NS4ed

EQUITY: **IN EDUCATION, IN OPPORTUNITY, IN CAREERS**

“If we are to achieve equity, we must focus on career education.”

– Dr. Joseph Goins, CEO, NS4ed

When equity is introduced into career-focused learning, dreams can take shape. Every student can now begin to envision their ideal job, begin considering the new possibilities they have for work, and begin developing academic and career pathways that take them forward. **Equity that begins with career education becomes an equalizing educational experience.**

We've come a long way from times when career and education valued and rewarded competition and dominance to now, where we strive for equity, where every student has the support they need to be successful. This is a start! We've also come a long way from the old voc-ed programs to today's career and technical education (CTE) programs, where rigorous academics merge with technical skill development and postsecondary courses while still in high school.

Taken together, equity and career education exemplify inclusion, with the promise that no student—regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or economic backgrounds—is left out of career and college readiness pathways.

What is equity? It's the quality of being fair and impartial. And what is the role of equity in education? Equity is the systemic approach schools need to take to successfully educate diverse student populations. For that to happen, we need to link what students learn with where they are going by intersecting Education, Employment, and Economic Development. This model of career-centered learning is the promise of equity.

This promise can be kept through our responsiveness to the multiple needs of all learners, by building trust with marginalized learners, and by ensuring their voices and perspectives are heard. This promise is kept as we give students the help and guidance they need to explore careers, understand the education and training they need for different career choices, and map pathways to reach their goals. The level of support and its direction clearly shifts the role of education to include a long-term vision linking students with next steps following graduation.

Career-focused education equitably prepares students for these next steps, whether students are headed for college, training programs, apprenticeships, or directly to the workforce.

Why, when discussing equity, is it important to introduce careers into high school academic programs? Increasingly more jobs require basic academic skills, particularly in mathematics, as well as workforce and technical skills. Together, these job requirements can be bundled as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills. This is where failures in equitable learning come under a harsh light: (1) minorities are significantly underrepresented in STEM careers; and (2) just 16% of minorities who enter a STEM major in college remain in this pathway (College Board, 2016; Funk & Parker, 2018).

When minority populations are excluded from career preparation, employers struggle to maintain a workforce that mirrors the diversity of their communities. By better preparing students for success in college and careers, educators are also contributing to Employment equity, a strong societal benefit.

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NS4ed, an educational research and development company, partners with state and local educators and policymakers to provide research, policy, and practice deliverables that yield high value and actionable results. In 2018, NS4ed created its Pathway2Careers (P2C) math curricula , Pathway2Algebra and Pathway2Geometry. These supplemental curricula were developed with attention to inclusion, equity, choice, and purpose—and are taught within the context of careers. With the P2C curricula, at the same time students are learning math, they are learning how it is used in real workplace settings they want to explore. Minority and economically disadvantaged students, who are less likely to have exposure to well-paying careers, will now have the same tools to engage in career exploration and build the knowledge and education they need to enter high-value careers. Learning math with Pathway2Careersequally prepares all students to be part of a more representative and inclusive workplace.

To ensure teachers can support equity across student populations, NS4ed has also developed a new professional development course focused on careers and equity. Topics will address understanding and removing barriers to equity within career programs, and mapping career pathways to achieve equity.

Correlations between the study of mathematics with college and career success are so strong that, simply put, students without developed math skills will not be prepared for STEM college majors and careers. NS4ed's technologically advanced Pathway2Careers digital platform addresses this inequity by engaging students in relevant and relatable math learning built upon workplace-based problem solving. As NS4ed joins together businesses and educators, communities can envision a vibrant, equitable, inclusive, and fully representative economy.

A final note: COVID-19 has focused attention on issues of equity. Studies conducted with more than one million K-8 students nationwide showed a decline in math and reading among all students—with the steepest decline for Black, Hispanic/Latino, and low-income students (Ofgang, 2021). Helping these students return to grade-level academics and creating career exploration opportunities to chart their school pathways is one way to restore learning loss and move closer to equity in education and the workplace.

About NS4ed

NS4ed is a rising leader in technology-based career and college education services and actionable research. Our revolutionary Pathway2Careers program provides straightforward tools that identify high-value careers and effective resources & materials that can sustain progress on the pathway to career readiness.

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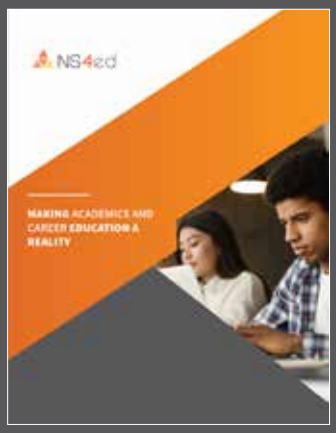
Other Articles of Interest

These articles and more are arriving soon to **www.pathway2careers.com**



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