

Business education prepares students to be college and career ready

Introduction

Identification of the issue:

Students are leaving high school without essential business skills and knowledge needed to be prepared for college, a career, and to function as informed, intelligent, and productive consumers and citizens.

Sound education content and instruction are being compromised in some schools when instruction of business courses or topics is assigned to teachers who do not possess adequate business knowledge, a business education degree, OR are assigned to other curriculum areas.

Statement of the issue:

To be competitive in the global economy, our business, industry, and service sectors require employees to have world-class academic, technical, and workplace skills and knowledge. To meet this expectation, our education system must provide compelling learning experiences that connect all students to adulthood, and domestic and global labor markets based upon a strong instructional convergence of academic, technical, and employability skills.

Business education courses make a significant and vital contribution to the academic and career preparation of all students by providing rigorous and relevant courses of study aligned with the Common Core Standards.

1. An academically prepared student possesses common core skills including: higher order thinking skills, analytical skills, essential computational skills, writing and reading skills, and technology skills.
2. A career ready person capitalizes on personal strengths, talents, education, and experiences to bring value to the workplace and the community through his/her performance, skill, diligence, ethics, and responsible behavior. A career ready person has explored various career options and is cognizant of the skills and education required.
3. A student that possesses essential life skills has sound personal finance and money management skills; understands the economic conditions that contribute to a sound economy and what it means to be globally competitive; understands and appreciates the free enterprise system; can use technology efficiently and effectively for personal and career use; and can apply skills learned to various personal and professional situations.

Because business educators have undergone rigorous training and are certified to teach accounting and finance, they are the most qualified to teach personal financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and economics*.

Based on the 2008 Survey of States conducted by the Council for Economic Education, personal finance concepts were included, to some extent, in the educational standards of 44 states, with 34 of these states requiring implementation of personal finance standards. Thirteen states—representing nearly 31 percent of the entire United States population—have mandated a personal finance course (or personal finance concepts in an economics course) as a high school graduation requirement.

(Taken from PCBEE Policy Statement #88)

Business courses contribute to a workforce that is prepared to lead, collaborate, and innovate. Students that study business and acquire business skills and knowledge help to strengthen the economy.

Integrated academic and technical instructional opportunities in business education must be provided for all students and recognized as a component of graduation requirements.

The Body

Background information:

From its inception, business education has been an integral part of the school curriculum. Business courses provide a rigorous course of study. Individual course standards reflect skills and knowledge needed to pursue a career and to be ready for college.

While business education programs vary by school district, the full range of business education content areas includes:

ACCOUNTING

Accounting focuses on the importance of being able to understand, interpret, and use accounting information to make financial decisions. It is the language of business. In particular, Accounting focuses on the ability to: (1) read, interpret, and analyze financial information; (2) apply generally accepted accounting principles; (3) understand how the accounting system provides business information; (4) recognize the various users of accounting information; and (5) understand the dynamic nature of the business environment in which accounting information is used.

Accounting contributes to common core including: strategic and critical thinking; risk analysis; problem solving and decision making; communication; calculation, computation, analysis, interpretation of data, and team work and leadership.

BUSINESS LAW

Business Law addresses statutes and regulations affecting businesses, families, and individuals in their related roles. A knowledge of business law is useful for all students, because all students eventually assume roles as citizens, workers, and consumers in their communities and in society at large. Business students must include in their academic preparation a basic knowledge of the legal system and how business law impacts commerce in their own country and abroad (i.e., the impact of globalization). They must also understand that state, territory or province, or federal law must sometimes work in conjunction with international law.

Business Law contributes to common core including: problem-solving strategies, critical thinking, analytical development, reading and comprehension, and writing arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using effective techniques, valid reasoning, and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career Development differs from other curriculum areas in that it encompasses an individual’s total lifestyle—education, occupation, social responsibility, and leisure activities. An individual who wants to enjoy a quality standard of living must be prepared to make wise career transitions and to continuously learn new skills.

The Career Development Standards accordingly focus on the following skills:

- Assessing personal skills, abilities, and aptitudes for making a good “career fit.”
- Using career resources to explore career opportunities in both domestic and international markets.
- Developing expectations for workplace-related values, such as a strong work ethic, positive working relationships, ability to succeed in culturally diverse environments, strong communication skills, continual skill improvement, and competence in managing one’s career.
- Managing the school-to-work transition, including job-search strategies and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Career Development contributes to common core including: research and exploration, personal assessment of skills and aptitudes, reading skills, and personal and professional reflection.

COMMUNICATION

The Communication curriculum encourages mastery of all communication skills essential for interacting effectively with people in the workplace and in society. Of equal importance is the mastery of the common core skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and their application in both social and organizational settings.

While basic principles of communication remain fairly consistent, the world continues to change politically, economically, technologically, and socially. As these changes occur, new communication strategies evolve. Technology, including business social networking, profoundly influences business communication, making technological competence a requirement for career advancement. The body of knowledge called Communication is unique in that it permeates all areas of the business education curriculum as well as all other educational disciplines. Communication standards, therefore, should not be limited to one course; they should be integrated throughout the curriculum.

Communication contributes to the common core including: language arts: reading and writings skills, grammar and punctuation, speaking, and the knowledge of personal, professional, and technical writing.

COMPUTATION

Computation skills are more than just the skills needed to make quantitative and precise calculations. A hallmark of the business education curriculum is its relevance to everyday applications. Computational skills encompass the ability to:

- solve mathematical problems,

- analyze and interpret data, and
- apply sound decision-making skills.

These abilities are an important component of what it takes to succeed in all areas of business and finance in our technology- and data-driven society.

The business curriculum offers multiple opportunities to develop, use, and integrate computation skills at all levels. In addition, specific courses in business, personal finance, and applied mathematics help students develop the computation skills needed to solve business-, personal finance-, and economic-related problems.

Computation skills acquired in business courses and content that contribute to common core include: how to choose and use the technology resources, calculation, computation, analysis, and interpretation of data.

ECONOMICS

The American economy is based on a private enterprise system in which the millions of individual choices made by consumers, workers, and citizens, in sum, affect the decisions made by business owners and government officials.

Economics links to basic economic concepts that all students should master, such as the following:

- scarcity, choice, and opportunity costs;
- productivity;
- economic systems, institutions, and incentive;
- exchange, money, and interdependence;
- markets, prices, and competition;
- supply and demand; and
- roles of consumers, governments, and citizens.

Economics contributes to the common core including: critical thinking, assessment, analysis, connecting insights and predictions, computation, and reading comprehension.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship focuses on recognizing a business opportunity, starting a business based on the recognized opportunity, and operating and maintaining that business. All students benefit from developing an appreciation for and understanding of Entrepreneurship in our economy: most of the jobs (both professional and technical) created in recent years have been in the small business sector. Forecasts indicate that this trend will continue.

Entrepreneurial skills are necessary not only for students who will become entrepreneurs, but also for individuals working in the increasingly competitive corporate world. Entrepreneurship is a natural fit for business education because entrepreneurship integrates the functional areas of business—accounting, finance, marketing, and management—and the legal and economic environments in which any new venture operates.

Entrepreneurship contributes to the common core including: problem solving, research, analytical thinking, planning, assessment of complex ideas and information, computation, and language arts/communication.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology is radically changing the landscape of business and the global society. Once viewed as an area only for computer programmers, engineers, and scientists, the information technology field is now viewed as an indispensable resource for organizational and personal productivity—that is, for achieving an organization’s business goals, and for facilitating the attainment of an individual’s life and career goals.

Mastery of technology tools is a requirement rather than an option for enhancing academic, business, and personal performance. To prepare students to be successful in today’s global business environment, which is increasingly dependent on—and defined by—technology tools, educators must focus on the use of technology as a tool for facilitating ethical business functions.

Information Technology contributes to the common core including: problem solving, reading comprehension, analytical thinking, and interpretation of data, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of information presented in various formats and media, determine meaning of symbols and vocabulary, utilize various technology to accomplish appropriate tasks.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

International Business is an essential area of study to help students understand, to make informed decisions, and to compete in today's global economy. The International Business standards focus on:

- raising awareness of the interrelatedness of one country's political policies and economic practices on another;
- learning to improve international business relations through appropriate communication strategies;
- understanding the global business environment—that is, the interconnectedness of cultural, political, legal, economic, and ethical systems;
- exploring basic concepts underlying international finance, management, marketing, and trade relations; and;
- identifying forms of business ownership and international business opportunities.

International Business contributes to the common core including: analytical, computation, language arts/communication, research, and reading comprehension.

MANAGEMENT

Management is the process of using organizational resources effectively and efficiently to achieve organizational goals through planning, organizing, leading/directing, and evaluating/controlling. Management education helps students understand and analyze various management theories and apply them to the workplace. Management education also helps students understand basic management functions, their interrelationships, and the organization’s competitive niche.

The study of Management is an essential component in the design and delivery of the business education curriculum. Mastery of these standards will help students lay the groundwork for managerial competence in the global marketplace. **According to the 2012 Princeton Review, business administration and management/commerce is the number one college major followed by economics, computer and information sciences and communications studies/speech communication and rhetoric.**

Management contributes to the common core including: problem-solving, analytical, reading comprehension, speaking, decision making, and computation.

MARKETING

Marketing education introduces students to the processes and functions involved in providing products or services that meet consumers' wants and needs. As a major business function, marketing impacts both the domestic and International economies.

Marketing exists within a dynamic environment of rapidly evolving technology and constant change, emerging interdependent nations and their economies, and increasing demands for ethical and social responsibility. General marketing concepts are important to everyone, because they impact individuals, business, and society. The study of marketing can help students gain a clearer picture of how key business functions are directly related to marketing activities.

Marketing supports the common core including: analysis, problem solving, discernment, language arts including reading, writing, and speaking.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Personal Finance equips students with essential financial skills. The growing emphasis on financial literacy has highlighted the need for students to learn how to navigate the financial decisions they must make and how to make informed decisions related to managing finances and budgeting, saving and investing, living independently, earning and reporting income, buying goods and services, using credit, banking, and protecting against risk. According to a report on college debt by PBS.org, college debt now outpaces credit card debt in the United States.

Knowing, understanding, and applying these personal finance concepts offer the necessary analytical tools for addressing economic issues, both personal and societal. Understanding economic principles and developing sound financial literacy skills provide the basis for responsible citizenship, financial solvency, and career success. Financial literacy is being considered and now required as a graduation requirement in some states including: Indiana, Missouri, and Ohio. The following quote illustrates the increasing interest in a financial literacy requirement: "Lawmakers in Ohio, propelled by the state's dubious distinction as the leader in home foreclosures in the nation in 2006, made financial literacy a high school graduation requirement. Other states and schools are considering similar measures." (ASCD, Feb.2009)

Personal Finance supports common core including: calculation, computation, analysis, and decision making.

It is evident that the business education curriculum makes a necessary contribution to the education of all students. Students who leave high school without the skills and knowledge acquired in business courses are not as prepared to function in a business world, and ALL students will be required to make business decisions on a daily basis. It is also evident that the business education curriculum supports and reinforces common core skills and helps students to become college and career ready.

Conclusion

Suggested course of action – solution to issues

Business education programs are a critical component in helping students become College and Career Ready. The time spent in business education courses provides opportunities for hands-on learning, collaboration and teamwork and confidence building. *When business education courses are included as graduation requirements with core academic courses* such as math, science, English/language arts and social studies, the result is prepared students who have the confidence, skills and education needed to adapt to a changing business environment, to continue to engage in lifelong learning, and to contribute value to their workplace and community.

College and Career Readiness is about the basics. A strong academic foundation and personal ethics help students succeed. The basics include: speaking and writing effectively; analyzing situations and solving problems; understanding fundamental concepts in math and science; meeting deadlines, and professional conduct.

College and Career Readiness is about personal development. Personal development includes: understanding available technology and how and when to use it appropriately; using what you know to address new challenges and new opportunities; being enthusiastic about learning for self-improvement; and having the knowledge, drive, and confidence to start your own business.

College and Career Readiness is about relationships. Collaborating with co-workers and respecting the opinions, privacy and cultures of others, as well as working on your own, are skills learned in business classes. It also includes accepting responsibility and understanding the consequences of your decisions and making wise choices.

College and Career Readiness is about generating a powerful workforce across the nation. Creating a steady supply of responsible leaders and skilled employees in business is a primary goal of the business education curriculum. This also means inspiring young entrepreneurs and young professionals to start businesses to promote a more vibrant economy, a sustainable business environment, and greater opportunity and growth at every level.

Business courses need to be a graduation requirement for all students. Global competition and United States success depends upon:

- A skilled and knowledgeable workforce
- A strong work ethic
- A society that values education

To adequately prepare students for college, a career, and to be informed consumers and citizens, ALL students need to take business courses that will:

1. Develop common core skills that will enable them to be ready for college.
2. Develop life-long skills and knowledge that will enable them to pursue a career.
3. Develop essential foundational business skills and knowledge to be productive citizens that include personal finance and transferable technology skills.

Business education shares the common characteristic of teaching academic, technical, and personal skills through problem-based (STEM) and applied learning experiences. Business education courses and content make a significant and essential contribution to the academic and career preparation and success of all students; **therefore, business education must be a requirement for all students.**

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