

# A Career Pathway To Educational And Employment Success



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Dwight's initiatives aim to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership skills. Chancellor Spahn of New York's Dwight School with

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New and emerging technologies are redefining the nature of work and job skills at a pace that demands a parallel transformation in education. Sixty-five percent of children starting school today will need skills for jobs that don't yet exist 🐦, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Youth unemployment runs high even as jobs stand empty, in part because people are graduating from high school and college without the skill sets they need for the digital age. To be prepared for the jobs of the future, today's students need to view learning as a lifelong process.

How can our schools transform education to make it applicable and adaptable to the future? How can they foster the capacity for lifelong learning that young people entering the workforce today need for future success?

Stephen Spahn, chancellor of New York's preschool-12 [Dwight School](#), has been asking these questions for 50 years. As the longest serving head of an independent school in the U.S., he has a unique view of the present and future of American education.

Chancellor Spahn believes that curriculum must evolve constantly to keep pace with the realities students will face as they transition into the world of work—and that means learning by doing.

Education should equal applicable, usable information and skills. Students need to be able to ask questions, solve problems, pursue projects and outcomes that interest them, and apply what they have learned in a real world context.

The key lies in combining theory with practice. At Dwight School, the curriculum is a robust combination of International Baccalaureate classroom learning, as well as real-world application through mentorships, after-school programs, internships, job shadowing and other innovative initiatives.

With a foundation of core mastery in writing, speaking, and analyzing data, students' learning is customized to their interests and talents. For example, a child with a passion for acting might do some of their classes online through the Dwight Global Online School, and spend a year working directly with actors and directors.

Spahn sees it as his job to create an environment where students can discover their passions and interests. Nothing motivates learning as well as the spark of genuine curiosity. At the same time, learners need to be able to apply research and pursue projects through to fruition.

Dwight's initiatives foster innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership skills in the real world context. For example, all sixth graders take part in a ten-week project with a challenging capstone event: cooking and serving a three-course meal without being able to use a kitchen. With guidance from an alumnus restaurateur and culinary experts, the students learn about everything that goes into operating a restaurant—from sourcing sustainable ingredients to designing a menu, laying out a dining room, and cooking and serving a meal. This type of hands-on learning helps students develop crucial skills that will transfer to any career or context—things like problem-solving, teamwork and adaptability. In Chancellor Spahn's view, "A well-educated person is someone who if relocated anywhere in the world will prosper and thrive."

Ultimately, students must be able to apply what they learn to a pathway for career success. There is no substitute for learning by doing. Real-world application of knowledge provides a solid foundation for any educational or career pathway. The development of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and teamwork skills—which are so vital to success in any field—does not happen on paper.

Spark Tank is Dwight School's K-12 incubator. Students develop their own ideas for businesses, nonprofits and products. Under the mentorship of teachers, and the Dwight School Foundation Spark Tank Committee of parents and alumni, inspired young people develop their ideas from the initial seed of curiosity all the way through to prototypes and, in some cases, market launch. Spark Tank students have produced clothing lines, apps, medical devices and prosthetics, and have designed business and nonprofit models aimed at making the world a better place.

Spark Tank shows that given the tools and the freedom to innovate, there's no limit to what young people can do. In Chancellor Spahn's view, this freedom is the revolution in education that we need and that educators should embrace as the most powerful way to transform education in a rapidly changing world.

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