



How to Get Involved in Needed Literacy/Workforce-Readiness Initiatives

By Glenn Marshall

Is your organization facing significant challenges attracting potential employees with the capabilities needed to support your company's future success? Your challenges reflect widely shared pain among manufacturers. Starting today, take steps to remedy this roadblock to competitiveness.

First, understand the urgent need to develop a collaborative, "cradle to career" approach to graduating literate, career-ready citizens. None of us — manufacturers, educators, families and community/government resources — can achieve this goal alone. The [2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\) report](#) indicates that only 34 percent of U.S. fourth- and eighth-grade students met or exceeded the NAEP proficiency standard. Struggling readers come from all backgrounds and might include: economically disadvantaged youngsters, English-language learners, and students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities. Scientists estimate that 95 percent of all children can learn to read proficiently, especially when given reading instruction validated by science and based on data outcomes. Students in high-risk populations need not fail at the current rates. Placed in schools with effective principals and well-prepared and well-supported teachers, economically or otherwise disadvantaged children can learn to read as well as their more advantaged peers.

Learn how young children can be provided a nurturing environment that promotes learning/reading, prepares them to read at grade level by the end of third grade and then continues to advance their reading and comprehension skills through high school and beyond. *Action: Contact local educators and ask about needed resources for overcoming reading proficiency gaps.* The Association for Manufacturing Excellence's Adopt-a-School Program, for example, provides guidance for effective industry/education partnerships. Through this program, participants in an adopted school or community college receive a corporate membership, enabling teachers and students to attend AME events at member prices. Participating schools will receive copies of AME's *Target* magazine to increase awareness of what will be required for career readiness in manufacturing, logistics and related areas.

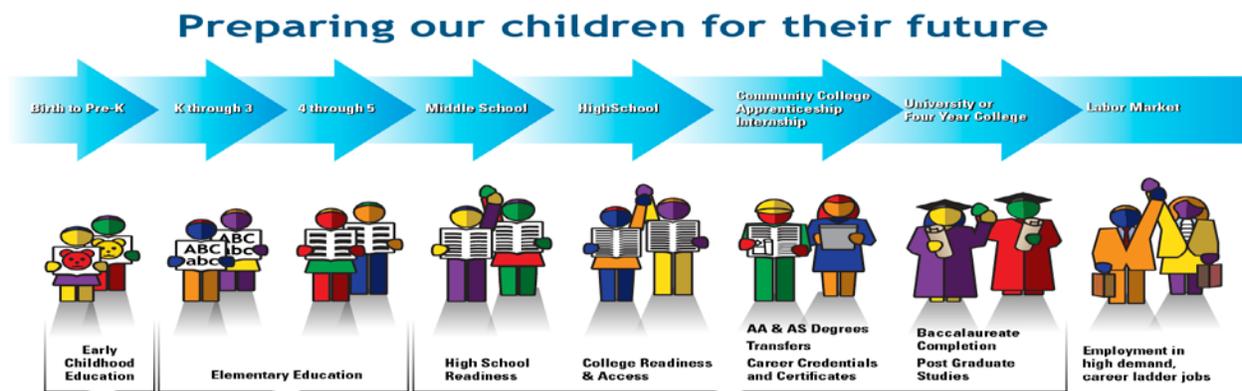
Get involved in initiatives for introducing reading and skills training that will promote job-readiness capabilities. According to a report by the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, the number of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and health care graduates must increase 20-30 percent by 2016 to meet the projected growth of the U.S. economy. While new and available jobs require more advanced skills every day, 2.2 million people are added to the adult illiterate population each year. Consider the high unemployment rate for the nation's teenagers (missing opportunities to build experience they will need later in

life) and more than 92 million people of working age who are not participating in the workforce. Such unemployment and under-employment costs taxpayers millions of dollars in public assistance and potential future prison costs. *Action: Get involved with the [STEM Education Coalition](#) and other organizations fostering awareness/action to support STEM education programs.*

Participate in launching an educational and manufacturing renaissance to provide a high-quality, literacy-rich environment — a prerequisite for academic and economic success. The [Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation \(LEARN\) Act](#) proposes comprehensive state and local literacy programs to ensure that children from birth to grade 12 have the reading and writing skills needed for success in school and beyond. *Action: Check the [Literate Nation website](#) for information on tools and knowledge supporting literacy solutions.*

Reach out to local and regional organizations with shared concern about the crucial need for building literacy and job readiness skills/understanding. One example: [The Literate Nation-Virginia Coalition](#) is working to graduate more literate, career-ready citizens and supports the school-dropout-reduction initiative led by [America’s Promise Alliance](#).

The [Youth Promise Act](#), when implemented, will fund evidence-based practices to interrupt the cradle-to-prison pipeline that is far too common today. The act will encourage and require leadership and oversight of these programs through community-based committees. Research shows that evidenced-based prevention programs for at-risk youth save much more than they cost.

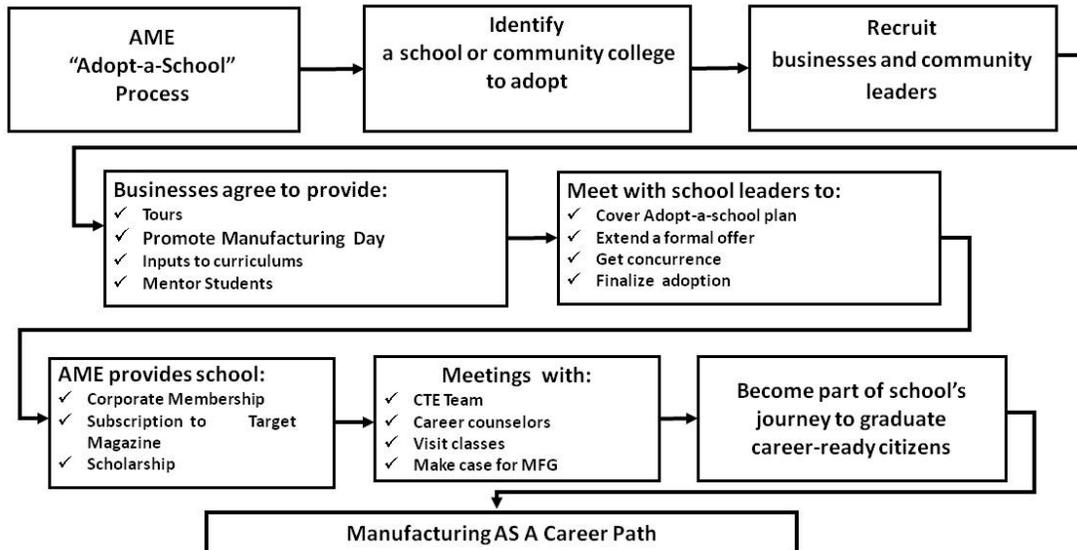


Source: Literate Nation

A University of Virginia Miller Center commission, chaired by former governors Haley Barbour and Evan Bayh, released a report offering innovative, non-partisan, actionable ideas on how to create middle-class manufacturing jobs. These ideas include providing a more flexible education system, certification programs, and access to financing and technology. The AME Adopt-a-School initiative is a good first step in deploying these ideas as shown below:



Adopt-a-School



There will be 55 million new jobs by 2020 but not enough post-secondary-educated workers. The U.S. Department of Commerce reported that manufacturing jobs draw 17 percent higher compensation benefits versus non-manufacturing jobs. Your support for literacy and workforce readiness programs will help to create and develop talent for tomorrow's manufacturing workforce.

AME, with its alliance partners, works with communities, educators in schools and colleges, as well as other organizations toward a collective impact approach for addressing [the nation's talent shortage](#). The objective is to prepare and graduate literate, career-ready citizens with the proper education and the right skills needed to qualify for high-paying jobs — and then let them lead the way in designing and building things at home, again!

Glenn Marshall, retired, Newport News Shipbuilding, leads the Association for Manufacturing Excellence (AME) initiative for Manufacturing as a Career Path and AME's Adopt-a-School Program.

The Association for Manufacturing Excellence (AME) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the journey of continuous improvement and enterprise excellence. AME members, a network of volunteers, are committed to leveraging the practitioner-to-practitioner and company-to-company shared-learning experience. Through workshops, seminars, plant tours and industry-leading conferences, AME members discover and implement continuous improvement strategies and best practices. AME offers its members valuable resources to help them stay abreast of current industry developments and to improve the competitiveness/success of their organizations. For more information, visit www.ame.org or email info@ame.org. Glenn Marshall can be contacted at marsh8279@aol.com.