

---

# August 2018 Educator Toolkit: Is College Worth the Investment?

**Date :** August 8, 2018

## Why This Matters Now

Mention it, and you are likely to strike awe and fear into the hearts and minds of your higher education-bound students (not to mention parents and administrators). Their eyes will widen at the mere thought: what if you consider a path other than college after high school?

While it is a contrarian consideration, it is something that an increasing number of students around the world are thinking about. A contributing factor is the cost of higher education, which, according to Wharton professor Peter Cappelli, has risen by about four times the rate of inflation over the last generation. And meanwhile, students get deeper into debt.

Also, young entrepreneurs with viable ideas and a driving determination to build and market them are saying, “Why wait?” Learning doesn’t only happen in the classroom – in fact, real-world learning may be equally as powerful as four years on a college campus.

It’s an interesting argument to tackle, and one that is steeped in tradition and emotion for many students and educators. At the very least, it is worth introducing the conversation, especially for those high school students who, while pressured, have that deep-down nagging feeling that college at 18 may not be the right course for them.

## Resources

### Article

#### [Would You Bypass College for Real-world Learning?](#)

This KWHS article presents the opportunity to confront the issue head-on, with all the teen examples, related online links, and conversation starters you need to fuel a dynamic classroom discussion. Students will meet 18-year-old Scott Millar from Brisbane, Australia, an entrepreneur who only recently decided to postpone his college debut while pursuing his hologram business, BOP Industries. “Already the real-world learning, knowledge and connections have been beyond my wildest dreams and I’m finding myself as an 18-year-old that is fresh out of high school, being able to have in-depth conversations with CEOs of massive corporations,” says Millar. Students can explore the notion of an alternate path (this article focuses specifically on entrepreneurship and not trades or corporate training programs) by learning about the Thiel Fellowship for teen entrepreneurs, as well as supporting academic research. It also makes the point, supported by Millar’s own admission that he plans to go to college, that a successful post-high-school path may well include many different kinds of learning environments. We also encourage educators and students to check out our four-part audio podcast series [Managing College Costs and Debt](#) for a deeper discussion around this topic.

### Lesson Plan

#### [Exploring Future Career Opportunities](#)

This KWHS lesson plan, published in 2017 and including Jumpstart National Standards, CEE National Standards and Common Core State Standards, provides a bigger-picture view for students of the choices they will have to make about their lives after high school. It’s provocative to think about forgoing college, but is it realistic? The included Career Exploration Activity Guide will get them thinking about the requirements for different careers, and the Why Go to College? handout provides the important perspective that a college degree could well improve their job prospects.

## Hands-on Learning

When they read the KWHS article [Would You Bypass College for Real-world Learning?](#), students will get a brief introduction to the Thiel Foundation. Started by Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal, the Thiel Foundation awards \$100,000 each, to young people who want to “build new things instead of sitting in a classroom.” More than 100 students have received this money since the start of the organization seven years ago.

How successful have these students become? Have their ideas taken flight? Are they now studying in college? In this hands-on follow-up exercise to the article discussion, students should research past Thiel recipients (the related links tab in the story toolbar is a good place to start) to find out how successful they have been. What did they learn and how successful was their alternate path? They should find information online, and should also be encouraged to email the public relations contact person listed on the website and press releases to potentially interview past Thiel Fellows. If the teacher wants to first take the step of finding some willing Thiel fellows to provide students with a working list of interviewees, it may save them some time.

This can either be an individual or group assignment that combines research and reporting skills with writing and presentation skills when they ultimately report their findings to the rest of the class.

We would also love to see your high school students competing in our 2018 **KWHS Comment and Win contest**, which runs through the end of August! Check out the [comment thread](#) on the Real-world Learning article for inspiration. You can get all the rules of the competition [here](#) and read more about this year’s [Round 1](#) and [Round 2 winners](#), who have been especially impressive. The more student voices, the better! Round 3 wraps up at midnight on August 10 (storytelling is the theme) and Round 4 begins August 13 (anything goes; they can leave a comment of any kind on any story) and lasts through midnight on August 31. As evidenced thus far by students’ thought-provoking reflections, this is a great way to get teens thinking more deeply about business, finance, entrepreneurship, leadership and career and college prep, expressing their opinions, and adding value to the discussions around KWHS articles.

### **Video Glossary**

Provide an extra layer of learning for your students with our video glossary. Here, Wharton professors define terms: Employer Tuition Assistance, Entrepreneurial, Labor Market and Opportunity Cost.

### **KWHS Quote of the Month**

“Initially, I wasn’t as keen on going to college... I realized that the state-of-the-art in AI research is moving so quickly that the only way to allow me to get there and to have the opportunity to push it forward is to first get my feet in academia.” – *Michael Royzen, Teen App Developer and Incoming Freshman at the University of Texas, Austin*