

# Helping Students Who Face Unique Challenges



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Hardships like insecurity, poverty, personal trauma, life circumstances and learning disorders often results in students struggling to engage in school. These challenges can significantly impact self-esteem, academic achievement, and future career opportunities. What most people see is the immediate impact on students as they grapple with these issues. Often, we do not consider the long-term impacts of unemployment and underemployment.

With this unique set of circumstances, students are in a vulnerable position and require a set unique strategies, programs, and tactics to secure the desired outcomes. Unfortunately, the resources that are typically available are uninspiring and unable to move the needle. These individuals need something beyond a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to addressing their needs. There are five areas that can be explored to increase success for these students that require a more thoughtful approach.

## Success Planning

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An old saying, failing to plan is planning to fail is such a powerful statement. With the complexities, distractions and personal obstacles students face a daunting task when it comes to planning for the future. Not having a comprehensive and well-structured plan leaves students in a vulnerable position.

This plan should incorporate immediate goals as well as long-term goals. The plan should also identify blind spots, opportunities and identify possible careers, support systems, and industry information. Once the plan has been created, they can be shared, critiqued, and updated.





## Entrepreneurship

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According to Forbes 81% of students want to into the world of entrepreneurship. This is the best time in human history for anyone to explore entrepreneurship. There is no shortage of ideas with most students, but they will need the structure, knowledge, and develop the skill set necessary to start and run a company. Entrepreneurship places the power directly in the students' hands while allowing them to explore their passions and dreams.

Entrepreneurship can apply to every student regardless of major or interest. These benefits of entrepreneurial studies begin with innovative thinking. Our world is changing rapidly so tomorrow's young entrepreneurs must know how to navigate the basics with ease. Entrepreneurs frequently envision products or services that have not existed so fine tuning the idea in gives them a distinct advantage over their peers.

## 21st Century Skills

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Building in-demand skills to gain employment is a must. 21st century skills can set these individuals apart when it comes to looking for employment. These skills include Excel, PowerPoint, business basics, and entrepreneurship.

While many of the job opportunities do not require these skills, they are good to have because individuals may come across opportunities that lend themselves to these skills or have an opportunity to grow within an organization. Not having in-demand skills places the individual in a vulnerable position as they look to attain reliable and consistent employment.

## Career Exploration

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Students engaged in career readiness at earlier ages are significantly more likely than their peers to develop a clear career goal as well as problem-solving, critical thinking, communications, and valuable work-related skills.

This type of approach increases engagement, which directly impacts academic achievement. The goal is to increase exposure, match students with in-demand skills and activate interest in a hands-on way. According to research:

- The more that students participate in career and technical student organizations (CTSOs)- an integral intracurricular component of many Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that features competitive events, business and community partnerships, and leadership experiences—the higher their academic motivation and engagement, grades, employability skills, career self-efficacy and college aspirations<sup>1</sup>.
- Work-based learning has been found to help students gain an understanding of the work environment, increase motivation, support work readiness, enhance job-related skills and knowledge, improve school attendance, and reduce dropout rates<sup>2</sup>.
- Students who participate in career guidance, career courses and computer-based guidance systems demonstrate greater knowledge of jobs, higher self-esteem, and better grades, and are engaged more in career and academic planning<sup>3</sup>.



## Prepare students for an uncertain future

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The future is uncertain. With automation, outsourcing and gaining efficiencies through technology, job security is a dubious concept. Students need to have an opportunity to carve out their personal path to success, even if it is not working for a company in the traditional sense.

In some cases, economic upheavals and unpredictable circumstances might force someone to explore entrepreneurship. Students need to be able to capitalize on unique opportunities. The skills accumulated can turn out to be just what the market wants 5 or 10 years down the road.

# References

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3: Hughes, K. L., & Karp, M. J. M. (2004). School-based Career Development: A Synthesis of the Literature. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.