

Ronn Richard Remarks

Fred Talks – E³: Education, Economic Development, Empowerment

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2014

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I commend you for making time to join the conversation on an issue of such critical importance to Cleveland's young people, employers, educators – in fact, to our entire community.

You may wonder why the Cleveland Foundation became interested in career-based learning. The short answer is that it links two of our foremost community priorities: education and economic development:

- In public education, our board – in partnership with the George Gund Foundation – has led the way these past seven years in supporting new, innovative schools that offer Cleveland's students a challenging alternative to their traditional neighborhood schools. We have also championed the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's transformation plan, which builds upon the success of the innovative schools.
- In economic development, we have invested more than \$85 million in the past decade to revitalize our region, with noteworthy gains toward stabilizing and diversifying our economy and rebuilding a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation. But stubborn gaps remain in the core city, where poverty and unemployment rates are three times higher than in the region as a whole.

All of us in Greater Cleveland have a vested interest in strengthening Cleveland's economy and encouraging inclusive growth that provides real opportunities for city residents. As we at the foundation considered our strategy for economic transformation in this context, both the data and our own experience confirmed that our community – like our country – is not preparing our youth for the high-skill, high-demand jobs of the present and future. These are the jobs that will grant financial independence to younger workers, paying the family-sustaining wages that will allow them to buy into the American dream.

Here is a visual representation of the economic disconnect we face.

This chart is from a just-released report by the consulting firm FutureWorks, which the foundation commissioned to analyze the job demand-and-supply picture in Greater Cleveland. The chart documents a significant gap between available openings in well-paying occupations – identified as demand – and the number of job-related credentials awarded in each field: the supply side. Note the number of red bars designating occupations with more demand than supply. The jobs are out there!

For the well being of our young people and our core city, we need to bring these two sides into closer alignment.

The foundation is recommending that we as a community ratchet up career technical education in Cleveland, with an initial focus on the areas listed on this slide.

These short-term action items represent a start toward building a coherent career pathway system in Cleveland. They bring all stakeholders to the table – including the Cleveland schools, higher education and employers – to begin strengthening career technical education in the schools, initially by mapping out an exemplar career pathway in a high-growth sector and strengthening current pathways. Ultimately, students could choose among multiple pathways aligned with workforce needs and their own interests.

The availability of multiple pathways would encourage students to explore their career options much earlier than under our current system, which provides little opportunity for that during their middle and high school years. As a result, we churn out graduates ill prepared to commit to a vocation or a college major.

Of course, none of this will matter much if we fail to elevate the importance of career technical education, in part by abolishing the false dichotomy between so-called white-collar and blue-collar jobs. That simplistic “brains versus brawn” mindset no longer applies. Today, every employer needs workers with critical thinking skills.

This is familiar turf to tonight’s featured guest. I am delighted to welcome Anne Stanton, program director at the James Irvine Foundation in California, who has dedicated her own career to serving young people.

As her full bio in your brochure explains, Anne heads Linked Learning, a career-based learning program widely acclaimed for its success in connecting students to the working world. Last May, the California Department of Education awarded \$250 million to consortia committed to

implementing the Linked Learning model – and followed up with *another* \$250 million for Linked Learning in June.

Anne will talk more about this program in conversation with Helen Williams, the Cleveland Foundation’s program director for education, and Shilpa Kedar, our program director for economic development. But first, let’s enjoy a short video on Linked Learning.