

The Importance of Education

By [Levon Johnson](#)

Chamber President/CEO

This is the fourth of ten consecutive articles that I will be writing covering the most frequent topics I have discussed in the first half of 2019.

It's hard to believe that this week will mark the beginning of the school year for some of our area students, with most students, teachers, and staff having their summer come to a close by the end of next week.

This week isn't so much about a question we get asked but more about a topic we get asked to be involved in, almost more than any other: Education. The involvement takes on the form of joining committees, answering questions, connecting business and education, supporting education or workforce development initiatives.

Your Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce, through its long standing Education Council, has been a strong and continuous supporter of pre-school thru higher education, in all its forms.

Of all of the topics people have discussed during meetings, no matter the focus, there is one thing that is universally and unanimously agreed upon: EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT. Not just a little important. Not kind of important. Not "we don't need to focus on it" important. Education is societally, economically, culturally foundational to our core and community sustaining and growing itself important.

Education questions abound when families are deciding where to live, when businesses are trying to decide where to expand or relocate, when young professionals decide where to work. Realtors understand those facts. Economic development organizations get it. Human resource professionals see it.

Cities, Counties, and Regions are focused on education. In the past six months I have been part of conversations and meetings that revolve around pre-school, k-12 education, higher education, trades education, and certification that allows employees to advance in their careers. Education is a major portion of the workforce development plan that the City of Elkhart is has in its 2040 plan. The very mission of Elkhart County's education connector, Horizon Education Alliance, is lifelong transformational learning. The South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership has as one of its cornerstones, Education and Workforce.

The beauty of all of this is that business leaders, educators, and elected officials are all working together in all of this to ensure that our region provides the right educational opportunities for everyone, ages 3 to as old as you want to continue being educated.

Why is any of this important? For years, it had been common practice that the academic side of the education equation was left to the education professionals and the workplace training was left to the

business community. It's important because in Elkhart County we are seeing the power of change that can happen when Education and Business work together to create clear career pathways and together define what it means to be career and college ready.

Education is so important to the vibrancy of our community, the economic development of our business community, and the retention and attraction of talent in our cities and towns.

As the new school year begins, remember learning never stops.

Have a productive and positive week.