

From the Superintendent's Desk  
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Two weeks ago, I wrote about what it means to be **college-ready** upon graduation from high school. In this article, I want to talk about what it means to be **career-ready**.

In case you missed my last article, I wish to call your attention to the website [www.RedefiningReady.org](http://www.RedefiningReady.org). If, as a high school student, you identify a career cluster you wish to pursue upon graduation, the likelihood of you being **career-ready** is greater if you have met 2 or more of these benchmarks:

- Maintained a 90% or better attendance rate in school
- Performed 25 hours or more of community service
- Have workplace learning experience
- Have an industrial credential
- Have taken a dual credit Career Pathway course
- Participated in 2 or more co-/extracurricular activities while in high school

According to AbsencesAddUp.org, a national chronic absenteeism prevention campaign, being absent for just two days every month of the school year can put a child behind academically. Did you know that students with regular attendance are more likely to read well by third grade and score higher on tests? They also tend to be more engaged in school and feel better about themselves.

**Attendance strategies** that will help put your child on the path to success include:

- Make school a “priority” (Talk to your child about how important their education is. Make daily routines for homework, bedtime and waking up on time for school—and getting to school on time)
- Make a plan (If your schedule or transportation situation makes getting your child to school a challenge, ask for assistance. Make a car pool or transportation plan with other parents or family members)
- Report in (Know the school’s attendance policies. If an attendance or early dismissal is unavoidable, contact the school)
- Carefully weigh sick days (If a doctor recommends that your child stay home, find out exactly how long and on what conditions he/she can return to class)
- Schedule wisely (If possible, schedule doctor/dental appointments after school or during holiday breaks or teacher inservice days. Resist the urge to schedule vacations when students will miss school)
- Help students be able to complete assignments (When your child has to miss school, make arrangements with teachers to pick up a packet of make-up work. Ensure that your child follows through—completes it and returns it in a timely manner)

According to the Corporation for National and **Community Service** ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)) , the first and biggest benefit a person gets from volunteering or performing community service is the satisfaction of incorporating service into his/her life and making a positive difference in the community. The intangible benefits alone—such as pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment—are worthwhile reasons to serve. Additionally, when one shares his/her time and talents, they:

- Solve problems
- Strengthen communities
- Improve lives
- Connect with others
- Transform his/her own life

In the process, the service provided can open doors for something you may choose to do for a career later in life.

**Work experience** provides many benefits giving a person skills and experiences that will allow them to stand out to potential employers as well as helping them choose the right sector to work in later in life.

Work experience has these benefits:

- The person develops “soft skills” —team working, communication skills, and commercial awareness
- Helps the person to differentiate him/herself—an important thing to factor in when competition for jobs can be fierce
- Equips a person with knowledge that will enhance his/her job applications/interviews
- Gives a person a chance to try things out to see if they suit him/her
- Can lead to full-time employment

I have always told students that in addition to attending school and focusing on their academics, they need to get involved in **co- and extracurricular activities** (e.g., sports, music, drama, and clubs and organizations). Many benefits come from being part of a team or club:

- Physical development (Participation in sports, for example, gives one good exercise and helps him/her to learn life-long habits to keep physically and mentally fit)
- Learn creativity (Many co- & extracurricular activities help a child to learn creativity and problem-solving skills which will help at various stages of life)
- Relief from stress (Most co- & extracurricular activities take place in a relaxing environment. Such an environment helps promote healthy ways of dealing with stress)
- Self-Confidence (When learning new activities and skills, a person gains self-confidence. Learning social skills such as negotiation, cooperation, conflict-resolution, and teamwork helps one to interact properly with others at every stage of life)
- Team spirit and companionship (Participation in co- & extracurricular activities helps one to learn team spirit both at home and work. Team sports enable one to work together for achieving a common goal)
- Time management (Participation in co- & extracurricular activities helps teach a person the skill to juggle homework, school, family life, and after school activities. The person learns the value of prioritizing and planning)

Co- & extracurricular activities are not only fun-filled and entertaining; they also help teach important life skills. They help one to be responsible and grow-up as well-balanced adults.

In my next article, I will elaborate on what it means to be **life-ready**.