the prohibitive costs of the alternative teacher certification process.

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>> Businesses must continue to express the skills most needed to assure today's students of good job skills, making them marketable upon graduation from high school and college. This underscores the need for sustained collaboration by industry partners with educators at all levels, beginning as early as middle school.

>> As we move forward and programs develop further, it will be valuable to continue have roundtable discussions among stakeholders to share and ask questions about "model" programs and partnerships.

>> Educators need to know what jobs are in high demand and which classes should be offered to help supply those needs. It also helps when industry talks to students directly about the job demand and salaries since students will likely listen to someone from industry more readily than they will another person from education or other disciplines.

>> Focus on changing perceptions among students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators. We have spent a few decades creating a "traditional college is the only pathway to success" community primarily focusing on four-year degrees. Now we must also focus on skills training in high school and community colleges.

>> Industry must develop and deliver a proactive program to reach out to students, parents and educators.

A proactive program to reach out to students, parents and educators should focus on:

- *Engaging students, parents and educators by first developing career development programs, then*
- *Provide clear and concise industry information, then*
- *Provide opportunities to experience industry with real world experiences like industry presentations, assemblies, field trips, internships, externships and apprenticeships.*
- *Utilize targeted social media and other current avenues to reach young people throughout the state.*