

KEY
FINDINGS

A Launchpad for Life:

A Vision for Purposeful
Pathways for All Students

The Commission on Purposeful Pathways is an initiative addressing one of education's most critical challenges: bridging the gap students experience between high school, higher education, and employment.

The Reality

Too many students graduate unsure about their futures and lack clarity on which postsecondary credentials provide value and open doors to their careers. Bridging the gap between learning and work is not only better for students—it is a national economic imperative. Researchers estimate that a failure to address the worker skills shortage could lead to \$1.7 trillion in annual unrealized revenue for the United States economy by 2030.

78%

of Gen Z students believe it's important to determine career plans before high school graduation...



13%

...but only 13% feel fully prepared to do so.

Recommendations

1

Provide all high school students with access to a purposeful pathways that include three core experiences.

Students receive high quality advising, access accelerated coursework, and experience career-connected learning.

2

Hardwire purpose, belonging, and social capital into every pathway.

Students connect what they're learning to their interests, feel seen and valued, and have networks of support.

3

Move the goalposts beyond the high school diploma to economic mobility.

Students receive comprehensive support from K-12 through higher education and into the workforce.

4

Make student transitions a shared responsibility across sectors.

Students experience connected systems that support postsecondary completion.

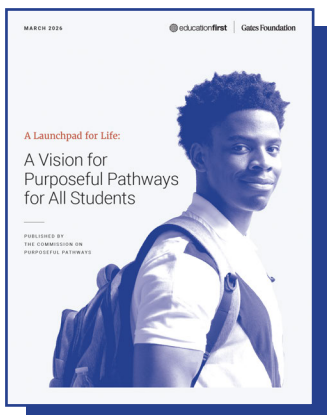
● Calling local, state + national leaders to embrace recommendations and:

- + View high school as a launchpad rather than a finish line.
- + Scale advising, accelerated coursework, and career-connected learning that intentionally build purpose, belonging, and social capital.
- + Invest in regional teams and intermediaries that align schools, colleges, and employers.

With the right policies, partnerships + investments, every young person can graduate high school not just ready for a job, but prepared for a fulfilling life, meaningful career, and lifelong economic mobility.

Read the full report + explore the Action Guides from the Commission

→ onegoal.com/_CPP



THE COMMISSION

OneGoal CEO Melissa Connelly served as Co-Chair for the Commission on Purposeful Pathways, a year-long, national effort convened by the Gates Foundation and led by Education First. Composed of 21 leading education and workforce experts and informed by young adults, the Commission reimagined how we support students from high school through college and career. The resulting report and companion resources provide an actionable framework and a call to action for communities to implement purposeful pathways. The vision is that by high school graduation, all students should be able to say with confidence:

“

I know who I am, I know where I'm going, and I know who can help me get there.

ABOUT EDUCATION FIRST

Education First is a national, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with deep expertise in education improvement. They envision a world in which every student is prepared to succeed and income and race no longer determine the quality of education.

ABOUT ONEGOAL

OneGoal transforms postsecondary advising and support so that every student can define their own future. Our unique approach, honed for nearly 20 years, equips everyday educators to provide career-connected advising, tailored to each student's aspirations and circumstances. An independent study by UChicago found that OneGoal students are 40% more likely to graduate from college than peers from similar backgrounds.

¹ Korn Ferry. (2018). Future of work: The global talent crunch. <https://www.kornferry.com/insights/this-week-in-leadership/talent-crunch-future-of-work>

² ECMC Group. (2023, June). Question the quo: Gen Z teens have changed their priorities for education and work. Question the Quo. <https://www.questionthequo.org/media/x5zjdjmxu/question-the-quo-june-2023-report.pdf>

³ Schultz Family Foundation & HarrisX. (2025, July). The Broken Marketplace™: America's school-to-work crisis. <https://www.brokenmarketplace.org/>