

Learning and Working in the Age of AI

Technology has always shaped learning and work, but artificial intelligence is moving faster than educators and employers can adapt. The shift to computers and the internet took decades, whereas AI is having a dramatic impact in a shorter timeline.

AI is changing not only what learning and working look like today, but the skills students and workers need and the ways in which they acquire those skills. There is a foundational misalignment between the K-12 education and workforce systems. Students have been graduating without the basic skills needed to succeed in the workforce since long before the AI boom.

A 2026 survey by the ManpowerGroup shows:

70%

Nearly 70% of U.S. employers already report difficulty finding qualified workers.

By 2030 McKinsey Global Institute estimates:

**1/3
JOBS**

A third of jobs will see over 10% of their required skills changed.

With traditional pathways from education to employment becoming less predictable, new approaches to learning, skills development, and workforce preparation are needed.

The U.S. needs resilient education and workforce systems that are flexible enough to keep pace with AI or risks locking the next generation out of economic opportunity.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Uncertainty and economic worry due to technological innovation is not new; AI only requires us to work more quickly. BPC's Commission on the American Workforce recommends ways for policymakers to better align the education and workforce pipeline and future-proof our systems from the bottom-up:



Create a National Talent Council, modeled on the White House National Economic Council and National Security Council, to ensure the nation has a human capital strategy that is coherent, coordinated, and effective. Its purpose is to bring together the many federal agencies responsible for education, workforce, and worker supports to align policies and investments.



Strengthen federal and state data systems by creating, implementing, and incentivizing a national Talent Data System built around measurable outcomes that would centralize and streamline federal postsecondary, workforce, and relevant K-12 data. The creation and operation of public access portals should also be supported. Without accessible, transparent data systems policymakers cannot assess whether programs are responsive to labor demand or prepare workers with necessary skills.



Expand AI literacy initiatives in schools and in the workplace to ensure that educators, employers, students, and workers know what AI is, how to use it, and how to interpret outputs.



Adopt a “skills-first” framework by creating portable skills savings accounts funded by employers, employees, the public sector, and philanthropy to support lifelong learning after high school and meet the pace of change from AI. It also includes incentivizing the creation of learning and employment records so learners and workers can communicate their skills, and educators and employers can verify that they have those skills



Implement a K-12 scorecard and authorize the National Assessment Governing Board to improve efficiency and state-level reporting of NAEP scores. NAEP should also be expanded to report state results for 12th-grade assessments, civics, and science.



Reimagine high school to ensure student outcomes and skills are aligned with the current economic reality by requiring states to define their standards for college and career readiness. It also includes investing in state and local strategies to expand work-based learning, civics education, and service experiences to all secondary students.



Build more effective postsecondary pathways in partnership with employers and providers by expanding work-based learning and reducing barriers for employers to participate in work-based learning programs. These efforts should be supported by replacing siloed federal funding streams with performance-based grants and allowing states to blend education, workforce, and human services funding to better support workers and learners.