Know2

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1 Know that in the world of today being highly educated is essential for economic success and a high quality of life

2 Know that being highly educated is possible for me, for my family, and for my community

Premise: the Need for a Pervasive Education Culture

Accelerating economic change in South Carolina will require creating a pervasive education culture. Experience and polling data demonstrate that in many segments of the population there is a considerable lack of awareness about the importance of education beyond high school both for economic success and a high quality of life. In addition, polls provide strong evidence that, even among those who state their belief that advanced education is important, there remains a deep skepticism that success in education is actually achievable for them or for people like them (including their children).

These large reservoirs of indifference and skepticism act like a brake on the entire educational system. Teachers, faculty and other educators must cope with students who don't believe that learning is important and/or don't think success is possible so therefore not worth the effort. Increased investment in education is essential in our state—we cannot compete with bottom of the rung teacher and faculty salaries and inadequate facilities. But even as we recognize the importance of additional dollars, we must recognize that funding alone will not solve our problems. Boeing has shown with its 787 Dreamliner that building a lighter aircraft will make existing engine technology more fuel efficient. In the same way, we must realize that helping our citizens understand the importance of being highly educated will make our existing investments in education far more productive and therefore also attenuate the level of needed future funding.

Is it Possible to Create a Pervasive Education Culture?

It is possible. South Carolina has taken a major step with the Personal Pathways to Success program. By giving young people a clear vision of the relevance of schoolwork to rewarding and interesting jobs, the PP program speaks directly to the education culture issue and is likely to have a major impact over time. And there are many other programs: First Steps focuses on pre-K education, which research shows can make an enormous difference; higher education's New Front Door initiative works at the other end of the age spectrum to provide a well thought out reentry point for adults who haven't moved beyond the high school level. There are also many very effective programs in between, such as CHE's SC GEAR UP. But a good program or even a cluster of good programs won't do the job, at least not quickly. Instead, the *attitudes* of entire communities have to change: parents, students, business owners and leaders, politicians, pastors, employees, retirees—everyone in the community--must be convinced that education beyond high school is both essential and achievable. Once that happens, the many good programs available or already deployed will help our communities surge forward like the Dreamliner.

The Kingsport Example

Kingsport, Tennessee, which is located at the juncture of I-26 and I-81 was jolted in 1999 when the largest local employer, Eastman Chemical, announced that it was planning major layoffs and also considering moving its headquarters. Eastman cited a changed economy, including

especially the need for a different kind of workforce, as justification for its decision. Specifically, much production was now automated, and physical labor was no longer the primary need. Now, Eastman needed people with varying levels of technical and management skills who could analyze and maintain complex processes.

The Chamber of Commerce led the effort to retain Eastman. Quickly seizing on the central issue of education, the Chamber led the development of *Educate and Grow* in 2001. The purpose of this effort is to prepare people for good-paying jobs (a specific goal is to provide incentives for young people to stay in the region). The principal mechanism of the effort is the Educate and Grow Scholarships which ensure that students will receive at least two years of higher education at no cost). Kingsport changed K-12 to K-14 (and in the process made learning in high school much more important)—this is the seamless model that South Carolina is aiming for.

Kingsport's employment and income outcomes are striking (see Appendix A). But culture change is most clearly seen in a 23% increase in high school graduation rate. Educate and Grow did not have any funds for the schools, but the business community's effort to change attitudes about education in the community was highly successful. Culture change happened at the kitchen table, as newly aware parents began to communicate a different view of the future to their children.

We Need a South Carolina Example

The Kingsport example gets people's attention, but as it stands it's not enough to break through inertia and drive change across South Carolina. One problem, quickly noticed by audiences hearing about Kingsport, is that the area has one huge employer who can quickly and easily command everyone's attention—a very rare situation. Also, the economics and demographics of Kingsport don't match well with our state's communities: Kingsport's economy in 1999 was almost all manufacturing and relatively prosperous. In addition, the area does not have much of a rural/agricultural dimension and there is little diversity.

The Power of a Pilot

Because time is critical, the initial desire would be to start Kingsport-type efforts around the state right away. Every year that young people and young adults fall out of the educational pipeline is a year lost to a more productive and rewarding life. We also know that every year out makes it harder for them to return.

But two issues argue against going to scale right away. One is that we do not have the central resources to support the growth of a lot of programs at once—we risk having some fail and those might in consequence becoming resistant to future efforts.

A second reason is that we do not yet know enough about the factors that will drive change. There are many good community-based college access programs, including the important promise-type programs (e.g. the Kalamazoo Promise), and we can learn a lot from these. That's a good start, but these won't give us a sufficient foundation of knowledge about what strategies will be most effective in changing attitudes--the core of what we're trying to do. The power of Eastman Chemical in Kingsport is such that everyone listened when they spoke, and the entire business community was mobilized to talk to employees, classes in schools, parents, and so on. But, since none of our communities has even a roughly similar situation, how can we get the same impact?

It would be best to have a two-stage pilot approach, in which we first get academic and professional advice on what strategies are most effective in talking to which audiences, then

implement in a pilot that allows us to closely monitor success and failure with the goal of both continuous improvement in the pilot and the strongest possible knowledge base for the full rollout.

Characteristics of a Pilot

The pilot community or communities should have these characteristics:

1) **Small enough to reach everyone**. A population area of 3 to 8 thousand would be ideal.
2) **Strong leadership**. Willing and dynamic business, religious, political, school, leadership is key. Since objective, external measures of leadership don't exist, we'll have to find another way to identify. Existing structures, such as SC GEAR UP, Regional Education Centers, FirstSteps, and others might be helpful in guiding us.
3) **Diverse and representative**. About 30% of South Carolina's population is African American, and most of the state's smaller communities include a significant rural/agricultural component. These two factors, and perhaps others, must be prominent in any pilot site.
4) **In reach of college/university partners**. Strong and collaborative school leadership will be essential, but, since a core objective is education beyond high school—and the extension of adult education is key--reasonable proximity (i.e. 20—30 miles) of a technical college and university is essential.
5) **One pilot or two?** If resources are available, two pilots would allow for the kind of research needed for the scale-up stage. Also, since there are notable overhead costs, spreading initial funding over two sites makes Stage 1 more cost effective. Finally, some sense of competition, as in sports, would be useful—it's something that's known to work in our society. Indeed, recognizing a reality of our society, we might think of a charismatic coaches as potential leaders.

Conclusion

In the academic and political debate about the role of espionage in helping the Soviet Union get a nuclear weapon so quickly, one scholar noted simply that on August 2 of 1945 the United States had given the Soviets the most important secret of all—the knowledge that it was possible to build a bomb. This simple but powerful fact transformed the Kremlin's effort. We need to be sure all of our citizens know today's most important secret—it is both possible and feasible for all citizens to receive the education necessary for stable, well-paying, knowledge-economy jobs.

Appendix A: Kingsport Data

Basic Data: 2001 to 2009

- Education
  - 23% increase in high school graduates
  - 248% increase in HS grads going directly to college
  - 27.5 % increase in adults with Associate Degrees
  - 19.2 % increase in adults with Bachelor's Degree
- Employment
  - Lost 12,600 manufacturing jobs
  - Gained 22,600 jobs in service, health care, professional
  - Income
- Median family income up 20%

Source: Kingsport Chamber of Commerce

The Educate and Grow Scholarship Program is designed to:

* Increase parent/guardian involvement in the educational process.
* Provide incentive for high school students to upgrade academic competencies while in high school.
* Encourage eligible high school graduates to attend college.
* Enable students to prepare for obtaining good, well-paying jobs within the region.
* Provide an educated and well-qualified workforce.
* Provide an incentive for young people to remain in the region.

Source: http://www.educateandgrow.com/educate_grow_learnmore

The Harvard Grant

See: http://ash.harvard.edu/Home/News-Events/Press-Releases/Kingsport-s-Higher-Education-Initiative-Wins-Innovations-Award