



If Business Owners Want a More Skilled Workforce, They Shouldn't Forget about Charter Schools

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By: Emily Stahly

Last week in Columbia, [business and education stakeholders](#) expressed their concerns over the preparedness of Missouri's future workers. As part of an initiative called Talent for Tomorrow, a task force will present recommendations intended to "[align the education system with workforce needs](#)," the primary focus being on higher education.

While it may be true that Missouri's 2-year and 4-year colleges have room for improvement, business leaders should not overlook the potential to shape high school education to better meet their needs. In particular, the flexibility of the charter school model and ability to focus on career and technical education (CTE) should appeal to businesses and students throughout the state.

Bucking the traditional high school model, Robert Schwartz with the Thomas B. Fordham Institute [explains](#) that charter schools could "be co-designed by charter leaders in collaboration with regional employers and community college leaders. This would ensure that its programs were focused on preparing young people for careers in high-growth, high-demand industry sectors like IT, health care, and public services."

In Fresno, California, a [career technical education charter school](#) —the product of coordinated

effort by community and business leaders and the Fresno County Superintendent—is opening this fall. Not only does the charter high school’s curriculum align with what industry leaders want, but students can also take college courses at a local community college. In Wisconsin, the Green Bay Area Public School District received a grant from the state department of education to open an [innovation charter school](#) that would prepare at-risk students for high-tech jobs.

There is no good reason why similar opportunities are not available to Missouri’s students. Even now, industry leaders could work with local school districts to open a CTE charter school. Better yet, Missouri could allow [charter schools to expand throughout the state](#) and authorize universities to sponsor charter schools anywhere, not just in Kansas City and St. Louis.

Instead of just concentrating on higher education or writing off charter schools as only for urban areas, business leaders should seriously consider the role charter schools could play in developing a more skilled workforce.

Tags:

- [Charter Schools](#)

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