



Oklahoma's Business Case for **EDUCATION REFORM**



Oklahoma Educated Workforce Initiative

Oklahoma's Education Crisis

There are a number of areas in which Oklahoma schools are not doing what is needed to move the state forward. This has a tremendous impact on our state's economy and the ability of our children to lead productive, successful lives.

Our economy depends on a vibrant and dynamic education system. In recent years, our state's economy has flourished. We have worked hard to diversify and now compete for jobs not only in the energy sector, but in manufacturing, biosciences, research, and aerospace. If our state intends to continue on its current economic trajectory, it is imperative we produce the talent pipeline needed for a modern workforce.

The business case for education reform is clear: it is best for Oklahoma if we can find the employees we need currently and in the future right here at home, with the skills necessary to meet our state's specific needs. To do this, business leaders must get engaged with policy makers and educators to ensure we are getting what we need to fill our future jobs and make sure every student in Oklahoma can lead a prosperous and fulfilling life.

Businesses want to hire critical thinkers, people who can collaborate and problem-solve and be innovative. Your business depends on the quality of your workforce and nothing costs a company more than its human capital. Without quality employees, a company is doomed to fail.

We all want every Oklahoma student to have the skills needed to find a quality, high-paying job right here in Oklahoma. Our state's economic future depends on it.

This report examines Oklahoma's talent pipeline and what leaks must be plugged to meet our workforce needs of the future. Without immediate change, our state's best and brightest will continue to be recruited away and our students will be plagued by poor educational options that set many up for long-term failure. We must do better. We owe it to our students and Oklahoma's current and future employers to give this issue our united attention. I am confident, together, we can move Oklahoma forward.

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Executive Summary

In the pages that follow, you will be walked, step by step, through the education system in Oklahoma, all the way from pre-K to the workforce. The start of the story is quite promising, as the report highlights Oklahoma's sustained commitment to high quality universal pre-kindergarten for young students. In many ways, Oklahoma leads the nation in pre-K schooling (see page 8).

Beyond that point, however, our educational outcomes are far less positive. According to many metrics, with each year students spend in Oklahoma schools, they fall further behind the national averages. The statistics speak for themselves:

- In grade 4, Oklahoma ranks in the **bottom 10 states in math** on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam; nearly two-thirds of the state's fourth graders cannot earn proficient scores in math (see page 9).
- By grade 8, Oklahoma's students fall further behind in math, earning a ranking of **45th of the 50 states** as three quarters of the state's eighth graders score below the proficiency level in math (see page 9).
- In high school, just over **one-third** of the state's ACT test-takers earn a "college-ready" score on the ACT math section. This is especially disappointing as this test is generally only taken by the students in the state with an interest in college. On this measure, **Oklahoma ranks 38th of the 50 states** (see page 11).
- The costly result of this underperformance is that too many of Oklahoma's college-bound students – 40 percent – must take remedial coursework when they arrive at college (see page 11).
- Due to these weaknesses in student preparation, fewer than one-quarter (22.8 percent) of degree-seeking students in Oklahoma's public colleges successfully graduate within four years. **This places Oklahoma 40th in the nation** (see page 12).

The result at the end of the education pipeline is an Oklahoma citizenry in which fewer than one quarter of the residents hold a Bachelor's degree or better and fewer than one third hold an Associate's degree or better. This matters a great deal because much of the job growth we expect to see in Oklahoma over the next decade or so will be in areas requiring some post-secondary education (see page 13).

But, there is some reason for optimism. There are numerous examples of partnerships in which businesses are collaborating with school districts and institutions of higher education to strengthen the critical connections between academic preparation and the world of work. One of these partnerships, the MidAmerica Delivers program in Pryor, Oklahoma, is highlighted on page 16. We need many more similar programs if we are to provide a meaningful and productive schooling experience to students across Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's Education Pipeline

Oklahoma has enacted aggressive policies to support business development in the state. Oklahoma's recent percentage growth in GDP has outpaced most of the nation, Oklahoma's per capita income is on the rise, and Oklahoma is ranked number one in the nation for its low cost of doing business by CNBC. These strong economic rankings, however, sit in stark contrast to some of the state's educational outcomes.

As this study will show, the performance of Oklahoma's students and schools remains well below the national average on a number of key indicators. This suggests that Oklahoma schools are not currently growing the labor force needed to support business development. As a result, Forbes magazine ranks Oklahoma 31st in the nation for labor supply.

Moreover, there is a huge gap between jobs in Oklahoma and the workforce available. By 2020, **64 percent of Oklahoma jobs** will require post-secondary education. According to 2011 Census data, however, **only 33 percent of the Oklahoma's working-age adults hold such two- or four-year college degrees.**

If the current rate of degree production continues, about 37 percent of Oklahoma's adult population will hold at least some level of post-secondary education in 2020. To reach 64 percent attainment among its projected 2020 adult population of 2,015,777, **Oklahoma will need to add more than 524,000 degrees to that total.**

If we want Oklahoma's economy to thrive, we need to ensure that our educational pipeline, from pre-kindergarten through technical training or college, is successful in educating students and preparing them for the current and future labor market. This will ensure every Oklahoman has access to a high-paying, stable job.

Oklahoma schools are producing only half the workers needed to fill increasingly high-skill jobs.

Oklahoma's Education Pipeline Key Indicators

Pipeline Performance Indicator	Timeline	OK Percentage	US Average	OK Rank (of 50 states)
Percentage of 4-year-olds in State-Funded Pre-K	Pre-School	74%	28%	3rd
Math Average Proficiency Rate – Grade 4 (2013)	Elementary School	36%	42%	42nd
Reading Average Proficiency Rate – Grade 4 (2013)	Elementary School	30%	35%	40th
Math Average Proficiency Rate – Grade 8 (2013)	Middle/Junior High School	25%	36%	45th
Reading Average Proficiency Rate – Grade 8 (2013)	Middle/Junior High School	29%	36%	43rd
High School Graduation Rate (2012-13)	High School	85%	81%	17th
College Readiness on Math Section of ACT (2014)	High School	35%	43%	38th
College Readiness on All Four Subjects on ACT (2014)	High School	22%	26%	35th
College Graduation Rate (6-year public)	Post-Secondary	46%	58%	41st
Fraction of beginning grade 9 students in OK who ultimately graduate college	Post-Secondary	18%	21%	35th

Our Broken Pipeline

50,220

students entered kindergarten in 2000

48,896

entered 9th grade in 2008

39,447

entered 12th grade in 2011

39,082

graduated in spring 2012

20,088

went directly to college

9,120

students will graduate in six years

4,319

students will graduate in four years

Only 8.6 percent of the students who entered kindergarten will have successfully graduated college in four years. Allowing a couple of extra years for graduation, only 16.5 percent of the students who entered kindergarten will have successfully graduated college in six years.

What If More Oklahoma Students Stayed in School?

On average, **14 students drop out of Oklahoma high schools every school day**. Even after beginning their senior year, 2 students drop out every day prior to graduation.

Only 74 percent of students from the Class of 2012 earned a high school diploma, and there are significant financial consequences for students who do not graduate from high school. On average, they earn more than \$10,000 less per year than their peers who received a diploma.

The consequences of this reduced earning potential impacts the entire state.

If Oklahoma had graduated 90 percent of students from the class of 2012, it would have led to increases across the financial landscape.

\$83 million	in increased annual earnings
\$64 million	in increased annual spending
\$105 million	in increased home sales
\$8.5 million	in increased auto sales
700	new jobs
\$108 million	in increased annual gross state product
\$13 million	in increased annual federal tax revenue
\$6.2 million	in increased annual state/local tax revenues

Graduation rates improved last year, with 85 percent of students from the Class of 2013 earning a high school diploma. Hopefully this is the start of a positive trend for graduation rates, but there are still too many students without a diploma.



Oklahoma at a Glance

Statewide Population in Oklahoma and the Region

	Student Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility (2010-11)	Median Income (3yr average., 2011-13)	% Population with HS Degree (2009)	% Population with BA Degree (2009)
Oklahoma	60%	\$47,691	86%	23%
US Average	48%	\$51,847	85%	28%
Average of Region	54%	\$47,111	84%	25%
Arkansas	61%	\$40,760	82%	19%
Colorado	40%	\$60,727	89%	36%
Kansas	48%	\$50,003	90%	30%
Missouri	45%	\$49,403	87%	25%
New Mexico	68%	\$43,221	83%	25%
Texas	50%	\$52,169	80%	26%

Like many states in our region, Oklahoma struggles with high poverty rate, a low median income, and is less educated than surrounding states.

Student Achievement in Elementary and Middle School (2013)

	NAEP: Grade 4 Reading % Proficient or Better	NAEP: Grade 4 Math % Proficient or Better	NAEP: Grade 8 Reading % Proficient or Better	NAEP: Grade 8 Math % Proficient or Better
Oklahoma	30%	36%	29%	25%
US Average	34%	42%	36%	35%
Average of Region	31%	40%	31%	32%
Arkansas	32%	39%	30%	28%
Colorado	41%	50%	40%	42%
Kansas	38%	48%	36%	40%
Missouri	35%	39%	36%	33%
New Mexico	21%	31%	22%	23%
Texas	28%	41%	31%	38%

On every national exam, students from Oklahoma trail their peers in the nation and, perhaps more importantly, trail their peers in the region.

College Preparation - ACT Scores (2014)

	% Students Taking ACT Test, 2013	ACT: Overall Composite Score (average)	ACT: English Score (average)	ACT: Math Score (average)
Oklahoma	75%	20.7	20.3	19.9
US Average	57%	21.0	20.3	20.9
Average of Region	71%	21.0	20.4	20.8
Arkansas	93%	20.4	20.1	19.9
Colorado	100%	20.6	20.1	20.4
Kansas	75%	22.0	21.4	21.7
Missouri	76%	21.8	21.6	21.1
New Mexico	69%	19.9	18.9	19.7
Texas	40%	20.9	19.8	21.4

While Oklahoma rates similarly to regional states on our ACT scores, it cannot be used as a true college readiness measure of our student population as only 75 percent of students take the exam.

Graduation Rates - High School & College

	High School Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate, 2012-13	College Four-Year Graduation Rate 2013	College Six-Year Graduation Rate 2013
Oklahoma	85%	22.8%	46.2%
US Average	81%	33.3%	57.6%
Arkansas	85%	20.6%	39.7%
Colorado	77%	30.3%	53.6%
Kansas	86%	27.6%	54.6%
Missouri	86%	32.3%	55.2%
New Mexico	70%	14.4%	41.7%
Texas	88%	27.6%	51.7%

What happens to the students who do graduate high school and enter into postsecondary institutions? In Oklahoma, less than one-quarter (23 percent) of those students graduate college within four years, and less than half of those students (46 percent) earn a degree within six years.

Turning on the Tap: Universal Pre-Kindergarten

- Oklahoma made a bold commitment to high quality universal pre-kindergarten in 1998, and now **over 74 percent of four-year-olds in the state attend full or half day pre-kindergarten.**
- Current analyses of the data show some significant academic differences in kindergarten between students that attended pre-K vs. those who did not.

Oklahoma pre-K kids are:

+9 months ahead of their peers in reading, +7 months in writing, and +5 months in math.

- There are concerns that these effects might diminish over time. What are Oklahoma schools doing over time to sustain these gains?

Spotlight on Success

Educare

Educare Schools are dramatically changing the life trajectories of thousands of children growing up in families facing the greatest obstacles to success - and changing the way America thinks about early education. Each Educare School is a comprehensive early childhood program aimed at preventing the achievement gap that takes root between children in poverty and their middle-income peers long before they enter kindergarten.

With one location in Oklahoma City and three in Tulsa, Educare serves more than 500 disadvantaged Oklahoma children, ages birth to five years old, with year-round early childhood education programs. Educare Schools, throughout the nation, help young children grow up safe, healthy and eager to learn, providing the highest quality outcome-based learning environments for families and their children who are at-risk for school failure.

Educare serves as an example of a successful public/private partnership between the state, local school districts and many philanthropic organizations like the Inasmuch Foundation, Sunbeam Family Services, George Kaiser Family Foundation, United Way and many others.

“Programs like Educare and Oklahoma’s fully-funded, all-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten for every Oklahoma student are helping better prepare our students for a successful future.”

- Bob Ross, President of the Inasmuch Foundation & OEWI Board Member

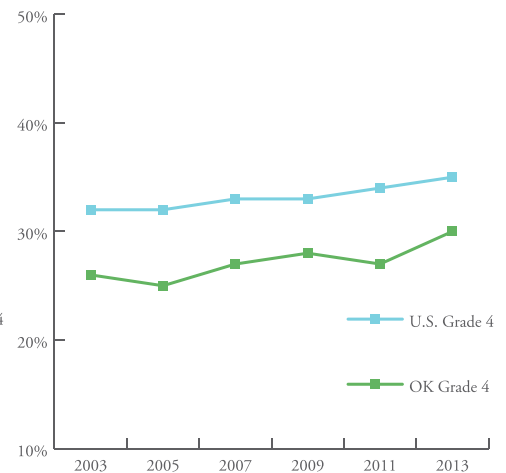
Losing Pressure: Elementary and Junior High

- Early indicators of academic success are highly predictive of future academic success. As indicated by Oklahoma's recent strengthening of the Reading Sufficiency Act, **students who cannot read by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.**
- One strong indicator of student progress is the internationally benchmarked National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores. Because the exam is administered across the United States, the NAEP results can serve as a more meaningful yardstick than Oklahoma's state test, the OCCT. Moreover, the NAEP presents a more rigorous assessment of student performance, more than twice as many students are labeled proficient on the Oklahoma state exam as meet the proficient standard on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Thus, in most analyses of educational policy across the U.S., the NAEP is considered a key performance indicator.
- **As early as 4th grade, NAEP math and reading scores show Oklahoma students are falling short.**
- In 2013, results were discouraging: Only 35 percent of 4th graders scored proficient in reading, and 41 percent scored proficient in math. Eighth grade proficiency levels were even lower: only 31 percent were proficient in reading and 29 percent were proficient in math.

NAEP Math (% Proficient)



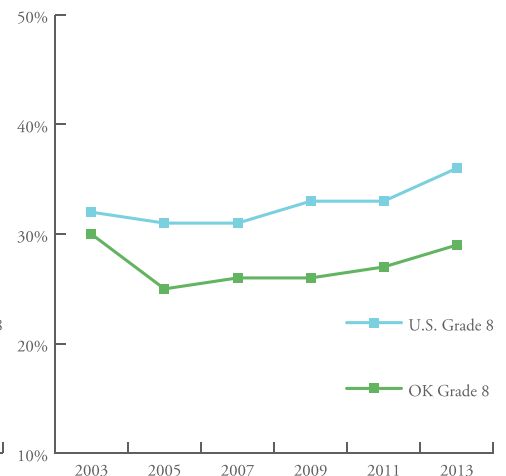
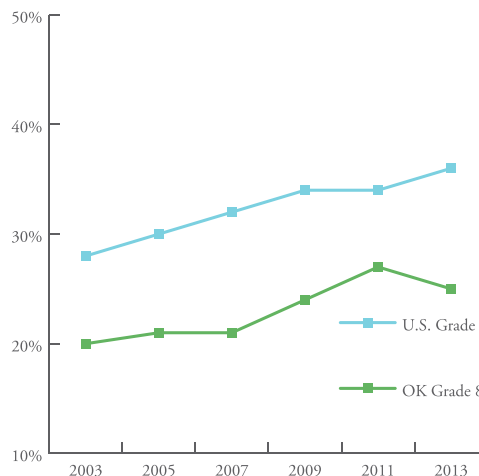
NAEP Reading (% Proficient)



Although Oklahoma's NAEP scores have increased modestly over time in both grade levels and both subject areas, students in Oklahoma persistently score several percentage points below the national average in reading and math.

Grade 8 math is a particularly problematic area, where only 29 percent of Oklahoma's students score at a proficient level, while 36 percent of eighth graders across the nation have earned proficient scores in math.

Proficiency Over Past Decade, Oklahoma and US average



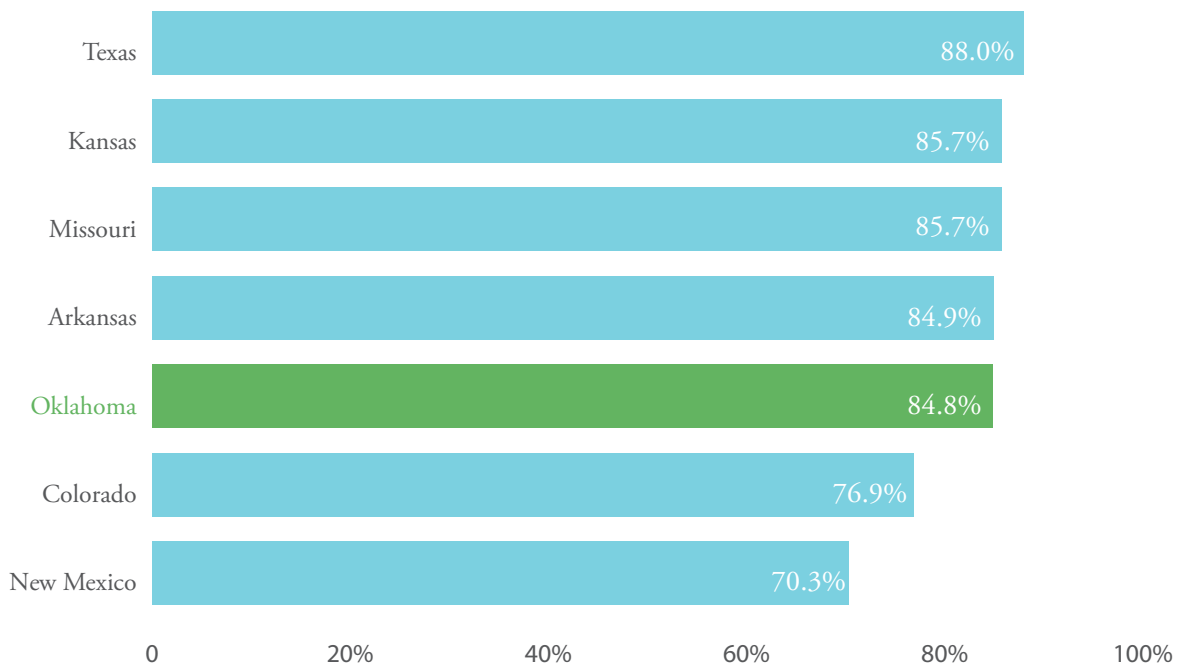
Cracks in the Pipeline: High School

- High school graduation is a key indicator on the road to success, and many Oklahoma students don't meet it. Without a high school diploma, students will earn an average of \$10,000 less per year than their better-educated peers.
- Oklahoma's educational pipeline springs a significant leak during the high school years. Oklahoma high schools lose almost **one-quarter** of their high school students.
 - Nearly **49,000 Oklahoma freshmen** entered 9th grade in 2008
 - Just under **40,000 Oklahoma seniors** started 12th grade in 2011
 - Finally, fewer than **39,000 Oklahoma high school graduates** walked across the stage in the Spring of 2012.
 - **Thus, 10,000 Oklahoma students** significantly lowered their earning power and their ability to productively contribute to the state's economy by leaving high school prior to graduation.

Students starting high school in Oklahoma are less likely than their peers in four of the six bordering states to earn a high school degree.

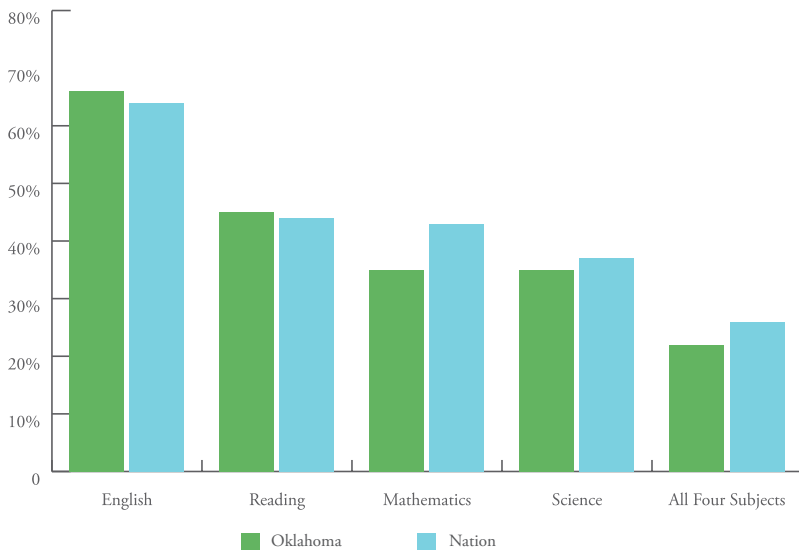
- US Department of Education.

High School Graduation Rate (Adjusted Cohort Rate) for Oklahoma and Six Bordering States, 2012-13



Pipeline Failure: OK Students Not Prepared for College

Percent of 2014 ACT-T-Ested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



- Only 22 percent of Oklahoma students earned “college-ready” scores on all four sections of the ACT exam. This low number is driven mostly by the fact that only **35 percent of math test takers and 35 percent of science test takers** earned ACT scores considered “college-ready”.
- When students aren’t ready for college, they may have to take remedial classes once they get there. In Oklahoma, **40 percent of college-bound Oklahoma high school grads are required to take at least one remedial class** when they get to college. **Nationally, only 32 percent of college freshmen must take remedial coursework.**

- Overwhelmingly, students needed help in math. Of those Oklahoma students who took at least one remedial class, 90 percent took a math course, 41 percent took an English course and 24 percent took a reading course, according to data from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Only 3 percent enrolled in a remedial science course. Perhaps not coincidentally, the state of **Oklahoma requires only three math courses of high school students, while most states in the nation require four math courses for high school students to graduate.**
- This is not a trivial issue. **The “cost of remediation” per student runs as much as \$2,000 in community colleges and \$2,500 in four-year universities.**
- The ACT is the college entrance exam overwhelmingly taken by college-bound students in Oklahoma. Oklahoma is to be praised for ensuring that high numbers of high school students (75 percent in 2014) take the ACT and thus are able to apply for college. But, with the high need for more post-secondary graduates, we must do more to give every student a shot at success.

40 percent of college-bound Oklahoma high school grads are required to take at least one remedial class.

Products of the Pipeline: OK Students in Higher Ed

Only half of Oklahoma's high school graduates continue on to college. For 2012, the State Department of Education reported 51.4 percent entered an Oklahoma college or university the following academic year. This is 1.2 percentage points lower than the previous year. Students who attend college, however, are unlikely to complete their degrees.

In 2013, the graduation rate for first time, full time degree seeking students at Oklahoma four-year private colleges was 38.5 percent graduating in four years. This is 14 points below the national average, and **places Oklahoma 33rd in the nation.**

Only 22.8 percent of Oklahoma students at four-year public colleges graduate in four years. This places Oklahoma 40th in the nation. The graduation rate improves when we allow students two extra years to complete college, but Oklahoma's rank among the 50 states is roughly the same. The least likely to graduate are students in two-year colleges, where only 8.3 percent of students graduate in two years.

Four-Year Public College Graduation Rate (first time, full time degree seeking students) for Oklahoma and Six Bordering States, Class of 2013.

4-Year Public Colleges	4-year graduation rate	6-year graduation rate
United States Avg.	33.3	57.6
Missouri	32.3	55.2
Colorado	30.3	53.6
Texas	27.6	51.7
Kansas	27.6	54.6
Oklahoma	22.8	46.2
Arkansas	20.6	39.7
New Mexico	14.4	41.7

Even the students who have made it this far in the education pipeline are losing pressure, and finding it nearly impossible to reach their goals.

Will OK Students be Ready for Tomorrow's Jobs?

What will Oklahoma's workforce look like in the future? According to a recent (June 2013) report by the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University (Recovery: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2020), the types of jobs that have experienced the greatest growth since the recession require Bachelor's degrees, or at least some post-secondary training.

The economy is slowly returning to normal, and jobs will return, but not everyone will be educationally prepared to take these new jobs.

From 2010 to 2020, U.S. job growth will be greatest in the occupations and fields requiring the greatest educational preparation. In Oklahoma, job growth will be highest in the following seven occupations:

Occupation	Number of New Jobs by 2020	2020 Job Growth Rate	% New Jobs needing Associate's Degree or more	% New Jobs needing Bachelor's Degree or more
Social Sciences	1,280	23%	100%	100%
Healthcare Support	9,550	23%	59%	6%
Healthcare Technical and Professional	17,680	22%	94%	47%
STEM	10,140	19%	86%	55%
Food and Personal Services	49,610	19%	42%	9%
Education	16,690	18%	93%	92%
Managerial and Professional	52,910	18%	81%	49%

Thus, in the fastest growing occupations in Oklahoma, some post-secondary preparation is essential. Unfortunately, according to current Census projections, **only 32 percent of adults in Oklahoma will hold an Associate's degree or better by 2020, while 26 percent of Oklahoma adults will hold a Bachelor's degree or better by 2020.**

We will need dramatic improvements in the productivity of our educational system for the Oklahoma workforce to meet the demands of the 2020 job market.

Ensure business has a seat at the table



A former lawmaker and current principal recently posted this to a popular political blog: “We do not need business helping to write standards for education— unless you think the primary purpose of a school is to create a workforce.” While we do agree that the business community does not need to “micro-manage” the work of school leaders and teachers, we believe that our schools should certainly help prepare our students to figure out how they will contribute to society.

Our goal at OEWI is to ensure our state’s education system is better aligned with Oklahoma’s current and future workforce needs so every student can have a productive and successful career and life. In order to do that, we must prepare our students to contribute by actively participating in the modern workforce. Business does and should have a voice in that debate. Get engaged to make sure you and your industry has the workforce you need homegrown right here in Oklahoma.

Create an atmosphere of mutual respect and opportunity for all career paths



Oklahoma’s future economy includes a number of jobs in our five ecosystems—agriculture & biosciences, energy, information & financial services and transportation & distribution—that require a variety of levels of educational attainment. Indeed, many students are college-bound and we must ensure that the path to a four-year degree is accessible to all interested and capable students. Furthermore, there is no question that our state needs more bachelor’s degrees.

However, we know, and many others are beginning to recognize, that many high school students have no interest in a four-year degree, but would instead be interested in further schooling with more direct application to their lives and future. To meet our state’s future workforce needs, we will need to increase all levels of educational attainment and teach students about professions they didn’t even know were possible or available, especially within our state’s thriving manufacturing sector.

Demand better collaboration among all levels of education



Our state continually falls behind when it comes to the number of college graduates, and we must work to improve the preparation of our high school students for college-level work. But, it is also important to note that many of the 100 critical jobs as identified by the state Department of Commerce needed in our state do not require a four-year college degree, but instead an Associate's degree or an industry certification. And, as noted previously, even as we aim to increase the number of Bachelor's degrees earned, we must tighten the connection between secondary education and all types of post-secondary options.

Too often, the message sent in high school is “college or bust”! We must encourage our high school educators to better educate Oklahoma students on the multitude of career paths they can have through community college or Career Tech industry certifications. Furthermore, this will only work if those in K-12 education, Career Tech, community college and our higher education system work together with every student to find the best match for their skill set and education needed for their dream job.

Support those committed to change



There are many business and education leaders across our state who understand that our system is failing many students and changes must be made. Most agree that change is needed, but how and what to change is complicated and often leads to disagreements. We must remember we all have the future of our children in mind when we debate these issues and all want what is best for them, no matter our differences of opinion. Compromise is critical, but change is essential to move our state forward. Please become part of the discussion, or someone else will decide how your child will be taught and what your future workforce will learn.

Tomorrow's workforce is in today's classrooms.

MidAmerica Delivers

The MidAmerica Delivers program in Pryor, Oklahoma demonstrates what can be done when K-12, Career Tech, and higher education work together with business and the community to connect students with quality jobs. MidAmerica Delivers seeks to provide a pipeline of work-ready employees to satisfy the employment needs of current and prospective businesses in the MidAmerica Industrial Park.

This successful collaboration relies on three key “players”:

Partnerships with Local School Districts. To help students prepare for their future career, the five school districts in the surrounding area work to teach their students life skills, career awareness and encourage all educational paths, whether that be industry certification, community college, or higher education.

Engaging with Higher Education. In the MidAmerica Industrial Park, students have access to Oklahoma State University’s Institute of Technology, Northeast Tech Center and Rogers State University to give them a variety of career and education options in one, central location.

Investment from Business Community. Currently, more than 80 businesses, including Google, American Castings, Sygma and Orchids Paper Products, offer area students internships, apprenticeship programs, job shadowing, mentoring, industry tours, and business-to-classroom programs meant to expose students to the jobs available in the area.

The community is involved through the Pryor Chamber of Commerce, the Northeast Workforce Investment Board and the Cherokee Nation to ensure the program is promoted and the delivery of services are coordinated.

This unique partnership works to:

- Attract and inspire students
- Make students aware of opportunities, resources and career paths
- Create an atmosphere of equal respect and opportunity for all career paths
- Remove barriers, both social and practical
- Provide easy access to existing and new resources through communication and collaboration between organizations
- Train participants so they are ready to work within their chosen skill sets
- Deliver a ready workforce to business in a way that promotes growth and expansion and creates jobs

Oklahoma Educated Workforce Initiative

The Oklahoma Educated Workforce Initiative seeks to aggressively engage the business community on education issues to ensure our common education system is aligned with the needs of our workforce both today and into the future. The OEWI board is made up of business leaders who know firsthand the importance of a talent pipeline and see education as a pressing economic development issue.

We will reach our goals through coalition building and quality research that encourages the entrepreneurial spirit in educational settings to the benefit of all Oklahoma students. If you are a business leader who knows our education system is not aligned to your jobs needs, you can no longer sit on the sidelines and wait for someone else to make the changes necessary to ensure our students are prepared for work in our modern economy. We are seeking radical change to take Oklahoma from one of the worst education states to the very best. Our students deserve it, and our business leaders need it. Please consider getting involved today.

What We Do

- **Educate**

Conduct business-focused policy research that clearly makes the case for education reform and helps to better align Oklahoma's education system with current and future jobs

- **Advocate**

Develop an advocacy network of business leaders to ensure you have a say in the training of your future employees

- **Innovate**

Apply the entrepreneurial spirit seen in business to education reform efforts

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Oklahoma's Business Case for EDUCATION REFORM



Oklahoma Educated Workforce Initiative

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