



Anniversaries and retirement are both times for reflection. For the past year, our organization has been celebrating its 35th anniversary and, as many of you know, at the end of this week, I'm retiring as its Executive Director.

Certainly, my tenure has been but one milestone among many for the Consortium for Public Education, which began with one goal in mind – that all young people, especially those in under-resourced communities – would have the opportunities, experiences, and supports they needed to envision their futures and lead successful lives.

That singular goal is what drew me here and what has guided me since. When I joined the Consortium 15 years ago, I was excited to become part of a group of people who created programs that provided substantive experiences for kids, developed professional supports for educators, connected schools with their communities, and convened diverse groups who could work together for the best of students. The work has continued to evolve and expand across 10 counties and 50+ school districts, with dozens of business and community partners.

Six years ago, when I became Executive Director, our team stepped back, reflected on where we had been and where we wanted to go. We decided our work moving forward would fall under the umbrella of future readiness. We believed strongly that students needed to prepare not just for post-secondary education and careers, but for the lives they wanted to lead. We framed the work with three questions students must ask themselves: *Who am I? Who do I want to become? How do I get there?*

For us, that meant redesigning our programming and building even more connections to the wider community. We count as our greatest achievements the amazing work of students; educators who continually provide students with multiple means to demonstrate their strengths and assets; and an expanding network of business and community partners who provide “real world” knowledge and experiences that students need to become future ready and that educators need to support them.

None of this could have been accomplished without the amazing staff I have had the privilege to work alongside over the years. They are relentless in their commitment to all kids and communities. I leave knowing that this organization will continue to thrive over the next 35 years.

I am eternally grateful for the blessing it has been to know each and every one of you – my colleagues, partners, and friends!

My very best wishes to all of you,

Mary Kay Babyak