

Aug. 29, 2007

## **Q&A: Lydia Logan**

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ASBJ Editors

For our September 2007 “What is Ready?” cover package, the editors of ASBJ interviewed educators, scholars, and researchers about the topic of student readiness for the 21st century.

Lydia M. Logan, is executive director of the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, a division of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

**Editor:** What is “ready”? What specific skills should students have when they leave high school to enter higher education or the workforce?

**Logan:** Students need to be able to clearly communicate their ideas in both written and oral formats. They must be able to read for content, work in groups, think creatively to solve problems, and they need to be able to manage numbers. We agree with recommendations set by Achieve and others that high school students should take rigorous math courses at least through Algebra II. Increasingly, it is important for students to have digital skills. There was a time when that was optional, but that time has passed. As we enter into a time of global competitiveness, there will be more emphasis on understanding other cultures and speaking languages other than English.

**Editor:** How well are schools preparing today’s students for tomorrow’s workplace challenges?

**Logan:** Most schools do an adequate job of preparing some students for post-secondary education, but it is time for us to embrace the new challenges of a global economy and work with our education system to increase the rigor of the curriculum so that all students are prepared for life after high school. This means that what was good enough parents when they were in school, is not good enough for their children. Our economy is undergoing a transformation. Technology and globalization have changed the world in ways we never imagined. The technology age ushered in automation, and globalization opened up opportunities for businesses to bid on goods and services from markets in other countries. The result is that entry-level work in the U.S. workforce is much more complicated than it was even 10 years ago. Our school systems have not kept pace with the innovations that are driving change in our economy. We must work to raise standards, and give students and teachers the time and support that they need to know and be able to do what is expected of them in order to succeed.

**Editor:** Is 13 years of public school, using the current 180-day, 6½ hour instructional formula, a realistic time limit to ensure readiness? If not, what can schools do differently?

**Logan:** Some students will be able to learn what they need to know and be able to do within the current schedule, but many students will not. There are several ways to approach extended learning time that have shown early signs of success. One promising model, Mass 2020, is operating in district schools in Massachusetts. Several charter schools such as KIPP have also adopted longer days, weeks and school years in order to get student achievement up to proficient grade level work or higher and continue to move them forward. Extended learning time is most

effective when students have more time with quality instruction complimented by other activities that are often eliminated in a shorter school day where core academic subjects are the focus.

**Editor:** What can and should be done to ensure that programs teaching “readiness” skills are replicable across districts, states, and the nation?

**Logan:** First, readiness skills should be integrated into the school curriculum and not seen as an add-ons or separate offerings. For those programs that do take place outside of the curriculum or the regular school day, we should be sure that the programs are successful and that the elements that make them successful are replicable. We must make sure that the programs that have proven track records are replicated in a way that they are sustainable. Starting and stopping programs from year to year is not beneficial to anyone. We must do a better job of communicating to parents and students what is expected of young adults after high school so that they can actively participate in acquiring the skills that will secure their future success.