Georgia Employability Skills Task Force Recommendations

"It's our goal to ensure that every single Georgia student graduates prepared—not just for higher education, should they choose to pursue it, but also for a meaningful career in the field of their choice. For that reason, employability skills are a matter of importance for every Georgia student, every Georgia educator, and every Georgia business. Working together, we can make sure each student who graduates from a Georgia high school is equipped for a successful future."

-Richard Woods,
Georgia School Superintendent

GaDOE
Georgia Department of Education

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEFINITION:

Employability skills—also known as work ethic, soft skills, lifelong learning skills, workplace readiness skills, or 21st century skills—refers to the general skills and knowledge that are necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors.

"We need self-motivated, initiative-driven, problem-solving professionals communicating across all audiences of our organization and clients."

-Rob Collins
Founder and CEO, NEOS Technologies, Inc.
Albany, Georgia

"Employability skills, like punctuality, integrity and strong communication skills, separate good workers from good employees. In an industry where differentiation is critical to reputation, those who present themselves with these skills have a clear advantage in getting hired."

-Ellis Lowe, SHRM-SCP
Human Resource Manager, Estes Services, Atlanta, Georgia

Some employers call it work ethic; some call it soft skills, and others call it employability skills. Regardless of the term used, employers have a need for young workers with these skills. According to Georgia's business and industry representatives, the number one reason potential candidates are hired is the same reason employees are fired—soft skills. Employers often voice their concern for improved soft skills in the workplace. Their voices are stronger, louder, and more demanding.

- **Rayonier in 2014**: "We need those soft skills. We need people who are collaborative, who have the ability to communicate both verbally and through written form. I need craftsmen that can craft an e-mail."

- **Georgia-Pacific in 2016**: "Soft skills are a consistent theme in workforce needs. It is more than just showing up to work on time but also how you work on a team. The technical competencies are important, but one person can't save an organization. Employees must work as a team to succeed."

- **Pratt & Whitney in 2017**: "Pratt & Whitney looks for these characteristics in entry level workers: work ethic, follow directions, attitude, team player, get along with people, pay attention to detail, etc. At first we thought mechanical skills and math skills would be most important."

Over time Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) educators have implemented these and other initiatives to improve work ethic: employability skills in every CTAE course, mock interviews, soft skills seminars, young leader functions, soft skills contests, ethics trainings, employability toolkits, and leadership trainings. The lack of soft skills problem is bigger than high school CTAE students, thus a soft skills task force was formed to address this problem.

The work of the Employability Skills Task Force is evidence that Georgia CTAE is listening and responding to business & industry. Overall, the findings from the Soft Skills Task Force can serve as the catalyst for pre-K through postsecondary education to implement strategies targeted to improve the employability skills of all students, not just CTAE students.

Barbara M. Wall, Ed.D.
Director of Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education

"Our communities and employers are being extremely clear in identifying the skills the future workforce needs in order to be successful. Universal employability and soft skills are consistently at the forefront. The Georgia Department of Education's Employability Skills Task Force has done an excellent job of articulating recommendations, goals and strategies to address those skills. What are we going to do to ensure all of Georgia's students are prepared for the world that awaits them?"

-Will Schofield,
Superintendent of Hall County Schools

GEORGIA EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The Georgia Department of Education would like to formally recognize and thank all the individuals who contributed their time and expertise to the work of the Georgia Employability Skills Task Force. This work has been a collaborative effort that would not have been possible without the participation and insights from leaders across the state.

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EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOALS

The Employability Skills Task Force crafted three overarching recommendations and eight goals. The recommendations and goals are listed below. For each of the goals, the group also drafted implementation strategies for key stakeholders. The strategies identified for each of the stakeholders are listed on subsequent pages.

1. Integrate employability skills into curriculum and learning experiences from prekindergarten through postsecondary education.

    a. *Engage stakeholders in developing plans and strategies for integrating employability skills for **all students** into instruction across **all disciplines**.*

    b. ***Identify measures and indicators*** *of employability skills development and incorporate them into state, local, and school accountability systems, such as the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).*

    c. ***Engage the community in creating and implementing a plan*** *that promotes a common understanding of employability skills and their value for students.*

2. Support educators and other stakeholders in developing employability skills instruction.

    a. *Introduce and strengthen **professional development on employability skills** throughout the educator career continuum.*

    b. *Support district and school leaders, such as superintendents, district leaders, principals, assistant principals, school leaders, school counselors, academic chairs, and CTAE leaders in **making employability skills instruction a priority** within and across schools.*

    c. ***Provide sufficient resources*** *to classroom educators, including funding and technical assistance for implementing employability skills.*

3. Develop deeper and stronger relationships between industry and education to enhance student, teacher, and mentor roles in quality work-based learning and career development opportunities.

    a. ***Increase the number of students exposed*** *to meaningful career readiness experiences, including work-based learning and educator externships.*

    b. ***Increase students' access to industry experts*** *across grades and subjects.*

STAKEHOLDERS

STATE
Staff from multiple offices across the state departments, including at a minimum the departments of education and labor

INDUSTRY
Leaders or liaisons from groups of businesses and companies working in the same field as well as their representatives in local and state chambers of commerce, roundtables, associations, and other organizations

HIGHER EDUCATION
Deans and professors from two- and four-year colleges, universities, and postsecondary training institutions

POLICYMAKER
State legislators and members of state boards

DISTRICT
Key leaders from a school district or network of schools responsible for making local decisions about policies, funding, staffing, and infrastructure

PRINCIPAL
School leaders, especially for middle and high schools

1 Integrate employability skills into curriculum and learning experiences from prekindergarten through postsecondary education.

Goal
*1. Engage stakeholders in developing plans and strategies for integrating employability skills for **all students** into instruction across **all disciplines**.*

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Develop and execute a vision for coordinating state employability skills efforts across divisions within the GaDOE. • Convene a group of interventionists, special educators, ELL instructors, and other experts to identify specific supports for diverse learners. • Create clear guidance for and indicators of what constitutes appropriate employability skills development for students at all ages and grade levels. • Convene a stakeholder group to review, revise, and implement academic standards that integrate employability skills. • Re-evaluate CTAE Standard 1 and align it with the OCTAE Employability Skills Framework.
	• Inventory available learning experiences aligned to employability skills development and identify gaps for specific students. • Survey students and teachers about their employability skills development to inform ongoing program development and refinement. • Involve stakeholders in developing the scope and sequence of the curriculum to integrate employability skills.
	• Recognize, publicize, and reward educators who successfully incorporate and model employability skills.

Goal
*2. **Identify measures and indicators** of employability skills development and incorporate them into state, local, and school accountability systems, such as the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).*

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Strengthen existing CCRPI indicators in the state accountability system. • Add additional CCRPI indicators related to employability skills across all grade levels. • Develop guidance or recommendations on the quality of local implementation plans. • Communicate changes to CCRPI to key stakeholders including superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and students.

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Collect and analyze data regarding student participation in career development and employability skills activities (e.g., job shadowing, career fairs, guest speakers, field trips, mock interviews, CTSO participation and achievements, entrepreneurship projects). • Develop a local strategy for implementing the state's employability skills diploma seal, including which programs are appropriate and for which students.

Goal

3. ***Engage the community in creating and implementing a plan*** *that promotes a common understanding of employability skills and their value for students.*

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Develop guidance for supporting districts in coordinating employability skills efforts across different stakeholders. • Establish a public relations campaign (e.g., town hall meetings, print, television, and social media opportunities) to promote employability skills for all students. • Use relationships with state chambers of commerce, PTAs, and other organizations to build buy-in and understanding around the importance of (and transferability of) employability skills.
	• Include employability skills in promotion of job opportunities and outreach.
	• Create professional development opportunities for educators to coordinate employability skills efforts with outside stakeholders. • Formalize relationships and partnerships with postsecondary institutions, advisory boards, and local businesses to coordinate employability skills initiatives and support systems. • Engage current and former students in validating important employability skills as they transition from secondary education to postsecondary education and the workforce.
	• Create outreach materials for elementary and middle school families to promote CTSO and CTAE opportunities, including their connections to positive student outcomes. • Implement a public relations campaign (town hall meetings, print, television, and social media opportunities) to promote employability skills for all students.

Abbreviations: CTAE = Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education; CTSO = Career and Technical Student Organizations; ELL = English Language Learner; GaDOE = Georgia Department of Education; OCTAE = Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education; PTA = Parent-Teacher Association.

2 Support educators and other stakeholders in developing employability skills instruction.

Goal	
1. Introduce and strengthen **professional development on employability skills** throughout the educator career continuum.	

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Require educators to have some preparation (e.g., coursework or applied learning experiences) related to employability skills for their initial and renewable teaching licenses. • Create professional learning modules on employability skills for educators and staff in prekindergarten through postsecondary education. • Develop guidance and provide support to assist local school systems in coordinating cross-stakeholder efforts.
	• Coordinate cross-subject area professional learning communication collaborations to allow educators to discuss ideas and resources. • Offer induction support for new teachers that focuses on developing employability skills. • Develop strategies (e.g., professional development, resource sharing, co-teaching opportunities) to support instructors in integrating employability skills into classroom instruction. • Provide materials and professional development to help CTAE teachers incorporate CTSO activities into their classroom instruction.
	• Incorporate employability skills into coursework for educator preparation programs, including teacher, counselor, and administrator preparation programs (for example, the USG Teacher Preparation program). • Provide guidance and support on developing employability skills for staff that supervise student teachers.

Goal	
2. Support district and school leaders, such as superintendents, district leaders, principals, assistant principals, school leaders, school counselors, academic chairs, and CTAE leaders in **making employability skills instruction a priority** within and across schools.	

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Develop and provide cross- or co-curricular professional development and professional learning modules on the employability skills framework for educators in prekindergarten through postsecondary education. • Create clear guidance on expectations for school staff member roles in supporting and promoting employability skills development.

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Provide funding and support for schools and districts willing to join a state-led employability skills implementation initiative. • Create opportunities for work-based learning with business and industry to provide paid internships or work experiences for students that successfully complete activities related to employability skills development. • Incentivize schools and districts to strengthen, amplify, and increase opportunities for students of all ages to develop employability skills.
	• Integrate employability skills across district initiatives.
	• Create agreements with school districts and/or GaDOE that would give benefits and advantages to students who have participated in employability skills development opportunities.

Goal
3. **Provide sufficient resources** to classroom educators, including funding and technical assistance for implementing employability skills.

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Include employability skills resources in school counselor initiatives and SLDS data. • Provide opportunities for interagency resource sharing (for example, with the Department of Labor, Technical College System of Georgia, USG, Department of Education, businesses, and local education agencies). • Create a clearinghouse website that identifies employability skills tools and resources that are available to educators and how these resources can be accessed. • Crosswalk academic standards and common instructional strategies with employability skills in all grades and subjects from prekindergarten through postsecondary. • Clarify expectations for instruction around employability skills in teaching standards and teacher evaluation measures. • Provide guidance and support for assessing students' development of employability skills across all grades and subjects from prekindergarten through postsecondary.
	• Allocate funding for employability skills supports. • Include sufficient time for implementing these activities and supports in rules, regulations, and requirements (as applicable).

Abbreviations: CTAE = Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education; CTSO = Career and Technical Student Organizations; GaDOE = Georgia Department of Education; SLDS = state longitudinal data systems; USG = University System of Georgia.
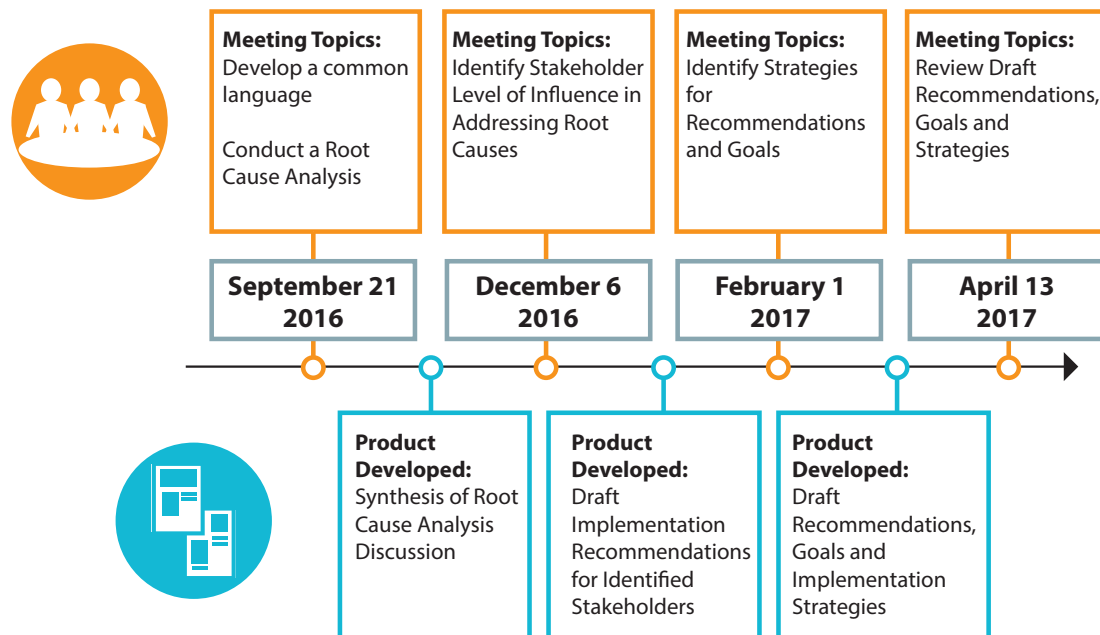
3 **Develop deeper and stronger relationships between industry and education to enhance student, teacher, and mentor roles in quality work-based learning and career development opportunities.**

Goal
1. ***Increase the number of students exposed*** *to meaningful career readiness experiences, including work-based learning and educator externships.*

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Revise the GaDOE Work-Based Learning Manual to include Employability Skills Task Force Recommendations and Goals. • Hire a full-time career coach to support every school in the state. • Support local high schools in converting their part-time work-based learning coordinators to full-time work-based learning coordinators. • Incentivize project-based learning approaches that also promote employability skills development across all grades and subjects. • Identify and secure funding to pay for teacher externships. • Support 3 days of professional development for local school systems for educator externships during the school year.
	• Develop a framework that defines a continuum of meaningful career readiness experiences. • Educate parents, schools, and community organizations about work-based learning. • Explore alternative work-based learning options to overcome transportation issues or age requirements. • Expand opportunities for students to develop employability skills and career readiness experiences beyond work-based learning, including career exploration and project-based learning, across all grade levels. • Identify integrated learning experiences that allow students to combine academic, technical, and employability skills learning.
	• Create awareness in the business community concerning the need for educator externships.
	• Lead the process for matching career readiness education experiences to each students' career pathway.

Goal
2. ***Increase students' access to industry experts*** *across grades and subjects.*

Stakeholders	Potential Strategies, Approaches, and Action Items
	• Use the Professional Standards Commission licensing option/permit to bring in industry experts to provide instruction relevant to academic, technical, and employability skills. • Work with stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce to develop educational partnerships. • Build relationships between HR departments at major companies and education leaders to stay abreast of workforce needs, including employability skills.
	• Develop a "sales training" to help work-based learning coordinators approach and interact with businesses.

Abbreviations: GaDOE = Georgia Department of Education; HR = human resources.

GEORGIA EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TASK FORCE MEETINGS

To develop the draft recommendations, goals and strategies, the Employability Skills Task Force met in person four times between September 21, 2016, and April 13, 2017. The in-person meetings were collaboratively planned by the Georgia Department of Education and representatives from two federally funded centers, the College and Career Readiness and Success Center and the Southeast Comprehensive Center. Below is a brief description of the topics of each meeting and the products developed.

Meeting Topics: Develop a common language

Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

Meeting Topics: Identify Stakeholder Level of Influence in Addressing Root Causes

Meeting Topics: Identify Strategies for Recommendations and Goals

Meeting Topics: Review Draft Recommendations, Goals and Strategies

| September 21 2016 | December 6 2016 | February 1 2017 | April 13 2017 |

Product Developed: Synthesis of Root Cause Analysis Discussion

Product Developed: Draft Implementation Recommendations for Identified Stakeholders

Product Developed: Draft Recommendations, Goals and Implementation Strategies

"Georgia's Career Pathways programs provide our students with the technical skills they need to be successful in the workplace when they exit high school but that is no longer enough. For any student to be successful in the modern workplace they must have the personal and relationship skills that will enable them to integrate into the workplace. Employability skills coupled with the technical knowledge and skills gained through Career Pathways provides Georgia's students with the maximum chance for success as they enter the workforce."

-Dr. Jimmy Stokes,
Executive Director, Georgia Association of Educational Leaders

"Manufacturing businesses are always working to beat their competitors in capturing waves of increased consumer demand. With the speed that the world is moving today, the period of time from recognizing a wave of demand and increasing production has become very short. The pipeline of resources has to begin flowing almost immediately, and one of the most important resources are skilled employees. With technology, globalization, and quicker more efficient transportation, it has become very easy to obtain raw materials and components. The race has now become who is the fastest to procure talented resources to transform those materials into a product."

-Mike Holman,
 Plant Manager, Baldor
Flowery Branch, Georgia

Georgia Department of Education

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at American Institutes for Research ■

**COLLEGE & CAREER
READINESS & SUCCESS** Center
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