

Cities Stepping Up in Talent Game

Producing and retaining talent is a top priority in Indiana and one of the driving forces behind *Indiana Vision 2025*, the Indiana Chamber-led long-term economic development plan. But the Hoosier state isn't the only place focused on those areas. Like Indiana, states (and cities) are turning to creative strategies for fostering economic growth.

Larry Gigerich, a longtime economic development professional and member of the *Indiana Vision 2025* task force, identified some of those initiatives in a recent column.

Dayton, Ohio created the Learn to Earn project, which seeks to ensure each young person is "ready to learn" by kindergarten and "ready to earn" by graduation. Currently, 50% of children in low-income areas in Dayton start kindergarten either academically or socially behind, and only 35% of 25- to 64-year-olds have a two- or four-year college degree.

Cincinnati launched the Plan Build Live Participate initiative, which will rework the city's building regulations so the area is more attractive to new residents and businesses. Pittsburgh is reaching out to college seniors and making them aware of opportunities in the city's health care, education and

technology sectors. Niagara Falls, New York funds a program to pay for students' school loans if they agree to live in certain neighborhoods.

Innovation is key for communities to attract and retain talent. Investing time and money into creative initiatives to produce and retain recent college graduates will help cities succeed in today's competitive human capital world.

The downtown Cincinnati skyline, as viewed from Northern Kentucky.



Microsoft Sending Employees Back to School ... to Teach

“People can't get jobs, and we have jobs that can't be filled.”

Brad Smith, Microsoft's general counsel, spoke these words recently, in reference to the shortage of computer science graduates entering the workforce. According to *The New York Times*, there will likely be 150,000 computing jobs opening up each year through 2020. But in 2010, fewer than 40,000 American students received bachelor's degrees in computer science.

Microsoft is facing this daunting challenge head-on by sending its own employees into high schools to teach computer science classes. The program – Technology Education and Literacy in Schools – is now in 22 Seattle-area schools and is trickling into neighboring states.

The goal is to generate interest in computing at an early age. To do this, Microsoft tries to connect the science with the gadgets most students use every day. For example, one Microsoft engineer taught students how to make software for mobile phones.

Microsoft hopes to expand the program by recruiting engineers from other technology companies to teach in high schools across the country.

Some Schools Adding Days to Academic Calendar

In 1987, the Indiana General Assembly passed a law extending the state's school year to 180 days, which is the standard throughout the country. While that may seem like an eternity to students, advocates of longer school years say this model is outdated.

“That fact that our calendar has been based on the agrarian economy when almost none of our kids work in the field anymore doesn't make any sense whatsoever,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan told *The New York Times*.

The National Center on Time and Learning, a nonprofit research group, reports that about 170 schools across the country have lengthened their school calendars past 180 days to 190 or even 200 days. More than 140 of those are charter schools.

In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's 2012 *Education at a Glance* report, the U.S. lags behind many other developed countries in education attainment levels. The standard 180-day school year in the U.S. is one aspect of scrutiny. In just one of many examples, time on task in India is 200 days for grades 1-5 and 220 days for grades, 6-8, according to The Center for Public Education.

Jeannie Oakes of the Ford Foundation, which has financially supported groups helping schools restructure their academic calendars, told *The Times* that without first focusing on the quality of the education, increasing the quantity is inconsequential.

“Better is as important as the more,” she concludes.

Shorts written by Katie Coffin