



**IOWA BUSINESS LEADERS
WEIGH IN ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF
BUSINESS IN EDUCATION**



MIKE ESPESET, *President, Story Construction*



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The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) is the voice of Iowa business. It is Iowa's oldest and largest business network, representing 1,500 businesses that employ more than 333,000 Iowans. ABI benefits members by advocating on their behalf at the statehouse, connecting them with decision-makers to share ideas and services, offering solutions and best practices for issues that affect their businesses and developing our state's business and civic leaders.

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A VIEW FROM THE TOP

Business Involvement is Essential to Education



Steven M. Bradford
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This month, the feature article in Business Record Iowa highlights something important: the need to build strong partnerships between business and education.

When it comes to education, business involvement is essential to ensure Iowa students gain the resources and skills they need to be part of a world-class workforce. The more business is involved at every stage of education, the more our students will see and understand the opportunities that exist right here in Iowa.

The results of these partnerships are overwhelmingly positive in terms of economic development and building stronger communities. These partnerships create greater opportunities for both students and businesses.

Strong educational opportunities don't stop once one enters the workforce, of course. Both ABI and the ABI Foundation produce high-value educational and informative programs and events all over Iowa year-round. The goal is to connect ABI members and Iowans, enhance business opportunities and share information of value with each other.

On a different note, ABI began a new fiscal year last month. The state of the association is strong, both financially and organizationally, and its role is more important than ever for business in Iowa. Your support and participation make all the difference in ABI's success. ■

EXPERT ADVICE

FFCRA Provides Paid Leave Benefits for Back-To-School

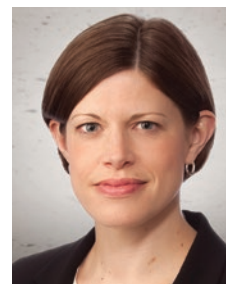
The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) was signed into law in March, just as school buildings were closing. The Act provides partially paid leave to eligible employees who cannot work because they need to care for children due to school and childcare closures. The Act requires employers with fewer than 500 employees to provide this leave and provides federal dollars to fund the program. The FFCRA does not expire until December 31, so this leave may be critical to back-to-school planning for many families. A few things to keep in mind:

Flexibility is allowed. Employers may grant FFCRA leave intermittently and employees may work remotely when childcare responsibilities allow. If students are in school only 2 days per week or if school closes temporarily due to an outbreak, this flexibility may be key to employee retention and business continuity. Additionally, families may share caregiving responsibilities so a two-parent family can alternate work and caregiving days.

Follow the rules. Funding for FFCRA leave is available only if the employee cannot work remotely due to childcare demands and if no other caregiver is available. Paid leave is not available to care for children over 14 absent special considerations. Employees must substantiate the need for leave so employers can secure reimbursement. Employers should obtain the necessary information and clarify the requirements at the time leave is requested.

Employers should also look for the FFCRA to be extended or other paid leave to be mandated if the pandemic continues into 2021.

Visit Fredrikson's COVID-19 Employment Question of the Day at <https://bit.ly/2OuNYy9> to navigate the changing business issues related to the pandemic. ■



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CULTIVATING IOWA'S TALENT CONTINUUM

Education Means Business in Iowa



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For years, business and industry has collectively raised a hand to the question of “who needs more skilled workforce?” No industry is exempt from this need as leadership, teams and talent span across generations who all think, learn and communicate differently in today’s workplace. At the heart of the response to this request is education.

Education in Iowa is working quickly to adapt—moving away from the hypothetical to the actual through the explosion of professional programs and student organizations, and the buzzwords you may have heard a time or two like “work-based learning” and “career and technical education.”

Educators and school districts are looking for a handshake, not a handout. Today’s classrooms rely on the expertise and open doors of partners in business and industry in exchange for cultivating your next wave of new hires. So what do they need from you if not a financial contribution? Here are some thoughts to get you started:

- **Access:** Studies show that there is a higher success rate among students who have had an internship or apprenticeship experience, and these are hard to replicate anywhere other than in an industry setting. Opening your doors to students helps them to develop technical skills, explore a career path, connect with mentors and much more. In exchange, you get the chance to directly train your local workforce with the foundational skills you require for the future. Excellent resources are your school district’s work-based learning coordinator and your local Intermediary (www.IowaIN.org), who can facilitate the experience and identify needs in your area.

- **Experience:** The Future Ready Iowa Clearinghouse for Work-Based Learning is designed to foster increased equity and accessibility to work-based, project-based learning for students, and allows companies to easily submit projects to be completed (many that can even be accomplished virtually). No projects? No problem. Submit your company name to be included among the 1,400+ business partners who are open to ideas at <https://clearinghouse.futurereadyiowa.gov>.
- **Guidance:** One of the biggest assets an educator can have in his/her classroom today is YOU. They want to know the technology you’re using, the best practices in your industry, the technical skills you’re requiring and the type of young leaders you need. What resonates even more with students is if this information is delivered directly from you. You can do so by adding your voice to a local Sector Partnership (www.EducateIowa.gov/sector-partnerships), offering to speak to a class or at a career-related event (even over Zoom!), or volunteering with a local Career and Technical Student Organization.

Finally, give an educator some (socially-distant) kudos. These career and technical education efforts are not only valuable, they’re also required for the success of their own K-12 and higher education programs, and may serve as a prerequisite to essential funding in the future. They deserve our best as they prepare our future. ■

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CAPITOL BUSINESS



The Policy Intersection of Child Care, Education and Workforce

For generations, Iowa’s employers, employees, educators and child care providers have worked together to create a self-sustaining network. This network allows parents to earn a living, kids to get an education, and businesses to hire a skilled and engaged workforce. Employers and employees, in turn, fund child care and education to keep the system rolling.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged this model and created uncertainty for all parties. Policy makers have stepped in with fixes, and more policy work remains to adapt and preserve this system.

Closed child care facilities, limited in-person learning opportunities for children and federal unemployment benefits that incent employees to leave the workforce and stay home to provide child care or see that a child’s education progresses can pull the old system apart.

Gov. Reynolds has convened the Economic Recovery Advisory Board and charged it to make recommendations for recovery including education. Several ABI member companies and ABI staff are participating in this process.

The Iowa Legislature stepped in to require that, with some exceptions, K-12 schools in Iowa must conduct 50% of their instruction in person. On July 17, Gov. Reynolds signed a new proclamation implementing the legislative requirement and taking steps to provide more and younger substitute teachers to meet the challenge of reopening for in-person education.

In August and September, ABI will hold our policy development committees and the ABI Board of Directors will approve policies that will be ad-

vanced to address this and other issues aimed at getting Iowa, its people and its economy past the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, please reach out to the ABI public policy staff for more information and input into the process. ■

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THIS IS IOWA / Ames, IA



IOWA BUSINESS LEADERS WEIGH IN ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS IN EDUCATION

MIKE ESPEET, *President, Story Construction*

BY GIGI WOOD

Leaders in Iowa's manufacturing and construction sectors say business participation in education is vital to the state's economy and future. With workforce shortages and skills gaps, finding the right workers for the job is a unique challenge. These leaders and industries are making it part of the mission and business strategy to participate in Iowa's education system on several levels.

An essential collaboration

As businesses address the skills and strategic needs of their operations, many leaders say a partnership with schools is critical.

"Collaboration between business and education is necessary in order to prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the needs of business," said Fred Buie, president of Keystone Electrical Manufacturing in Des Moines. "Collaboration between business and education is essential for economic growth. A skilled and ready workforce enhances profitability of our existing businesses and is a key element in attracting new business."

Buie serves on the Des Moines Area Community College board of directors and on the Engineering Advisory Board at Mississippi State University.

"At the college and university level, there are many advisory roles where businesses can participate," he said. "In fact, many accreditation agencies require input from businesses in the development of curriculum and other aspects of the education process."

Taking on such a role can also shape the future of education throughout the state.

"As a board member, I help to establish legislative priorities and advocate for funding for education," Buie said. "Every business leader should get involved in our education system. There are many opportunities where you can help."

Keystone Electrical has hosted college and high school interns, tours for elementary and middle school students, and externships, where high school teachers work in the company for the summer.

"Offering internships for students and externships for teachers is a great opportunity for involvement and one that is very rewarding for all," Buie said. "I have seen curriculums redesigned as a result of input from businesses. Students learn practical applications of concepts taught in school and teachers gain a deeper understanding of the skills students need to be successful in a business environment."

School partnerships have countless benefits, including allowing businesses to give input on curriculum and gaps in learning, said Mark Hanawalt, president of United Equipment Accessories in Waverly.

"It is important to let educators know the current needs for skills in the workplace," he said. "In addition, businesses know and can anticipate the needs that will be required in their future workplace. The collaboration between business and education is vitally important. We both need each other."

It's also important for businesses to guide the education curriculum.

"Schools either ramp up, reinvent or eliminate curriculum based upon input from businesses along with many other sources," Hanawalt said.

Closing the skills gap

One of the most important reasons for businesses to become involved in the education system is to help close the skills gap.

For Dave Zrostlik, president of Stellar Industries in Garner, education has been a commitment of time and energy. Among his many contributions, he has served on the North Iowa Area Community College Foundation Board for seven years.

"This knowledge of [skills gap] needs can only be discovered through a close working partnership between school administrators and local industry," he said. "When my children were still in our school system, I ran for an opening on the Garner-Hayfield school board and was elected. I ended up staying on the school board for 15 years."

During that time, he saw firsthand the benefits of participating in the education system as a business professional.

"Involvement in the educational system benefits the business professional and the educational institute. Our schools want to produce students that have the skills that are required by local industry," he said.

While serving on the board, a whole-grade sharing program was created in partnership with the neighboring school district in Ventura. That move eventually led to the consolidation of the two districts into what is now the Garner-Hayfield-Ventura Community School District. In another instance, the industrial technology instructor spoke to the school board about a needed technology upgrade to the school's CAD (computer-aided design) software.

"The decision was to go forward with an updated version of the product that had been used for years," Zrostlik said. "But industry had changed to a different type of drafting software. We found that the software being used by local employers was actually less expensive for the school to purchase and it better prepared the student for mechanical design careers with local employers."

Stellar Industries participates in National Manufacturing Day and provides tours of the company.

"It is important for business leaders to develop a relationship with administrators of their local schools. Once this partnership is developed, there are numerous activities that can be held throughout the year to bring industry and education closer together," Zrostlik said. "Stellar Industries participates in National Manufacturing Day by hosting busloads of students from various local schools to tour our facility. Working together to host an open house for high school students and their parents is also a good way to show families the power of a good education and how it is applied in the everyday world of advanced manufacturing."

He said his company also benefits by sponsoring Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) Business Horizons, a weeklong summer program for high school students. The program includes career experience, personal growth, leadership development and entrepreneurial competitions.

"This business summer camp teaches young people what it takes to build a business, interact with others and have fun doing so," Zrostlik said. "Most importantly, the experience gained during Business Horizons shows young people that there are a lot of great companies in Iowa that offer competitive jobs. Business Horizons does a great job steering young adults to seek careers in business, and hopefully businesses in our state of Iowa."

Stellar Industries' involvement in education has helped recruit students to open positions at the company.

"Once students were trained on the same software that our engineers were using to design our products, we were able to bring in after-school high school students and summer help to assist in our design process," Zrostlik said. "These



“COLLABORATION BETWEEN BUSINESS AND EDUCATION IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PREPARE STUDENTS WITH THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF BUSINESS,”

Fred Buie, president of Keystone Electrical Manufacturing

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

temporary employees needed no training from our company as they already had received their training as part of their high school education.”

Walk the talk

More business leaders are actively participating in boards, committees and other efforts to partner with schools. Hanawalt serves on the Wartburg College Board of Regents and has previously served on the board of a parochial school his children attended. He also communicates with the local community college to find out what programs they’re offering and to give input on industry trends.

His company, UEA, started a program it calls UEA University, which encompasses all aspects of education and continuing education, from onboarding of new employees, safety and diversity training, to advanced degrees for employees in engineering and MBA programs.

“The intent is to encourage our employees to view life as a continual learning process,” Hanawalt said. “The investment in our staff leads to job satisfaction, career advancement and employee retention. It is simply the right thing to do.”

Mike Espeset, president of Story Construction, served for six years on the Ames Community School Board. Businesses need to be present and participate in the education system, he said.

“I think particularly from a board perspective, but also just in general, I think our society’s better when we’re all at the table,” he said. “We must be present and willing to participate. We bring a set of skills and experiences to the system that are useful in leading, thinking and connecting.”

Serving on school boards, volunteering and participating in the education system in other ways may seem too time-consuming to some. But Espeset looks at it differently.

“Very often businesspeople think they’re too busy or are concerned that it’s a thankless job or don’t know if it matters,” he said. “Well, it matters. Having a business mindset and a business voice in the middle of our educational system is useful, as are all the other voices. But very, very often business is absent. And I think our education system suffers when that’s the case.”

Companies can also participate in education by helping find people to serve on boards and committees, volunteering to speak to classes and fundraising for special projects and extracurricular activities, he suggested.

“There are a lot more subtle ways that corporations sponsor and donate to different school programming, all the way down to volunteering in classrooms,” Espeset said. “And, a lot of companies just simply make their employees available. They don’t need to take PTO [paid time off].”

Younger workers may hesitate to volunteer for a board or committee because of a perceived lack of experience, but that simply isn’t a problem, he said.

“That’s why boards and committees don’t act in isolation,” Espeset said. “They can only act in total, in concert. It takes people who understand finance, people who understand facilities, people who understand workflows and systems, people who understand HR [hu-

man resources]. Almost nobody in business comes with an education credential to be on a school board. Citizen governors is what we are, and we need good thinkers, good whole-brain thinkers there. I think businesspeople represent a population of people that can be that.”

Moreover, serving on a school board can be incredibly rewarding, he stressed.

“Once I told people I was on a school board they almost, to a person would say, ‘Boy, you know, it’s such a thankless job, I can’t believe you would do that,’” he said. “My response was that it’s much more thankful than thankless. Really, for every one piece of criticism or critique I would receive, I would receive 10 thank-you’s. So don’t be discouraged if you feel at all called to get involved. Now’s a great time to do it.” ■



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ELEVATE IOWA

K-12 Program Helps Students Find Career Passions, Abilities

Get connected to your future workforce! The Iowa Intermediary Network is a partner and a supporter of the Elevate Advanced Manufacturing program. Learn more about this free and valuable resource.

The Iowa Intermediary Network links K-12 students to career exploration opportunities in the state through exciting work-based learning with highly dynamic and technology-driven Iowa industries. Entering the seventh year of implementation, Intermediary Coordinators at each community college provide experiences for students and educators to interact with industry professionals. Intermediary programs are partially funded through the Iowa Intermediary Network grant, a legislative initiative allocated through the Iowa Department of Education.

The Iowa Intermediary Network connects today's students to future careers through high-quality, real-world experiences. Some experiences offered across the state for students include: classroom speakers, career fairs, worksite tours and job shadows. For educators, the Intermediary network provides: connections to business and industry for student internship opportunities, educator tours, educator professional development and educator externships.

The work of Intermediary Coordinators follows an intentional work-based learning continuum of career awareness, career exploration and workplace training so that students receive the types of experiences they need to progress to higher stages of learning. By creating experiences at the foundational levels of awareness and exploration, Coordinators position students to find their career passions and abilities.

Intermediary Coordinators are proud of the work they do to help students determine their future endeavors. Read the success stories of students April and Kay at www.iowain.org. Both students, from different parts of the state, benefited from the experiences they had with the Iowa Intermediary Network, which positioned them for success after high school.

The Iowa Intermediary Network invites you to stay up-to-date with its latest news as a follower on social media at Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Then visit www.iowain.org to locate your local Intermediary Coordinator and send them an email to find out how you can get involved! ■



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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



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Go Ahead ... Ask!

When we look back at 2020, it's likely that we'll use a lot of words to describe the time, and "formative" should be one of them. The events and innovation of today will undoubtedly inspire the acts of tomorrow. This time has prompted individuals of all ages to contemplate big questions and participate in important conversations, and it has led to the resurgence of listening to understand rather than reply.

Recently, the Young Professionals of Iowa (YPIowa), an organization dedicated to connecting and serving Iowa young professionals and YP organizations, kicked off a series of virtual conversations. These discussions convene a community of young professionals from across the state for a conversation to share experiences, gather information and inspire action on relevant issues.

During one of the calls, the question was posed to a panel of young leaders, "What questions are you still asking yourself or others?" The answers: "How can we help?" "How do we add value?"

"How and where do we lend our voice to create positive change in our communities?"

Whether they are audibly asking them or not, these are the questions on the minds of our Iowa young professionals. The truth of the matter is that these questions are being asked by multiple age groups, in all industries, at all levels of leadership. If we've all been asking the same questions of ourselves and others, imagine what might happen if we bring more voices to the discussion.

At a time when no one has the right answers, it's safe to say that asking questions and listening to a variety of voices with the intent to collaborate is going to help us construct a path forward. Bring your new hires and young professionals to the table for these important conversations, and you can bet they'll provide a new perspective that just might lead to new solutions. ■

The Young Professionals of Iowa (YPIowa) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization driven by young professionals, for young professionals. YPIowa serves as resource for Iowa YP organizations, as well as a mechanism to attract, empower and retain emerging leaders in Iowa. Follow YPIowa on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/YPIowa.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS



AUGUST 18

Economic Growth Committee Meeting

Virtual | 11:30 a.m.

AUGUST 19

Pre-Employment Testing Process Seminar

Virtual | 9 a.m.

AUGUST 20

Tax Committee Meeting

Virtual | 11:30 a.m.

AUGUST 31

Executive Open

Des Moines Golf and Country Club | West Des Moines

SEPTEMBER 1

USMCA Panel Discussion

Virtual | 1:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 30

Advanced Manufacturing Conference

Virtual | Altoona

Visit www.iowaabi.org and click the "Events" tab for details on upcoming events, including updates in response to COVID-19-related safety restrictions for public gatherings.

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Learn more about how ABI membership could benefit your company by visiting www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi.



SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession Planning – How to Get it Right

If something happens to you, the business owner, do you know who will fill your shoes? Do you have a succession plan that outlines the next generation of leaders to step in? As Benjamin Franklin once said, “By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail.”

The answer to reducing risk in the event of change in leadership is a strong succession plan. Your succession plan should indicate who the successor is. Take it a step further by including training and mentoring opportunities to ensure the successor is ready to take over when the time comes.

Does your business need a succession plan?

Yes! All businesses, regardless of size, should have a succession plan. Whether your business is five or 5,000 people, you need to have a plan in place. Succession planning helps the business move forward in the event of a leadership change.

How do I identify successors?

Take a look at your internal team. Your current employees are already familiar with your business, your values and your mission. Evaluate your team from the bottom up and indicate who could be a good fit. Discuss career goals with your employees and assess their readiness for the position. Not all employees are interested in leadership, so ensure you and your successors are on the same page. Retaining your best employees should stay top of mind. However, you may need to look externally to fill some roles.

I have my successor(s) in mind, now what?

Is your plan transparent? Keep your team in the loop and inform all parties involved. Map out a path your successors can follow to be successful. Set aside ample time for mentorship between those who are in leadership roles and the qualified successors. Learning through mentorship passes along valuable knowledge gained from experience and prepares employees for their future positions.

Take it to the next level.

Creating an expansive succession plan takes time and can be challenging, no doubt. But investing time and energy into developing an in-depth succession plan better prepares businesses for the next step. ■



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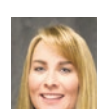
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Q. What is a good way to retain employees?

A. It is certainly difficult to find a good employee with the right skill set and abilities, and that fits into your company's values. Once you find those employees it is important to make sure you retain them.

To help you with analyzing employees and running your business, a great book to read is “Traction” by Gino Wickman. “Traction” talks about three questions to ask yourself about each employee: do they get it, do they want it and do they have the capacity to do it? If you can answer yes to all three of these questions, then you want to retain them.

To retain staff and help your business grow, it is important to be able to provide your current employees with opportunities to further educate themselves. Companies who offer continuous education opportunities help their employees grow and increase their job satisfaction. By doing this you may also help improve operations and possibly find new and improved ways of providing services or products.

In conclusion, an employee who fits into your company's values, vision and culture is worth investing in. There are many ways of providing opportunities for your employees to further their education. You can help an employee receive their undergraduate degree, pursue their masters or allow them to attend conferences. With the recent pandemic, education has become even more accessible with online classes and symposiums, and the expense of travel and time is eliminated so your employees can learn faster and more economically. ■