**NAF Be Future Ready Messaging Platform**

**Key Messaging Pillars**

* NAF helps solve some of the biggest challenges in education and our economy by transforming the high school experience.
* The NAF network of career academies offer schools and businesses a proven and sustainable model for working together to make high school students future-ready.
* NAF academies work for all students. They are especially effective for young people who start with the least access to college and careers; those who attend large, urban schools in predominately low-income neighborhoods.
* NAF graduates are future ready because their high school experience was different and they are different.

These key concepts were used to inform a new messaging platform that includes general messaging in a few forms – overview; who we are and what we do; and problem, solution, action.

**Mission**

NAF solves some of the biggest challenges facing education and the economy by bringing education, business, and community leaders together to transform the high school experience.

**Vision**

NAF envisions a world in which all young people have equal opportunity for successful futures.

**Unique Value Proposition**

**Students:** For students who don’t see the connection between high school and the working world, NAF transforms the high school experience by infusing STEM and work-based learning experiences into the curriculum to ensure students graduate and are college, career, and future ready.

**Industry:** For industries struggling to fill positions in their companies with skilled and diverse employees, NAF works with companies to align high school education with future workforce needs, creating a talent pipeline and a pool of future workers.

**Schools:** For schools striving to create better educational environments, NAF supports educators in transforming the high school experience by infusing STEM and work-based learning experiences into the curriculum to ensure students graduate and are college, career, and future ready.

**Boilerplate**

NAF is a national network of education, business, and community leaders who work together to ensure high school students are college, career, and future ready. NAF’s educational design ignites students’ passion for learning and gives businesses the opportunity to shape America’s future workforce by transforming the learning environment to include STEM infused industry-specific curricula and work-based learning experiences, including internships. Since 1982, NAF has been partnering with existing high schools in high-need communities to enhance school systems at a low cost by implementing NAF academies – small learning communities within traditional high schools. NAF has grown from one NAF Academy of Finance in New York City to hundreds of academies across the country focusing on growing industries including: finance, hospitality & tourism, information technology, engineering, and health sciences. During the 2015-16 school year nearly 89,000 students attended 716 NAF academies across 36 states, including DC and the US Virgin Islands. In 2015, NAF academies reported 98% of seniors graduated with 92% of graduates planning to go to college.

**Who We Are**

* NAF is a national network of education, business, and community leaders who work together to support NAF academies and ensure high school students are college, career, and future ready.
  + The NAF Network is dedicated to ensuring young people reach their full potential, regardless of demographics.
  + NAF academies focus on growing industries including finance, information technology, hospitality & tourism, engineering, and health sciences.

**What We Do**

* NAF implements a flexible educational design through public and private partnerships to ensure high school students are future ready.
  + Being future ready is about more than just college and career preparedness. It’s about infusing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills into learning so that our nation’s future leaders can compete in a constantly evolving global market. It’s about building a diverse workforce pipeline with talent who not only have STEM and industry specific skills, but the soft skills and passion necessary to succeed. It’s about giving young people access to a network of professionals who help them realize and reach their full potential.
  + The four elements of NAF’s educational design build on each other to transform the high school experience, engage students, support school and district priorities, and give businesses the opportunity to shape America’s future workforce.
    - Academy Development & Structure
      * NAF works with schools to set up and support NAF academies - small, focused learning communities that provide students with an education that makes learning relevant by exemplifying the connection between school and their future.
      * NAF academies fit within and enhance high school systems, allowing NAF to become an integral part of a plan for higher achievement at low cost.
      * Every school, district, and state operates differently and every student has their own learning style. The NAF academy structure is designed with flexibility in mind to meet specific needs.
      * The NAF academy structure promotes admission that is open to all students, creates a small learning community, and allows for teacher collaboration across subject areas.
    - Advisory Boards
      * NAF enables businesspeople to play an active role in developing their future workforce by shaping talent in high school.
      * Partnerships with local businesses give students the opportunity to build relationships with mentors early and learn from successful adults.
      * Local advisory boards provide a critical bridge to industry by collaborating with educators to inform curricula and provide, identify, and organize work-based learning activities.
    - Curriculum & Instruction
      * The NAF curricula is created in partnership with industry professionals and designed around projects that help students make connections across subject areas, acquire valuable workplace skills, and see their education as a step toward long-term career options.
      * NAF empowers teachers to expand the boundaries of the classroom in non-traditional ways that ensure lessons have real-world application to growing industries.
      * NAF recognizes that STEM is a critical component in all industries; therefore, it is a critical component of all aspects of education. In order to prepare students for the future, NAF integrates STEM throughout the curriculum.
    - Work-Based Learning
      * Work-based learning experiences, including internships, provide students with a well-rounded skill set that goes beyond academics and includes the soft skills needed to succeed in college and the working world.
      * Work-based learning in NAF academies is designed as a continuum of experiences beginning with career awareness activities, progressing to career exploration activities, culminating for career preparation activities, including internships.
      * Work-based learning experiences bring the classroom to the workplace and the workplace to the classroom.
      * Businesspeople guest speak in classrooms, host college and career skills workshops, and take part in mock interviews. Students have the opportunity to tour worksites, network with, and shadow business professionals.
      * Work-based learning culminates in an internship that allows students to apply their classroom skills and learn more about what it takes to succeed.

**Why this is Important**

* In the United States, job forecasts indicate that upwards of 65% of all future employment opportunities will require some post-secondary, be it a 4-year degree, master’s degree or technical or job specific training. Yet we still live in a country where nearly 1 in 5 students don’t graduate from high school.
* Although graduation rates are on the rise overall, minority and low income students are not keeping pace and still have high dropout rates. Low-income students are graduating 14.4 percentage points below the rate for their non-low-income peers.
* As the global economic landscape shifts, Americans continue to fall behind in developing the skills needed to compete in the modern workforce. It is becoming increasingly evident that it is not an employment problem, but an education problem.
* High dropout rates lead to low-wage earning adults.
* Businesses have limited access to a diverse, well-educated, future ready workforce.
* An unprepared workforce hinders America’s ability to compete in a global marketplace.
* When education and business work together, we can close the skills gap and decrease the high school dropout rate.
* The solution lies in bridging the gap between high school education and successful careers by providing young people access to a network of professionals, curriculum applicable to the working world, and work-based learning experiences.
* Academic achievement increases with applied learning opportunities.

**Why NAF**

* Our organization’s history is rooted in the corporate world and our team has experience working in various roles and levels in education, so we understand the complexities of both. With our expertise and experience, we are able to offer a flexible educational design that marries the corporate and education worlds and helps close the skills gap by graduating more college, career, and future ready students.
* We build lasting relationships with districts and companies to achieve maximum and sustainable impact.
* An individual can make a difference in the lives of our future leaders by leveraging the power of the NAF Network.
* The return on investment is high. The majority of NAF students are minorities living below or near the poverty line who don’t have mentors in their lives to ignite their passion for learning or expose them to the vast career opportunities available to them. Schools and companies that work with NAF are able to open countless doors for students who never even knew they existed.
* By working with NAF your company will be at the forefront of workforce development, recruiting diverse talent with a solid foundation in hard and soft skills. In fact, through NAFTrack Certified Hiring, many top global companies have committed to give special consideration to NAFTrack certified graduates.
* By working with NAF your school and district will be at the forefront of graduating college, career, and future ready students. Not only will your graduation rate increase, but your students will be on the path to success. Through NAFTrack Certified Hiring, many top global companies have committed to give special consideration to applicants who are NAFTrack certified.
* NAF graduates are future ready because their high school education is based on over 30 years of experience implementing an ever-evolving educational design that delivers results.
* We are results-oriented and have the data to prove it. NAF regularly collects data from NAF academies to inform our continuous improvement goals.
* NAF is committed to innovation and excellence. We know we can fill the skills gap and help end America’s dropout crisis. And we won’t stop until it’s done.

**Problem**

In the United States, job forecasts indicate that more than 65% of all future employment opportunities will require candidates to have some post-secondary education. Yet we still live in a country where nearly 1 in 5 students don’t graduate from high school. Too many students, especially minorities living below or near the poverty line, are disengaged because they don’t have strong mentors in their lives and they don’t understand the relevance of their high school education. In the meantime, businesses are struggling because they have limited access to a diverse, well educated, and future ready workforce – hindering their ability to compete in a global economic landscape. A staggering one-third of America’s unemployment rate is due to the growing chasm between employee skills and open jobs. While the number of available jobs is increasing, the number of people qualified to fill them is not.

**Solution**

NAF helps solve some of the biggest challenges in education and the economy by transforming the high school experience. Education and business leaders work together to expand the boundaries of the classroom through NAF academies – small, focused learning communities within existing high schools focused on growing industries including finance, hospitality & tourism, information technology, engineering, and health sciences. Through NAF’s flexible educational design, teachers have the platform to be creative and seize learning opportunities as they implement industry-specific curricula. Businesspeople have the ability to shape America’s future workforce at the local and national levels. And, most importantly, students have the chance to reach their full potential.

**Action**

NAF builds lasting relationships with districts and companies to achieve maximum and sustainable impact. We support educators’ efforts in effectively engaging business partners and we connect business partners to a diverse talent pipeline that is eager to learn and develop the hard and soft skills necessary for future success.

NAF works with educators to ensure that our educational design fits in with school, district, and state priorities while still aligning with NAF standards developed by education and business experts for over 30 years.

Regardless of whether a company works with NAF at the local or national level, the return on investment is high. Locally, businesspeople get involved on advisory boards to support NAF academy development, inform curriculum, guest speak in classrooms, participate in job shadows, provide internships, and more. NAF students graduate motivated to succeed and with a foundation grounded in the core STEM, career-specific, and soft skills. Many companies also work at the national level. Through NAFTrack Certified Hiring, top global companies have committed to giving special consideration to NAFTrack certified graduates.