



Youth Voices on the Skills That Matter

INTRODUCTION

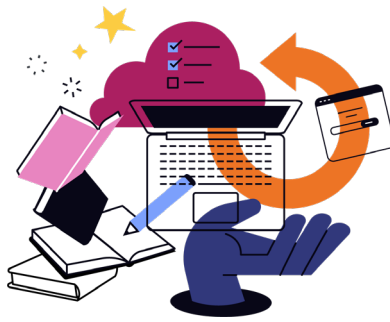
When reDesign released Future9 version 2.0 in early 2025, **we wanted to find out more about the skills that young people value compared to what they've been taught in high school.** We also wanted to **capture a broader picture of life as a 16-24 year old**, including trends in learning and development for their generation.

Our survey synthesis makes **connections between youth perspectives, the essential skill sets in the Future9**, and the **top future-ready skills** identified by college and workforce data. It offers a glimpse into what we heard across a range of young people who shared their experiences in and out of school.

When asked to consider how the competency-based focus of the Future9 might fit into their life, career, and learning pathways, it turns out that **young people aren't asking for less rigor - they're asking for more meaning.** They want the tools to **build deeper connections to self, community, and the world.**

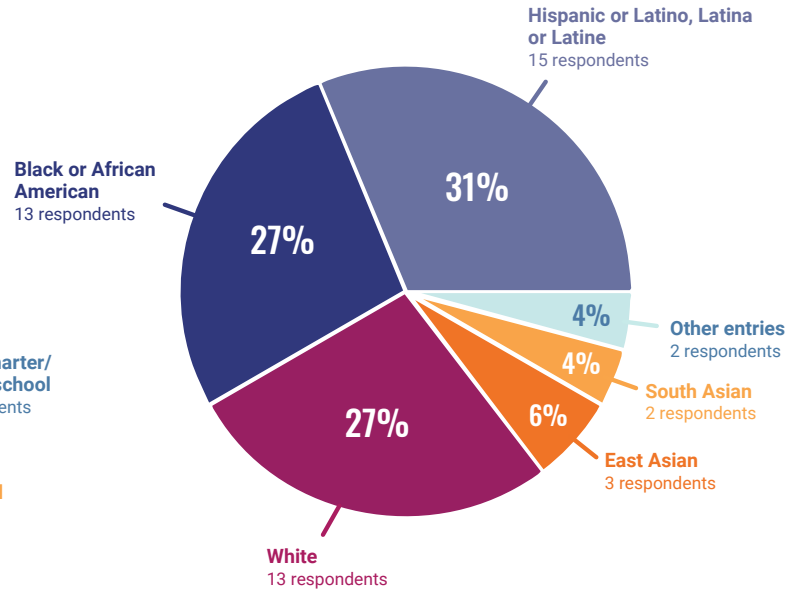
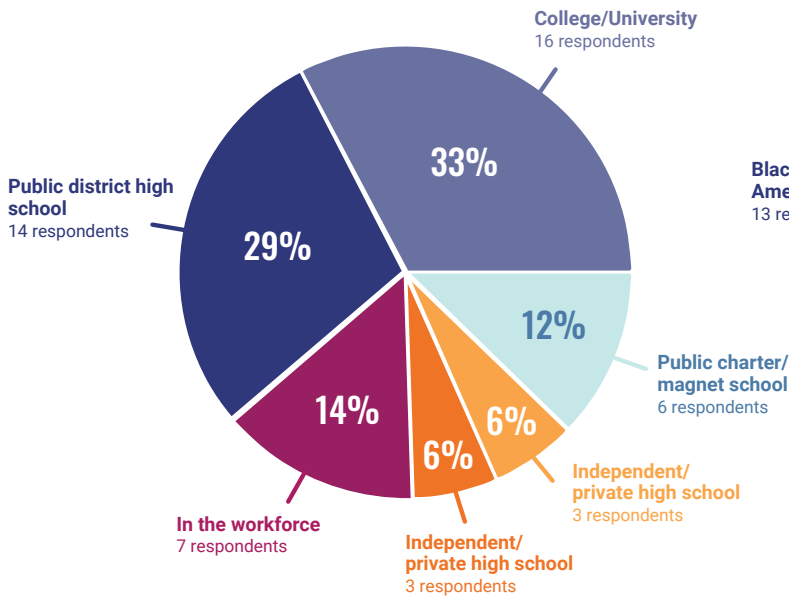
The **Future9** is a **free, open-source framework** with **nine essential future ready skill sets** and **developmental progressions** that can be adopted across K-12.

Learn more about the Future9 Competencies at redesignu.org/future9



The survey offered us a glimpse

into what a **small, diverse group of young people** shared about their **experiences in and out of school.**



YOUTH VOICES ON THE SKILLS THAT MATTER

We asked young people to reflect on **what school prepared them for**—and **what it didn't**. In this short video, they share what they wish they'd learned, and what they need from the adults around them now.

WATCH NOW



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

This generation shines when it comes to **advocacy, pro-activism, and pursuing what they care about:**

Learning That Sparks Joy

60% of youth say they **love what they're learning more than once a week**

87% say it happens **at least once a week**

Hands-On Learning Is Common

76% engage in **hands-on learning at least weekly**

Connected to Community

72% report **regular engagement** with their **community**

Self-Advocacy + Feedback Skills

Respondents are **confident in seeking support, revising their work, and advocating for themselves and others**



“To get really good at **creative inquiry**, I think students greatly benefit from **access to mentors or experts who are approachable**, along with **workshops or hands-on projects** where these skills can be **practiced in a supportive environment.**”

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

So, what should the supportive adults in their lives keep an eye on?

Too much stress

Navigating stress and pressure was the life experience that the highest percentage of respondents reported having more than once a week (**43% more than once a week; 35% at least once a week**).

Lack of Room for Innovation

30% of all respondents **pursue a creative passion less than once a week; 13%** reported that they **rarely or never do so**.

In contrast, **81%** of respondents report **preparing for a test at least once a week** - with college students spending even more time on exam prep than high schoolers.

Inconsistency

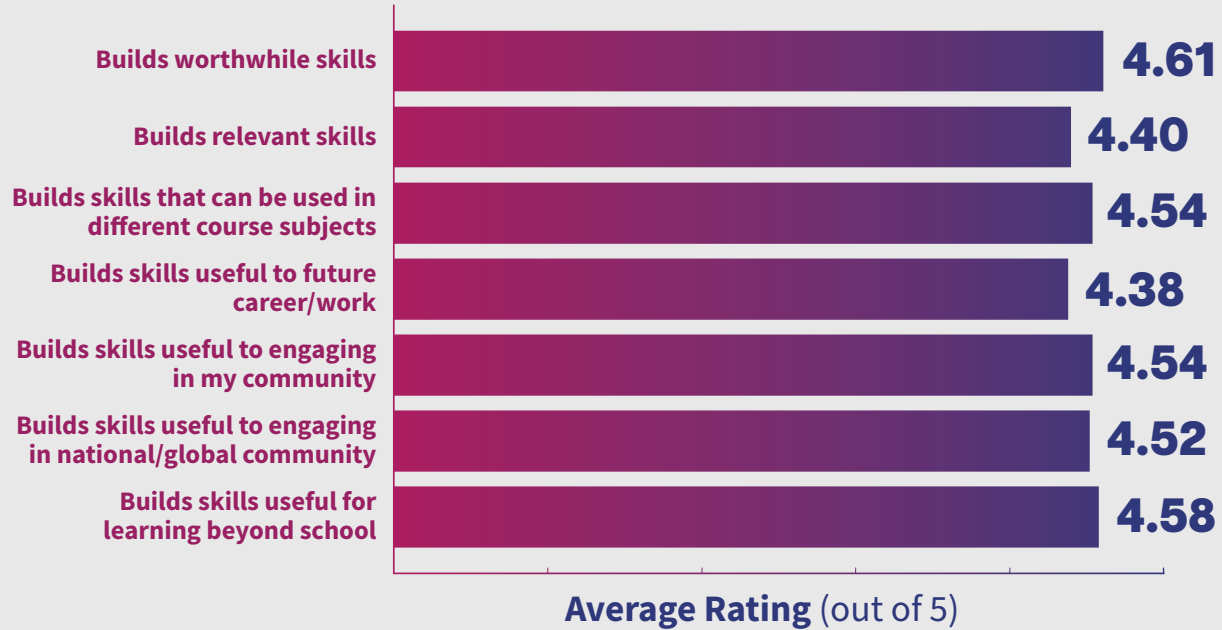
When we asked respondents about the skills they were learning in school, it was clear that worthwhile learning experiences are happening all over the country...but the degree to which key skills are supported varies widely over the course of a young person's education, especially when it comes to social-emotional learning.

There's also variation in experience and access when it comes to tools and technology - **only 52% of respondents indicated that they engage with new technologies like AI at least once a week**.

WHAT SKILLS MATTER TO THEM?

Young people identify the **Future9's competencies** as **essential for thinking and learning across different content areas and contexts**, affirming that they are **worthwhile** and **useful** (scale of 1-5):

YOUTH RATING OF FUTURE9 SKILL BUILDING ATTRIBUTES



Learners were most excited about:



Building community within and beyond school - networking and growing, helping the community locally and through “global collaboration”, “moving through conflict”, and “prioritizing my well-being while being there for other people”.



Improving “future survival and creativity”, the “emphasis on adaptability and innovation”, & “identifying real-world problems, creating prototypes, and testing them to see what works”

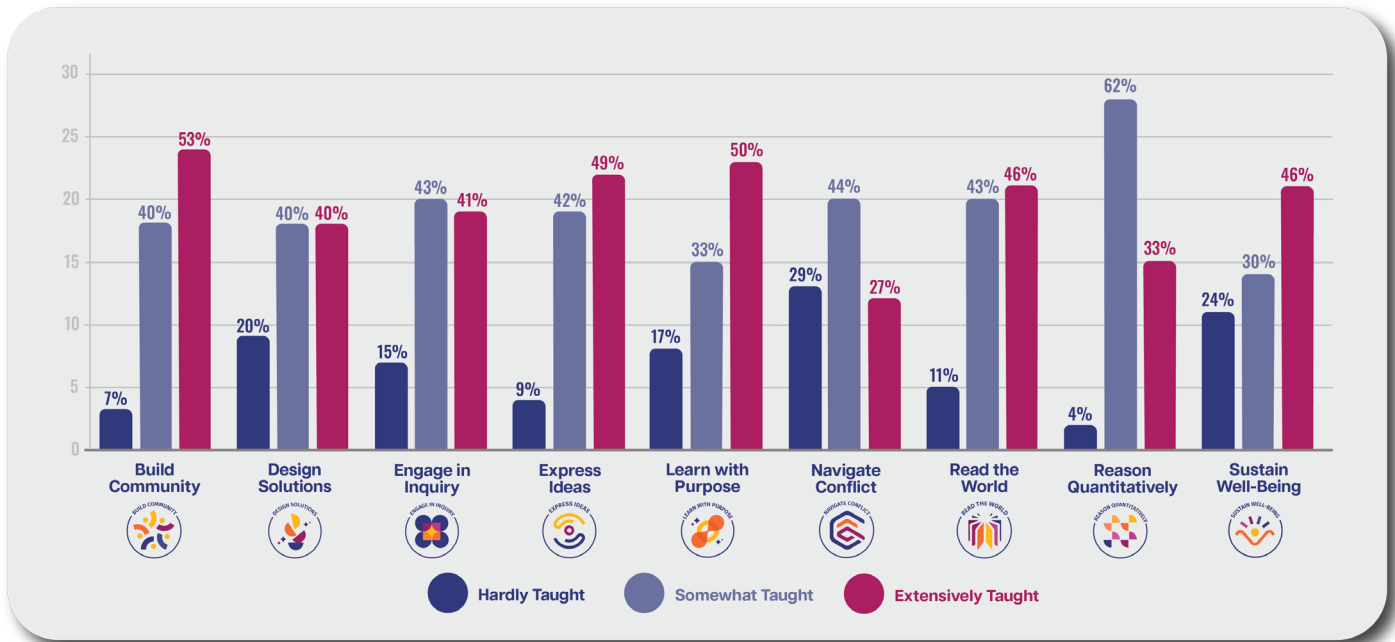


Feeling equipped to “read the world” and go out and explore it, finding relevance to their everyday life as well as different perspectives.

WHAT'S BEING TAUGHT, AND WHAT'S LESS CONSISTENT?

The competencies “**Sustain Well-being**” (24% *hardly taught*) and “**Navigate Conflict**” (29% *hardly taught*) were the *least likely to be taught in high school*. Skill sets with concrete application to traditional academics like “**Express Ideas**” tend to be getting more airtime than holistic developmental needs.

“**Build Community**” (78% *very important*, 53% *extensively taught*) & “**Learn with Purpose**” (78% *very important*, 50% *extensively taught*) were the competencies with the highest “very important” ratings - but *only about half of our sample* reported that associated skill sets around community-building and connection, goal-setting, monitoring, and student-driven reflection on learning were being “extensively taught”.







“I want to leave school with the **ability to think independently, make money independently, and have enough courage.**”

- SURVEY RESPONDENT



The opportunity and the talent are there...

It's clear that young people have incredible assets that they bring to future-ready pathways, including the richness and diversity of their life and learning experiences. Survey responses indicated that:

-  16-24 year olds have already had frequent exposure to key developmental experiences like balancing multiple responsibilities, building relationships with those around them, and considering societal and global issues that go beyond their own perspectives.
-  Work or childcare frequently accompanies high school learning
-  Many young people gain leadership experience and new skills through activities like sports or clubs, indicating that classrooms are not the only place where young people are developing essential skills.
-  42% of all respondents regularly speak multiple languages, highlighting the potential to elevate multilingualism as part of expressing ideas in the world and contributing to a rich workforce and citizenry.

So, how can pivotal adults like educators help young people strengthen their competencies in different settings? **Here's the wish list from these 16-24 year olds when it comes to support:**

- Mentoring and guidance
- Repeated practice
- Making each step clear
- Personalized tools & self-assessments
- Help studying more effectively
- Networking opportunities & internships
- Entrepreneurial training
- Emotional help along with academic
- Opportunities to teach and lead others
- Grace and understanding

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"I've always identified as a "hands-on learner," and I think that to an extent, we all are, so long as we're given room to take up space and grow."

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

WHERE FUTURE9 MEETS THE FUTURE OF WORK

Young people know the world is changing fast—and they’re asking for learning that keeps pace. Future9 was built in response to that urgency, and aligns closely with global research on what skills matter most. This includes the World Economic Forum’s projections for in-demand workplace skills.

Future9 offers a **developmental pathway for young people to grow the capacities that make these future-ready skills possible.**

Core Skills in 2025

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, FUTURE OF JOBS REPORT 2025

- 1 Analytical thinking
- 2 Resilience, flexibility and agility
- 3 Leadership and social influence
- 4 Creative Thinking
- 5 Motivation and self-awareness
- 6 Technology literacy
- 7 Empathy and active listening
- 8 Curiosity and lifelong learning
- 9 Time Management
- 10 Dependability and attention to detail

Top 10 Fastest Growing Skills by 2030

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, FUTURE OF JOBS REPORT 2025

- 1 AI and big data
- 2 Networks and cybersecurity
- 3 Technological literacy
- 4 Creative thinking
- 5 Resilience, flexibility and agility
- 6 Curiosity and lifelong learning
- 7 Leadership and social influence
- 8 Talent management
- 9 Analytical thinking
- 10 Environmental stewardship

Tech may be growing fast—but it’s powered by human competencies.

Future9 doesn’t replicate the lists—it **develops the competencies behind it.**

Use the map below to trace the connections between what the world needs and how learners grow.



