

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School

Morehead State University

May 31, 2023

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Abstract of Capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
Ernst and Sara Lane Volgenau College of Education
At Morehead State University

By

Jerry Jay Cloud

Lancaster, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. L. Jeannie Justice, Associate Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

May 31, 2023

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For many students, life after high school means jumping into the workforce. However, getting—and keeping—a job requires a specific set of skills, and most students enter the world of work with little understanding of what will be expected of them. Schools are ill-equipped to help them because employability skills are not part of the traditional curriculum. Instead, emphasis has been placed on transitioning students to post-secondary education, while very little has been done to help students transition to the workforce. Schools focus on teaching students hard skills, but, in general, they do not help students learn how to apply that knowledge after graduation. This capstone sought to address this gap by developing tools to help teachers integrate employability skills into their classroom content. An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum breaks down the process of integrating employability skills into four steps: identify, connect, develop, and evaluate. The Guide organizes over 40 different employability skills and categorizes them into six areas: critical thinking, communication, stewardship, technology, personal skills, and collaborator. Teachers can access the Guide on a website created as part of this capstone to help them work through the four steps of embedding employability skills into their curriculum. Corresponding worksheets were also created for this capstone that walks teachers through the process. The tools created as part of this capstone will help teachers focus on the skills students need to successfully transition from school to the real world of work. This is not a wholesale

educational change, but it is something new for staff to factor in as they think about the way they deliver feedback to students.

KEYWORDS: graduates, job skills, employability skills, curriculum

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DEDICATION

Personal Dedication

I dedicate this capstone project to my family, who have supported me throughout this process. I have spent many nights and early mornings sitting in front of the computer, reading, and typing, while completing assignments. My family picked up the slack around the farm to allow me time to work on chasing my dream of having a doctorate. My wife, Amy, has been my cheerleader in all my endeavors. From automobile racing to flying to showing horses to my continued professional growth as an educator, Amy has supported me. The maxim, “behind every good man is a great woman,” definitely applies to my wife, Amy Cloud. Thank you for everything you have done to get me to this point.

To my kids, Kendall and Houston, thank you for the making the sacrifices you have made to allow me to pursue this doctorate. From missed ballgames and band activities to not being mentally present when we were together, I hope you understand that I know what you gave up as I pursued this advanced degree. I also hope, in the process, I have demonstrated perseverance in a way that you will understand and appreciate as you start chasing your own goals. Both of you know my educational struggles as I started out at Murray State. So, I hope you both understand that I have obtained all my degrees not because I am the smartest guy, but because I didn't give up. I put in the time needed to do the work, (and often redo the work), in order to get to this point. As much as I am proud of your accomplishments, I hope you are just as proud of “your old man”. Love my Cloud Crew.

I must also dedicate this capstone to my students, who taught me more than any class could teach me in my 20 plus years in the classroom. You have helped me understand why employability skills are important. Initially, I thought that helping you develop hard skills in my classroom was my primary responsibility as an educator. However, I saw you struggle to find a purpose in the real world because you did not have all the skills needed to get and keep jobs. That is when I realized I needed to modify my teaching philosophy. Thank you for showing me the way to this project.

My last personal dedication is to Ed Brand, my father-in-law. Being a former principal and lifelong learner, you understand how important it is for teachers to also be lifelong learners. When I started on my first master's degree, you were there to give me support in a way that not many could because you had been in my shoes. You knew how difficult it can be to balance teaching (work), home life, and school at the same time. You understood the compromise it takes to accomplish it all, and you were willing to help with whatever was needed. Thank you for the days you helped with the kids, or when you were just there to talk about how things were going. I hope I am as energetic as you are when I am your age. Thanks, Ed.

Professional Dedication

I must give a shout out to Dr. Ron Chi for validating what I was seeing in my students. When I first met Dr. Chi, I was intrigued by his insights about giving kids the skills they need to be successful in getting jobs. He was the first person I knew who was surfacing the importance of employability skills. The more I listened, the more I

started connecting the dots with what I was seeing in my students. Since then, Dr. Chi has been a professional mentor and supporter in my educational career. From his roles at The Learning Center, Kentucky State University, Berea Independent, and Fayette County Schools, you have always made time to talk to me about my professional goals. Dr. Chi, thank you for your guidance.

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The educational staff of the Doctoral Program at Morehead State University has worked hard to help me get me to this point. I started this program in 2020, not knowing how the next three years would change our lives. COVID changed everything in such a drastic way that I am not even sure we know the full extent of what has happened. Dr. L. Jeannie Justice, Dr. Michael W. Kessinger, Dr. Fujuan Tan, Dr. Stacie A. Slusher, Dr. Christopher T. Miller, and Dr. Daryl R. Privott, thank you for everything you have done to modify the program to keep it going through this dark time in our history. Without your willingness to work through the barriers and find ways to proactively address challenges, the doctoral program would not have survived.

Next, I would like to acknowledge my family at the Kentucky School for the Deaf. Kristy Blevins, Sandy Smock, and Mandy Byrne: The three of you have listened to me talk about employability skills when I didn't even know what they were. We knew there was a need to help our students find the jobs they needed to become independent adults, but we didn't know a term like "employability skills" existed. I thank you for being there as I worked through the early stages of learning and embedding employability skills in my work. When I decided to pursue my doctoral degree and focus my capstone project on employability skills, you were supportive and gave me the initial momentum I needed to get going. Family will always support you because they love you and will stand behind you in your endeavors. There is a different kind of support one gets when you feel your

colleagues are behind you. Your support of this project was much appreciated. Love you guys.

To Mr. Robert Gunn, the man who taught me that it was ok to tell a student you loved them. Mr. Gunn, I appreciate all the support you have given me in my professional career and in my pursuit of the doctoral degree. I appreciate your willingness to discuss employability skills and the need to embed them in our curriculum. When you said, "Mr. Cloud. I get what you mean about employability skills, now that I am talking to employers," it meant the world to me. I miss having our professional careers overlap, but I trust I can call you at any time and you would be willing to brainstorm about things with me. Love you, man.

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Executive Summary

What is the core of the capstone?

This capstone was intended to help schools prepare students to join the workforce with sustainable employability skills by embedding them in a teacher's existing curriculum. The end result of this capstone is a website called An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum and downloadable worksheets, introducing teachers to how they can implement employability skills in their curriculum.

For this capstone project, I grouped employability skills into six main categories: Critical Thinker, Communicator, Stewardship, Technology, Personal Skills, and Collaborator. After researching different categories of Employability Skills, these are the ones I decided to use. Simply giving students' hard skills without teaching employability, or "soft" skills is not enough to help them get—and keep—a job after graduation. Schools help students become aware of available career options and provide educational hard skills but fail to factor in employability skills. Trusty et al. (2005) explain that the educational and career choices middle school students make have a lasting impact. Schools focus on helping students plan for life after school but, in many situations, the focus of early planning is more about the school's reputation than the future of the student.

In addition, Trusty et al. (2005) pointed out that counselors emphasized the importance of career planning to include math and science classes, but very little about employability skills. Students begin to establish habits in middle school that

will likely stay with them in the future. Early introduction of employability skills can help them become a successful employee.

Table 1 and Table 2 define key terms related to this project. Early introduction of these terms is included to help the reader understand how the terms have been applied in this context. This capstone groups employability skills into six different categories that will be referenced throughout the project. Table 1 lists the six areas, as well as a brief definition as it pertains to this project. Table 2 lists additional terms and acronyms along with definitions to help the reader connect how they are used within the context of this capstone.

Table 1

Six Categories of Employability Skills

Employability Skill Area	Meaning
Critical Thinking	Applying one’s thinking skill to a goal (Hitchcock, 2022).
Communicator	A person who relays knowledge or information (Merriam-Webster, 2023).
Stewardship	A person who displays responsible management of something entrusted to them (Merriam-Webster, 2023).
Technology	Devices such as phones, computers, tables not issued or under the control of a school or workplace.
Personal Skills	Person’s attributes or traits that relate to social interaction in a variety of ways (Zane, 2023).
Collaborator	A person who works with another person or group (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

Note. The six categories of employability skills were partly derived from the framework established by The Perkins Collaborative Research Network (PCRN: Employability skills, n.d.).

Table 2*Definitions of Terms or Phrases Used in the Project*

Term or Acronym	Meaning
PBIS	Positive Behavior Interventions and Support – a term used in the school setting.
Teacher Externship	Teachers shadow people working in other jobs to learn how their content is being used in the real world.
PLC	Professional Learning Committee
PD	Professional Development
Implementing	The act of putting into practice
Embedding	To surround or immerse
Student Examples	Activities or methods student may use to demonstrate an employability skill.
Motto	The way a school brands its values.
Creed	A phrase or chant used to inspire or motivate students, commonly presented in acronym format.

The Guide developed for this capstone is designed to help teachers use employability skills in the classroom in order to close the gap between hard and soft skills. Teachers are presented with a four-step process to help them find their own way of embedding employability skills in their existing curriculum. An Educator’s Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum explains employability skills and helps teachers identify a focused set of employability skills, identify ways to embed them, and strategies for offering feedback to students on working to improve those skills. The Guide encourages teachers to think about how

they can modify their dialogue with students in a way that will expose students to employability skills they can model in every course. Teachers are encouraged to use existing school initiatives such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), school mottos, or creeds to build familiarity with employability skills and help foster conversations with students regarding employability skills.

Using existing material makes it easier for students to connect employability skills with familiar school language. Most schools have acronyms developed by students and staff to help define their school's core values. These acronyms are conveyed through a PBIS, school motto, or creed. For example, a school with a mascot of a bear may use PRIDE as an acronym for its core values, where each letter represents a different trait or behavior, they want students to demonstrate or possess. Schools use these acronyms to brand themselves. They can be found on everything from t-shirts to murals. These visual prompts are reminders that P stands for Positive attitude at school and in work; R stands for respect at school and in the workplace; and so forth with the remaining letters. These existing acronyms can also be connected to specific employability skills that a teacher wants to cultivate.

Who is the capstone meant to impact?

When students are fully prepared to successfully transition from school into the workforce, the impact will have a broad ripple effect, stretching from their job to the community. Ultimately, this capstone is intended to have the greatest impact on students because they are the end users of all school programs. Helping students expand their employability skills can prepare them to be ready for the workforce and

life beyond school. Next, teachers can be impacted as they work to identify the employability skills they wish to promote and embed them into their existing curriculum. Others that can be impacted when the tools developed in this capstone are implemented include schools, school systems, families, businesses, and communities.

Teachers can be directly impacted because they will need to be open to the idea that just a few adjustments in how they discuss things in class can have as much, if not more, impact on the future of their students as the content of their curriculum. Students who are effective communicators and collaborators are more rewarding to teach. The Guide may help teachers establish a progressive classroom environment. When teachers see student behavior and performance improve in the classroom as they emphasize employability skills, they will create a more effective and satisfying learning and teaching environment.

Employability skills and progressive education should work together hand in hand. A positive impact could be felt at the school-level if grading systems incorporate the evaluation piece of the Guide in student assessments. Guskey (2021) makes a case for using two types of grading systems in our school systems: one for employability skills and one for hard skills. If standards-based grading replaces traditional grading systems, then employability skills would be needed to evaluate the way in which students apply those hard skills. *An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum* provides a crucial first step in training teachers on evaluating these skills.

School systems can be impacted because they will be acknowledged for their effort to close the gap between high school graduates entering the local workforce and available jobs. When students graduate and transition into a position that gives them a sense of purpose, the school has fulfilled one of its many roles. The Guide could also help school systems develop more partnerships with local businesses and larger employers. For example, human resource managers could come in and educate staff on the employability status of high school graduates from their perspective.

The number one goal of the Guide is to teach students the employability skills that employers say are missing in the pool of job candidates they have to work with. For example, Kevin Smith, Vice President of Beam Suntory in Kentucky and an active advocate in local workforce development projects, is very concerned about the future of the workforce in his area because of the lack of employability skills in the people available to hire (K. Smith, personal communication, January 15, 2021). According to Mr. Smith, recent graduates struggle to communicate with other adults in a way that is appropriate for the workplace. From Mr. Smith's perspective, recent graduates rarely engage in on-boarding training, struggle to understand the job responsibilities, and generally have to be re-trained. As Mr. Smith stated: "They often are not listening or engaged in the training we provide... They need to be able to think about the goal of the job and problem solve." These experiences make companies cautious in hiring recent high school graduates.

Businesses play a significant role in keeping a community afloat. When employers are not able to hire suitable candidates for vacant jobs, businesses start to

look elsewhere to operate. Losing businesses to other areas directly impacts the community. The Guide can be a step forward in showing the local community how their schools are addressing every aspect of effectively preparing graduates to enter the workforce, thereby shoring up the local economy. By helping teachers develop the tools they need to cultivate use of employability skills in their classrooms, schools are trying to help address issues expressed by employers in their community.

Students need to know all the skills employers are looking for after they graduate. Introducing, using, and giving feedback on use of employability skills while students are still in the classroom helps them make improvements in how they demonstrate those skills in a safe and familiar setting. Teachers can explain what employability skills are specifically, and how to use them in day-to-day interactions. When schools make intentional efforts to address the gaps that local hiring agents have identified as a reason graduates struggle to find sustainable employment, schools increase their value to the local community.

How will the capstone project be implemented?

Although implementation isn't required for the purpose of this capstone, An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum capstone project resulted in a website with an easy-to-follow implementation plan, practical examples, and an evaluation rubric. All have been developed as part of this capstone. The Guide is meant to help high school teachers embed employability skills alongside hard skills in their curriculum. Teachers following the four-step process will develop techniques to help them identify employability skills that align with their

content, develop classroom dialogue, and provide student feedback. These tools can be introduced to teachers in a professional development meeting, professional learning committee, or on an individual basis. Best practices would be an introduction in a professional development or a professional learning committee setting because these collaborations allow for open discussions. Teachers can work through the four steps together and develop an evaluation tool that would be consistent for students across those teacher learning groups. If not in group settings, the Guide can be used as a self-paced learning with activities and examples to help teachers implement the four steps.

The effectiveness of An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum depends in part on the effort school administrators invest in the Guide's introduction, time for development, and follow through. While this is not a wholesale educational change, it is something new for staff to factor in as they think about the way they deliver feedback to students. As Grogan (2013) summarizes, for any new thing to be successful the principal's involvement is crucial. Use of the Guide will only be as successful as the culture of the school will allow. Upfront planning by school leaders for introducing and monitoring of use of the Guide is critical to its success.

Professional Development

An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum is best used in a professional development (PD) setting where collaboration can be used to build staff consensus. This may generate a conversation

between colleagues on the importance of a balanced skills curriculum. Introducing the Guide in a PD session should include an element of real-world urgency. For example, human resource (HR) managers could attend a PD session to share what they are experiencing with hiring and retaining recent high school graduates. In my experience, their perspective would encourage buy-in and motivation among teachers to put intentional focus on employability skills while they teach their curriculum.

In a PD setting, involving HR managers also signals that they are there to help teachers develop employability skills in students. This could result in a team of educators and professionals working together to improve the chances for graduates transitioning into the world of work. Grogan (2013) puts emphasis on building teams as a way of increasing the intelligence of the group. Bringing in outside experts like HR managers and business owners sets this team approach in motion.

One problem that must be overcome is that, in general, education staff do not recognize there is a problem when students transition out of the classroom. The assumption is that most young people have the basic skills needed to find and keep a job. Having outside experts discuss the problem with faculty draws attention to the issue and promotes discussion on how to improve. All teachers want to know they have had a role in the success of a student after graduation, and focusing on employability skills is a step in that direction. When professionals from the community explain what they see as a problem, the message holds more weight than a conversation with internal staff during a faculty meeting.

After teachers understand what the Guide is and why it matters, they can access the website. There they will find the four steps, examples, activities and worksheets to help teachers with the implementing process. The website is accompanied by worksheets that can help teachers work through the steps, either in a group or individually. The four steps are: identify employability skills, connect those skills to an existing school value statement, develop an authentic way to talk about employability skills, and use a tool to evaluate effective use of the skills with students.

The Guide should not be introduced as a new directive or something non-negotiable, but as something a teacher can potentially embed in what they currently do in their classroom. If the Guide is being introduced to the staff as recommended, teachers can see there is a need to put more focus on something they may already do in their classrooms. Teachers should leave the PD session feeling like they can help advance their students' use of employability skills in their own way.

Identify Employability Skills

After buy-in has been established, teachers identify the employability skills they feel the most comfortable embedding into their daily teaching. They may pick from a variety of skills, but it is important that the skills they choose to focus on are things they could see themselves doing in a natural way. This connection could be personal or professional. The goal is for teachers to be ready with ways to acknowledge students when they demonstrate an employability skill.

It also helps when teachers look at their personal values when identifying the employability skills that are relevant to their work. They may have a personal connection or experience that helps them identify a skill they want to focus on. When teachers have personal experience with these skills, they are more motivated to use them because they have already learned the results (positive or negative) of demonstrating that skill. This experience can be a powerful motivator in embedding these skills in the classroom.

The Guide presents many different employability skills, but it is not all inclusive. The Guide groups employability skills into six areas: Critical Thinking, Communicator, Stewardship, Technology, Personal Skills, and Collaborator. If there are other skills that relate to the six areas in the Guide, teachers should feel empowered to use them. In a collaborative setting, teachers get to hear how their peers could see students demonstrating a skill in their classroom. These conversations can help teachers process their own thoughts on identifying employability skills related to their content area.

Connect Employability Skills

Implementing employability skills is not something that teachers should see as an extra burden. It is meant to work in concert with existing school initiatives. Using the value statements that the school has in place, such as Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS), school motto, or creed, teachers can find areas where employability skills overlap with content students already know. In some cases, the skills may already be part of existing initiatives, making it even easier for students to

make the connection between school and work. Schools tend to brand their buildings and spirit wear with its PBIS, motto, or creed so connecting them to employability skills immerses students in both simultaneously. For example, if a school is using P-R-I-D-E as their value statement and students see a P from the letters P-R-I-D-E on a t-shirt, it connects them with having a positive attitude. The Guide helps teachers setup this connection for student use.

The worksheets were developed as part of this capstone contains a chart for teachers to match their PBIS, motto, or creed to employability skills. A PD setting would allow teachers to collaborate with HR agents in making the best matches between skills and school value statements. Discussing this cross-referencing creates a team of teachers who are intentionally focusing on employability skills with their students. Teachers will think about how the employability skill might be demonstrated in their classroom by students.

Develop Employability Skills Language

Authenticity is essential to effectively embedding employability skills. Therefore, teachers need to develop their own approach for how they are going to talk about and demonstrate employability skills. When a student either demonstrates or does not demonstrate employability skills, the teacher needs to be prepared to discuss it with the individual student or in student groups. The Guide gives some examples of what teachers might say to help them in the thought process. Using employability skills in the classroom should not be forced or robotic. Teachers need to put things in their own terms to make it meaningful. The language of employability skills is not a

prescribed text that teachers need to memorize. It is something teachers can reference naturally when discussing employability skills with students.

After presenting example scenarios, the worksheets give teachers a place where they can write down phrases they might use with students. For example, what are some ways the teacher can acknowledge that a student has demonstrated an employability skill? Working through the employability skills worksheets in a PD session would allow teachers to collaborate with others on how a student could demonstrate an employability skill and how the teacher could effectively acknowledge it.

Teachers can use role-playing scenarios when students need additional support to understand the employability skills concept. Research conducted by Randi and Carvalho (2013) concluded that role-playing games were beneficial to retaining skills and concepts. Setting up employee to employer role-playing scenarios can be an effective method for teaching these skills. A drawback to this method is that some students may see it as an opportunity to be funny or perform, and not take the effort seriously. Teachers need to be aware of the classes that are ready to engage in an activity like this while staying focused on their objectives. This activity gives the teacher an opportunity to practice developing language for how they will acknowledge students when an employability skill is demonstrated.

Evaluate Employability Skills

The last part of the Guide helps teachers cultivate student feedback. Every teacher has developed ways to provide feedback to students on academics, but how

can they provide feedback on something relatively subjective in an evaluation? The final step in the Guide addresses how teachers can evaluate student use of the skills and provide encouraging feedback as students develop employability skills.

Evaluation and feedback may seem optional, but this step is essential. It has been said in education we evaluate what we measure, and this is true for employability skills. The evaluation rubric is where students can see their growth in employability skills. Teachers can use the rubric provided with the Guide or they can create their own evaluation tool. The evaluation rubric works best when using a shareable platform like Google Docs because it streamlines communication between teacher and student. It also helps with organization and tracking students' progress over time. A sample rubric is included with the Guide for teachers to use when going through the four steps.

On the rubric, each category has a rating from one to four, with four being the best. This system is modeled from other scoring rubrics such as GPA, On Demand Writing, and standards-based grading that use a one to four standard. There is also space for observations, which may be the most beneficial part of the rubric for students. For example, if a student indicates he is a "4" on an employability skill and the teacher believes it to be a "1", the discussion about the gap is where the learning happens. The evaluation piece is where the students can see areas for improvement, promoting the opportunity for growth.

Evaluating and assessing employability skills is commonly misunderstood. Teachers think they assess them at the same rate they assess the academic content

they teach. Some research into the hinderances of assessing employability skills finds this to be false. Contronei-Baird (2019) observed that a limited number of employability skills are assessed with content knowledge taking priority. Although the study was done in higher education settings, it seems to be true across many levels of classrooms.

Implementing the Guide as Self-Guided Learning

If the school has support from a strong professional learning committee (PLC), then the Guide may be used as a self-guided learning journey. Teachers can work through the Employability Skills Implementation Guide website using the worksheets provided. Campbell and Kresyman (2015) researched how to improve 21st century skills (employability skills) and they recommended the use of a PLC made up of administrators, faculty members, employers, and other stakeholders to help in the school stay current of skills a graduate need to transition to the workforce. Teachers can identify employability skills, make connections, develop their own language, and shape the evaluation piece as it pertains to their content. Teachers would bring their worksheets to the PLC or team meeting to collaborate with colleagues on the language they will use when a student demonstrates use of an employability skill. Inviting outside stakeholders as special presenters would help teachers see that implementing employability skills learning is as important as the rest of the content they teach.

Why were the capstone and related strategies selected?

I became aware of the need for employability skills in 2007 while attending a teachers' institute organized by a local workforce development board. Human resource managers from eight different businesses spoke about the lack of soft skills they were seeing in high school graduates. These HR managers said the graduates lacked skills needed for everything ranging from getting an interview to keeping the job. Very little was mentioned about the skills needed to perform the job. It was all about getting employment.

Later that same year, I noticed problems with some of my skilled students that were participating in co-op opportunities in the workplace. Through my observations and in talking with the employers, I saw the deficiencies in their skills. They did not know how to communicate with their boss, work within a deadline, or accept feedback. I was not preparing them for all aspects of employment. Students could excel in building a product but struggled to meet the demands of the rest of the workplace environment.

I quickly adjusted my educational philosophy to include employability skills in my daily teaching, with the goal of addressing the missing skills that were preventing students from gaining and retaining employment. I was concerned that my students would not have the support needed to overcome these deficiencies after graduation. As their teacher, if they needed something more to help them be successful out in the world beyond school, I needed to do something to meet those needs. My philosophy is "see a need and teach that need." Recognizing that this

experience was not unique to my classroom led me to develop *An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum*.

In my opinion, educators teach students the hard skills needed to be successful in a job but do little to help them develop the skills needed to keep the job. If a new employee lacks a hard skill, companies will usually offer in-house training or tuition reimbursement to the employee. In roundtable discussions with HR during the teachers' institute, not one of them mentioned terminating employment because someone could not complete a specific task. It was the skills beyond hard skills that were missing, such as the ability to effectively communicate, work together with others, and participate in meetings. I then understood that there was a disconnect between what we, as teachers, think is important and what the working world values. This disconnect was not solely tied to specific hard skills; it was more due to the lack of employability skills. Schools must focus on the full range of skills that will give employers the dependable employees they need.

Schools have placed a lot of emphasis on transferring students to post-secondary education, but little has been done to help students transition to the workforce. Whether a student starts working directly after graduating from high school or after college, the goal is the same: find a purposeful way to make a living. Students need to be prepared for the transition from school to work at any age, but many high schools are missing the mark because of the effort they invest on being prepared for post-secondary education. This problem was not created by schools alone.

Businesses and large employers let the degrees a person has influence their hiring decisions even though the amount of education a person has is not always the best indicator of how that person will perform at work. Salisbury (2019) explains that employers find degrees are often an inaccurate measure of a new hire's potential. Furthermore, most rural employment opportunities do not need workers with degrees. They need workers with the skills needed to succeed at their job. In interviews with HR managers, I have personally witnessed that they need dependable employees with a growth-oriented mindset who are willing to learn. The company that hires them will give them job-specific skills.

What creates this disconnect between high school education and real-world workplace needs? How do we improve the system to better prepare high school students for this transition? Some previous studies have tried to label the skills that students are missing after graduation. One study identified the skills as "21st Century Skills": interpersonal communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and adroit writing (Campbell & Kresyman, 2015). This was based on information gathered from interview questions asked of teachers, administrators, and representatives from companies that had hired recent graduates. The study revealed that they all agreed graduates are deficient in these areas (Campbell & Kresyman, 2015).

Some students will graduate with the goal of going to college or other post-secondary education, but what about the students who do not share these goals? In 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, for the 2014 graduating class,

the unemployment rate was 28% for high school graduates (not going to college) and 30% for students who had dropped out of high school (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The data suggest that schools are not giving students who finish high school that much more of an advantage of obtaining work after graduation than students who do not graduate. Employers are skeptical about hiring young adults because they lack basic communication skills, collaboration skills, task orientation, or dependability. These are the skills hiring departments see as valuable to them. Ronnie Ellen Kramer, the president of educational training and consulting firm Communication Dynamics, sums up hard skills as the skills needed to complete the job, while soft skills are needed to execute the hard skills (R. E. Kramer, personal communication, 2021). Kramer goes on to explain that from the business side they see huge gaps in hard skills and soft skills that graduates bring to the workplace.

Schools become known for their reputations in athletics, academics, and other areas of performance, so why not develop notoriety for having work-ready graduates? As a school gains a reputation among the local business community for producing graduates that are truly job-ready, businesses may start looking out for graduates from those schools known for their track record with employability skills. Teachers should be able to build relationships with employees who use the specific skills they are teaching students. Employees should be able to come into schools and mentor young people interested in their profession. Students should be able to tour, job shadow, or have internships with local businesses to help them see the value of having both hard skills and employability skills after they graduate. Employers should be able to come

to schools to identify students who possess the skills they are looking for and foster that relationship until graduation. The Guide developed for this capstone project is the first step in getting schools focused on making a positive impact for students after graduation regardless of whether they're going to higher education or direct to the workforce.

Hard Skills vs. Employability Skills

Schools use their curriculum to teach content needed for students to pass assessments, but what are the students learning to help them become employable? This capstone project separates what students are taught into two distinct categories: hard skills and employability skills. Table 3 lists some of the top hard skills sought by employers for 2023 (Patterson, 2023). Patterson states that these are the job-specific skills needed to be incorporated in a competitive resume in today's job market. Jeff Gillis of TheInterviewGuys.com has 112 hard skills including some of the trade skills that are typically taught in the high school technology centers (Gillis, J, 2022). Table 3 and Table 4 have been included to help teachers understand the difference between hard skills and soft skills.

Table 3*Top Job-Specific Hard Skills Sought in 2023*

Adobe	Photo composition	Risk management	Marketing
Computer processing	Software design	Data Analysis	Accounting
Science	Math	History	Writing
Cybersecurity	Data management	Data engineering	Diagnostics
Carpentry	Welding	Plumbing	Electrical
Engineering	Blueprint reading	Heavy equipment	Dentistry

Table 4*Employability Skills with Student Examples*

<p><u>Critical Thinking</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinks outside the box • Creative Thinker • Reasonable Thinker • Problem solver • Analyzes information 	<p><u>Communicator</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Communication • Oral Communication • Listening Skills • Gives encouraging feedback • Open to others' ideas 	<p><u>Stewardship</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Finances • Time management • Resources
<p><u>Technology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper use of cell phone • Proper use of computer • Proper use of social media • Aware of cyber bullying • Knowledge of technology trends 	<p><u>Personal Skill</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent worker • Good attitude • Self-motivator • Responsible for one's learning • Flexible 	<p><u>Collaborator</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a leader • Can be a group member • Conflict resolution • Open minded • Task oriented • Digital collaborator

Other examples include programs found in a vocational technology center where trade skills are taught. For example, a welding program teaches the hard skills associated with all the distinct aspects of welding. Skills learned prepare the student to do any type of welding a job may require. Similarly, nursing programs teach students how to properly care for patients and perform various required job duties. These programs are designed to allow the students to get proper training with the tools and protocols needed in their specific work environment.

“Employability skills” is a relatively new term that encompasses skills that have been previously labeled as soft skills, 21st-century skills, career skills, or transitioning skills. Whatever they’re called, these skills involve the same set of values and abilities. Doyle (2020) noted that employability skills are sometimes called foundational skills or job-readiness skills. Robles (2012) defines soft skills as character traits. The broad categories include communication, teamwork, critical thinking, accountability, time management, motivation, and attitude. These skill types can be broken down further to meet an employer's needs.

When looking at employability skills, lists can range from five categories to as many as 25, depending on how detailed one wants to be when defining them. National organizations, state departments of education, and some local school districts offer an employability skills framework that teachers can use. For an example, the state of Kentucky’s Office of Career and Technical Education has an employability skills list for all teachers to use as part of their curriculum. Since it is under the CTE category, most regular education teachers are not aware of it being

available. The Guide simplifies this debate by focusing on six categories of employability skills: Critical Thinking, Communicator, Stewardship, Technology, Personal Skills, and Collaborator (see Table 1). If there is a specific skill a teacher wants to bring attention to in their classroom, the Guide is flexible enough to make incorporating that skill very easy.

It is easy to focus on hard skills because they are easily measured. A student is taught a skill, given time to practice, and then demonstrates the skill for evaluation. If they meet the benchmark, they move on to the next skill to be learned. Jeff Gillis, the Co-Founder and CTO of TheInterviewGuys.com, recently summed up hard skills as being able to use all the tools to perform the task associated with that trade or profession (Gillis, 2022). Tracking student progress on hard skills acquisition allows administrators to track the gains of a program by comparing baseline student data to end-of-program evaluations. Administrators can also use hard skill acquisition to evaluate programs and teaching staff because they have concrete data.

In contrast, employability skills are seen as harder to teach and assess because they involve a person's character or personality. However, most employee performance evaluations, whether it is for a job straight out of high school or a job that requires college degrees, include rating an employee's employability skills. While it may initially feel uncomfortable for teachers to incorporate employability skills, students will encounter them in the real world whether it has been taught or not.

How can schools increase focus on the skills the employers want?

Employability skills are abstract concepts taught through example and concrete demonstration. Teachers can model and demonstrate application of employability skills, but students need to be open to receiving positive and negative feedback on things that are quite subjective. Teachers need to be on the lookout for how students are implementing these skills in the classroom.

Employability skills are not an add-on to the academic environment. There does not need to be an additional class called “employability skills.” These skills need to be embedded in the current curriculum. Habets et al. (2020) surmise that students need more training of 21st century skills in order to be vital in the workforce.

The Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) provides an overview of the U.S. Department Education initiative to address the lack of a unified set of employability skills in the workforce (Literacy Information and Communication System, 2020). LINCS provides resources on their webpage to help employers, teachers, and job seekers improve their knowledge of employability skills. This site could be utilized for teachers to find current employability skills initiatives in their state, or specific content area. LINCS provides another approach of embedding employability skills in classroom.

Barriers to Implementing Employability Skills

This capstone is attempting to bridge the gap between what schools teach and what employers need. Implementing this Guide will no doubt raise some barriers that need to be addressed. The most obvious barrier is the need to get teachers and staff on

board. Some may say there are other factors that contribute to unemployment and will be less likely to engage in the discussion of implementing these ideas. If some of these barriers are identified, planned for, and addressed before the introduction of the Guide, the implementation rate may increase. Teachers want to do what is best for students, and planning for some of these identified barriers can help them see the rationale for embedding employability skills in their content.

Employability skills are not easily measured because they involve qualities reflecting a person's character. How does a student handle adversity in the classroom when they have a bad day? How does a student handle feedback when they come from a rough home environment? These are tricky topics to address. However, the truth of the matter is that every single employer evaluates employees based on interpersonal skills to some extent. Teachers can help tear down these barriers and prepare students by teaching them the proper way to handle difficult situations in the classroom, with the hope that these coping skills will carry over to the workplace.

The effectiveness of An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum depends in part on the effort school administrators invest in its introduction, time for development, and follow through. While this is not a wholesale educational change, it is something new for staff to factor in as they think about the way they deliver feedback to students. As Grogan (2013) summarizes, for any new thing to be successful the principal's involvement is crucial. The Guide can only be as successful as the culture of the school will allow. Upfront planning by

school leaders for introducing and monitoring of use of the Guide is critical to its success.

Another barrier to embedding employability skills is that school administrators often view these skills as attributes that should not be monitored because they do not have a direct connection with the content curriculum. However, the evidence of need is staring administrators in the face. I have seen many administrators frustrated with staff who may be brilliant but struggled with attendance, finishing paperwork, parent communication, collaborating with others, or reporting to their assigned duty stations. All of these issues are things that would be considered to be employability skills. Teachers are evaluated in these areas, but would the issues even exist if teachers had learned about employability skills in school? Yet, administrators struggle with the concept of evaluating students on criteria they apply to their own staff.

High school students struggle to effectively communicate with school staff, peers, and their parents. They do not know how to effectively communicate their ideas, solutions to problems, or personal situations with anyone. As part of a group, they have a voice, and they need to know how to express themselves to others constructively. Overcoming this barrier involves taking the time to model and monitor collaboration in our classrooms through partners or groups working on projects. Students at all stages of academic maturity need to see how they can contribute to the solution of a problem. Students may understand, but if they cannot

communicate, do they really get it? Teachers need help in bringing these skills out in students so they can expand their potential – both at work and in life.

Why are there gaps between school and work? One reason is that educational stakeholders are not in touch with the labor market and employer needs. Habets et al. (2020) explain that for a student to enter the workforce successfully they need to come from an educational system where school leaders are analyzing the labor market needs. Schools have fallen behind in listening to the needs of the workforce. Instead, schools are focused on meeting test score benchmarks to receive funding and have lost sight of how they impact the community by preparing students to meet employment needs. “One of the goals of educational institutions is to prepare their graduates to be workplace-ready upon graduation” (McGunagle & Zizka, 2020, p. 591).

There may be some pushback from staff on the Guide because they may view it as another thing they must do in the classroom. Teachers are always being challenged to add one more thing or one more objective to their daily routines. Building teacher buy-in is critical to the success of this capstone project because they are the ones who will take the information and implement it in the classroom. Middle school teachers may view it as not being part of their job because the average student is not thinking about a career at that stage. Having an open mind can help them see that these employability skills are applicable to students at any level of education.

This capstone could have a negative connotation when it comes to parents. They may assume that the school is focusing on getting students career-ready at the

expense of college-bound academics. When parents hear that a teacher is talking about employability skills, they may only hear the word “employability” and not understand these skills are useful in all aspects of life including academia. Schools must assure parents that these skills will apply when their children enter the workforce at any stage of their life. Human Resource agents are looking for these skills in all employees but see the most deficit in young people. Informing parents and other stakeholders is critical so everyone understands the goal of implementing this guide.

Intended Impact of the Capstone

Ultimately, this capstone is intended to impact high school students by teaching them the skills they will need to succeed in the workplace. This impact will be made possible by school faculty that learn how to recognize, acknowledge, discuss, and evaluate employability skills they have embedded into their existing curriculum. The Guide shows educators ways they can change their daily routine to show students how they are or are not exhibiting employability skills. This intentional focus prepares students to be ready for what employers will expect of them as employees.

An indirect impact will be to the relationships between schools, the local business community, and other workforce. Schools can build this relationship by showing what they are doing to help students transition to the real world of work. Businesses can strengthen this relationship by showing schools the specific skills they want to see in new hires. Schools need to let businesses know that their graduates

have had employability skills embedded into their academics. Then, when a local employer sees that an applicant comes from a school they have worked with, they know the applicant comes prepared with employability skills. In return, the student can enter an interview or their first day of the job with a solid understanding of the expectations the company. Exercising the employability skills they learned in school will help them keep the job and advance in the company.

In order to develop broader relationships between teachers and businesses, schools and businesses could work together to advance the school's efforts to emphasize employability skills. One way to expose teachers to the demands of the labor market is through teacher externships. These programs allow teachers to job shadow in a local business or industry to see how their content area they teach is applied in the real world. If externships were established with local businesses, teachers would gain better insight into how the skills they are teaching are received in the real world or work. This would also help teachers stay current on what employers want, and remind them that it may not always be focused on academic achievement. Research by Bowen and Shume (2018) "found industry-based externship program demonstrated an increased understanding of the fundamental importance of skills for problem solving, collaboration, and communication in today's workplace environments, and expressed commitment to creating classroom opportunities for students to develop these skills" (p. 57). In other words, teachers spend time in the working environment, they stay current with the needs of the workforce which helps them prepare students to transition to the real world.

Profile of a Graduate is a new philosophy that allows schools to inform the public about all the skills future graduates from their school will have. Community, business/industry, educators, parents, and students come together to give input on the skills they feel that high school graduates need upon graduation. In an educational blog, Chambers and Truong (2020) detail some of the states who are working to advance Profile of a Graduate. They look at how the states are seeing K-12 students through a holistic lens in preparing them for the future (Chambers & Truong). Many communities have either not yet had these discussions, or they are in the early stages of implementation. The Guide would be an excellent tool for communities interested in moving in the direction of the Profile of a Graduate initiative. Frost et al. (2017) points out states such as South Carolina and Virginia have districts that have developed frameworks for student success based on Profile of Graduate, which is based in employability skills.

An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum can be used to foster conversations about how programs could be designed to make students aware of opportunities for co-op experiences and after-school work programs. For example, one local university is exploring the idea of using the Guide as a prerequisite for students to participate in an after-school entrepreneurial program. Ellis Tarver, the State of Kentucky's Specialist for Entrepreneurship, who is working through the State of Kentucky per the 1890 Land-Grant Cooperative Extension Structure and Kentucky State University explains that this Guide is the perfect place to start helping schools prepare students for the

workforce regarding employability skills (E. Tarver, personal communication, February 22, 2023). He is exploring the idea of using the Guide as an evaluation piece to determine if students can work outside of the school setting. The programs he is developing will provide work for high school students who demonstrate the employability part of the program. Tarver believes students can develop hard skills if they are proficient in the employability skills side of employment.

Limitations of the Study

An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum has few limitations because it can be adapted to meet the needs of all students, teachers, schools, and communities. One limitation are the factors that can affect one's ability to get hired and keep a job that are beyond the scope of this capstone project. For example, students must have a desire to work. The Guide cannot create a student's fundamental motivation to work.

Another limitation could be location because most of the existing information on the employability skills gap comes from hiring agencies, based on what they see in their local business. The lack of focus on the employability skills gap in the United States leads to a relatively limited source of research-based articles when compared to other countries. In my research, I found multiple articles on the topic, but they were based on results outside the United States. Trying to keep the research relevant to students, teachers, schools, and the workforce of the United States was the focus may be seen as a personal bias.

While flexible and adaptable, the Guide is best suited towards educational settings where the students are starting to explore the demands of the fields they are interested in pursuing. Middle school students can benefit from the exposure of employability skills, but most students may not be mature enough to understand how to model these skills. The effectiveness of middle school teachers implementing the Guide may be limited due to the audience they teach. Also, in discussing the Guide as part of this capstone project, middle school teachers struggled to understand the relevancy of the Guide to their work. In contrast, teachers at the high school level, especially career and technical education teachers, understood the need to help student develop employability skills. This is in part because they are more connected to the last stages of student's public-school education as compared to middle and elementary school students.

One of the biggest limitations of this study is determining the student's desire and maturity to visualize their role in the workforce. Students come to school with various goals for their life after graduation. A student who comes from a culture of working adults will likely understand the employability skills concepts and see the value of learning how to perfect them. Students coming from a culture where adults are not stable in their work may not understand how these skills can benefit them. Therefore, a student's background may be an indirect limitation on the effectiveness of the project.

Reflection

When I started this capstone project, I was clueless as to what the end product would look like. I did not have a direction, only a strong desire to find a way to change school culture in a way that would help students transition to the workforce. If I had known when I started this process that I would develop a website to help teachers implement employability skills, I would have been more precise with my coursework and research.

I have a vision for how the use of employability skills can help a school build a reputation for preparing well-rounded students with both hard skills and employability skills. I want businesses to look to my school for future employees because they know our students are truly work-ready. This vision clouded my judgement on what needed to come first: Getting teachers on board with the need to expose kids to employability skills. I was thinking big when I didn't even know how to start. I was trying to develop a district-level change of thinking instead of focusing on the people in the trenches first.

Starting with the end in mind would have helped me be more selective in my coursework by focusing on class activities directly effecting my capstone. When I learned about different concepts such as growth mindset, educational change, quantitative and qualitative research, things that change a classroom, biases, limitations, and other concepts, I would have seen them through the lens of my project. Looking back, I reflect on discussion and classwork that would have enhanced this project if I had a better vision of what I wanted to produce.

If someone asked me for advice as they start a similar journey, I would say start with the end in mind. Pick a topic you feel connected to and figure out your end product. The rest will get filled in along the way. How to decide on the final product? Start talking to your instructors early in the process about what you are passionate about, who needs to know it, and how you are going to communicate with them. They can help you focus in on your final project which will make the journey easier. Once you have the topic, together you can decide on a final product, making the middle the easier part.

The research for developing the Guide has been very rewarding. Coming from a strong academic educational career, my research has affected my educational philosophy to include some of the skills that were embedded in me as a kid. I was raised in a generation where basic employability skills were embedded in my home environment. Therefore, I was shocked when I heard some of the things young people were doing while trying to get and retain employment. In the process, I became the self-proclaimed employability skills “liaison” for my school. I carried the message about embedding these skills within their curriculum to the teachers.

In discussing this work with colleagues, I learned to develop a short reply to the “That’s not my job” Luddites I encountered. If a student was struggling to obtain a job because they did not have the hard skills, then schools would address it. Why should employability skills be any different? The role of education is to give the students the skills needed to become a contributing member of society. We must give them all the skills they need to achieve this goal.

I have also grown in my knowledge of the various options after graduation for students regardless of their academic status. If a student has a solid foundation in employability skills, then they can make a successful transfer to the workforce. Businesses will invest in employee training and education when an employee shows an interest in developing in areas that help the company. When I participated in discussions with various employers and they tell me they only need so many engineers as compared to reliable employees (B. Logan, personal communication, June 12, 2018), then I realized we are not in touch with the labor market in our communities. Schools are focused on sending students to college to get an engineering degree when there is sustainable employment available right out of high school. There is a disconnect between schools and the workforce.

Capstone Project

The core of this capstone project is An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum, is a website that can be found at <https://cloudeducational85.wixsite.com/employabilityskills2>, worksheets available on the website that explain each step in the process based on the website. The organization of the website prompts teachers to progress through four steps that can help improve their understanding and implementation of employability skills in their classrooms. The four steps toward embedding employability skills in existing curriculum are:

Step 1 – Identify employability skills

Step 2 – Connect identified skills to existing school initiatives

Step 3 – Develop language to discuss skills with students

Step 4 – Evaluate student progress toward using the skills

These steps can be presented in a faculty meeting allowing teachers to work through the process as a school collaboration, a Professional Learning Community, or as an individual learning module. The downloadable worksheets can help teachers organize their thoughts as they work through the steps on the website. The goal is to help teachers see how a few adjustments in their daily conversations would help students focus on employability skills. The website contains seven tabs with information about the steps of the Guide (see Table 5).

Table 5

Website tabs and user information

TABS	Information
Home	Brief overview of the 4-step process
Overview	Importance of the Guide
Identify	Step 1 Identify Employability Skills
Connect	Step 2 Connect Employability Skills
Develop	Step 3 Develop Your Employability Skills Language
Evaluate	Step 4 Evaluate Employability Skills
Resources	Worksheets and Student Examples

Homepage

The website's homepage is the front door to the An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum (Figure 1). On this page users find a brief introduction, a gateway to the four-step process.

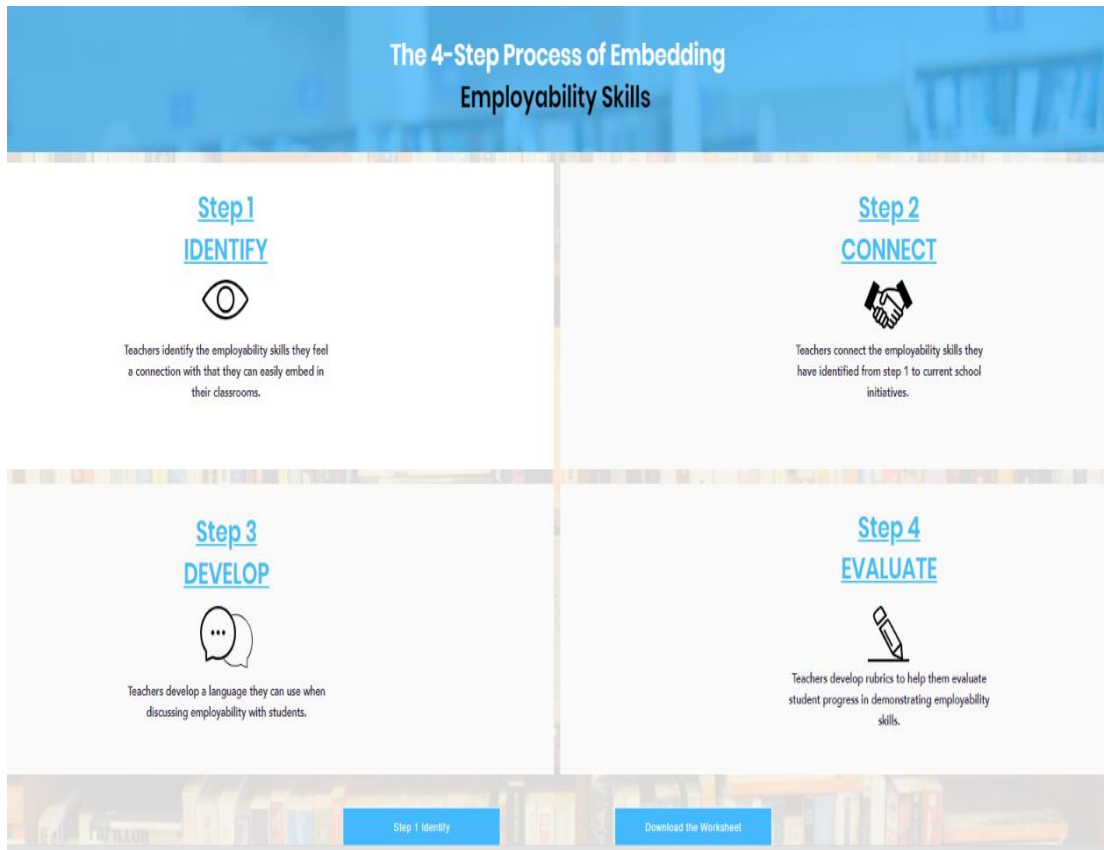
Figure 1

Website Homepage



Note. Website url: <https://cloudeducational85.wixsite.com/employabilityskills2>

The second half of the homepage presents the four steps (see Figure 2) teachers work through as they develop their knowledge of how to implement employability skills. Each step is hyperlinked to send viewers directly to that step if needed.

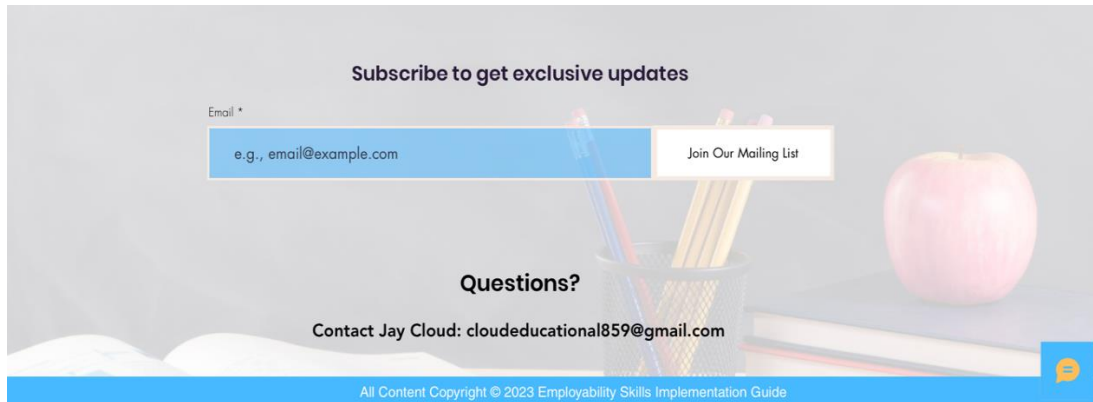
Figure 2*The Four Steps on the Homepage*

Contact information is available at the bottom of every page (see Figure 3).

Users can send me an email, sign up for updates, or leave a message.

Figure 3

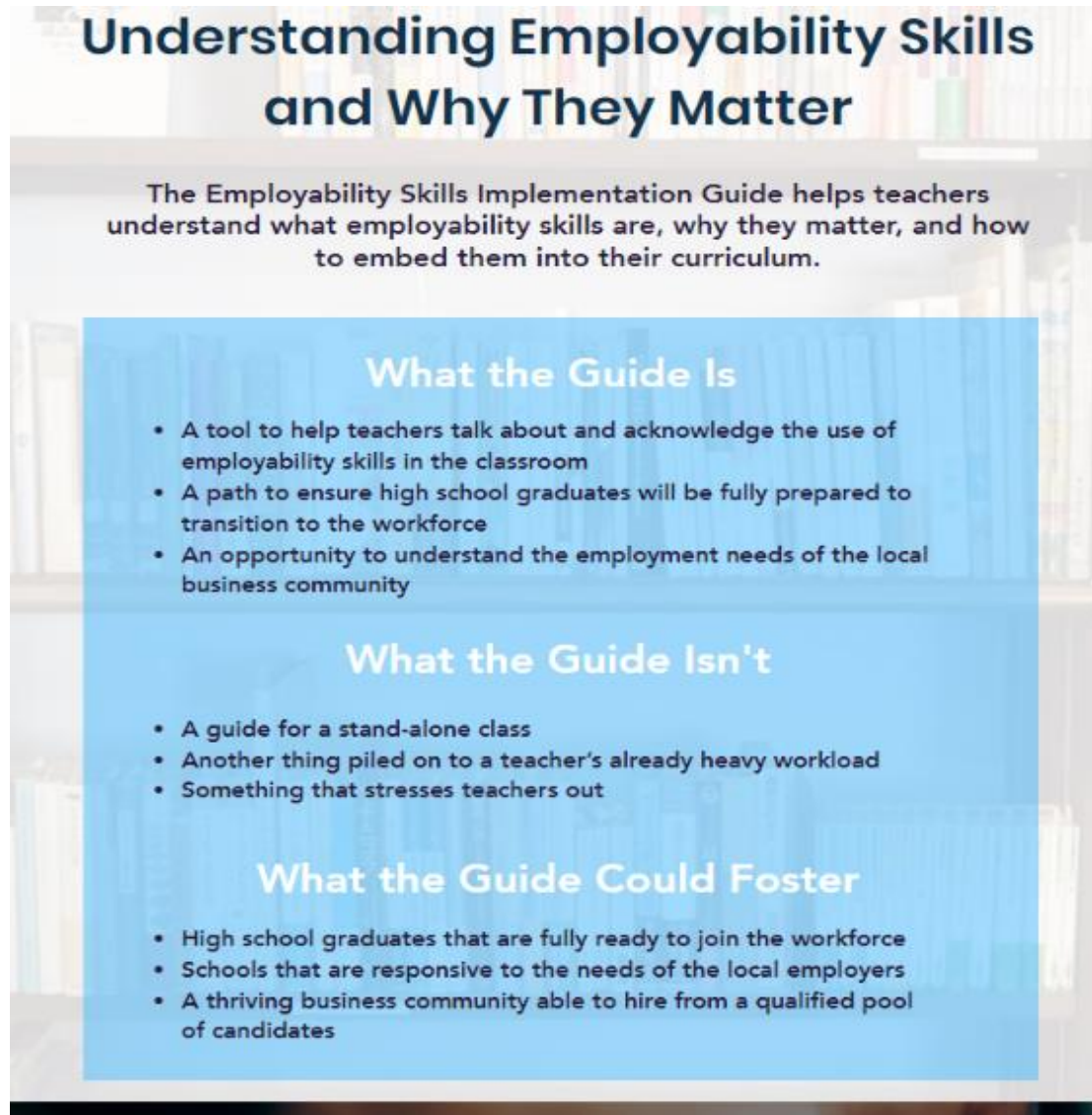
Website Footer



From the homepage, users can either go straight to Step 1 or go to project overview page.

Overview Page

When users click on the overview tab, they are taken to a page that explains the website, the Guide, and the motivation behind this project. The first half of this page explains what the Guide is and what it is not (see Figure 4).

Figure 4*Overview Page Part 1*

The second half of the Overview page (see Figure 5) focuses on why employability skills matter, why the Guide is important, and the motivation that led to creating the An Educator's Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum.

Figure 5*Overview Page Part 2*

Why Employability Skills Matter?

What Employers Need

Employers often struggle to fill vacant positions due to the lack of skills among the job candidates they have to choose from. Schools think they're preparing students for life beyond school, but many struggle to find and keep a job. They lack the kind of skills needed to participate in a work setting – the ability to communicate, collaborate, and problem-solve. When businesses can't fill jobs from area sources, they move on to somewhere else, hurting the local community.

A Fine Line

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2014 graduating class had an unemployment rate of 28%. Among students that dropped out, the unemployment rate was 30%. If the students that finished with school have just 2% more of a chance to get and keep a job. They are clearly not prepared for the real world of work. They may have hard skills, but they don't have what it takes to apply the work. If recent high school graduates are only marginally better prepared to get and keep a job, what are schools missing?

Why This Guide Exists

Before I started this Guide, I believed our education systems were providing students with all the skills they needed to be successful after they graduate. Then I participated in an eye-opening teachers' institute focused on the types of careers available locally. We toured facilities for a first-hand look at jobs and participated in open discussions among teachers, production leads, HR, and plant managers.

I picked up on a common theme: The young adults we were sending out into the world did not have the basic skills needed to get - or keep - jobs. Employers and HR managers described how recent graduates handled themselves during the interview process and the first few months on the job.

The stories were shocking. Our former students could not communicate, collaborate, problem-solve, or work without being on their phones. No one spoke about how these young adults were

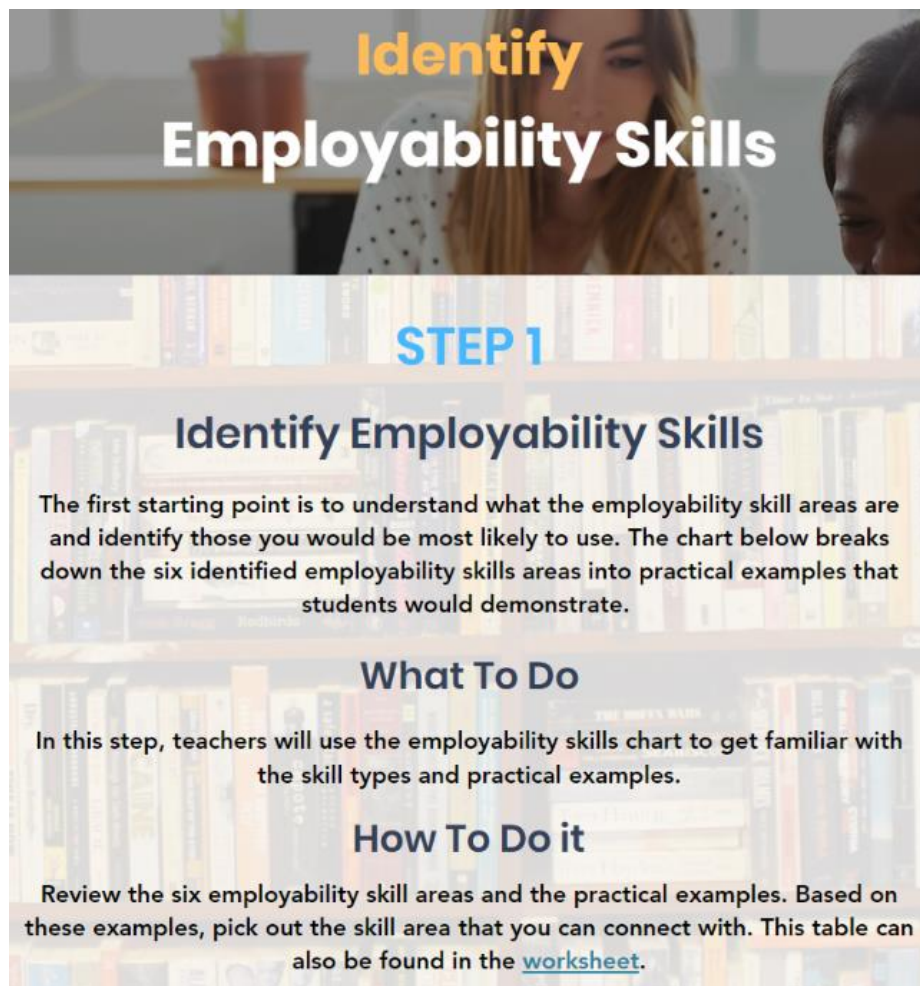
Step 1 – Identify Employability Skills

The Identify page (see Figure 6) explains the first step in implementation. At this stage, teachers identify the skills they want to embed in their curriculum.

Teachers are encouraged to identify skills that they feel would be beneficial to their school climate, as well as skills they feel a personal connection to. There is also a link to the worksheets to help teachers work through this step.

Figure 6

Identify Employability Skills Page Part 1



This project groups employability skills into six categories: Critical Thinking, Communicator, Stewardship, Technology, Personal Skills, and Collaborator. Figure 7 provides a screenshot of two of the six categories from the Identify page. Teachers can pick skills they want to implementation from any of the six categories. Working with a focused list of skills not only helps the teacher; it allows for more in-depth learning for the students.

Giving teachers the ability to pick the skills they want to embed helps them take ownership of this effort. Teachers have different backgrounds and experiences that allow them to see skills differently. Identify the employability skills that connect with their content and personal values gives teachers the opportunity to make the Guide their own. Allowing them to identify the skills they are comfortable teaching in their content helps with teacher buy-in. To help users better understand what each employability skills area includes, the second half of the Identify page features a chart listing the six categories alongside practical examples teachers can look for in their classroom.

Figure 7*Identify Employability Skills Page Part 2*

Critical Thinking	<p>Creative Thinking - Student thinks outside the box</p> <p>Independent Thinking - Student develops own ideas or processes</p> <p>Problem solver - Student uses a combination of new skills and previous skills to solve problems</p> <p>Rational Thinker - Student weighs risk versus reward in making decisions</p>
Communication	<p>Verbal Communication - Students can engage in discussions, presentations, or impromptu conversations</p> <p>Writing Communication - Students can use communication standards or norms when writing</p> <p>Active Listener - Makes eye contact with the presenter while sitting appropriately while listening</p> <p>Collaborative Communication- Student communicates ideas, results, or work progress with the group</p>

Note. The Identify page includes similar information for all six categories.

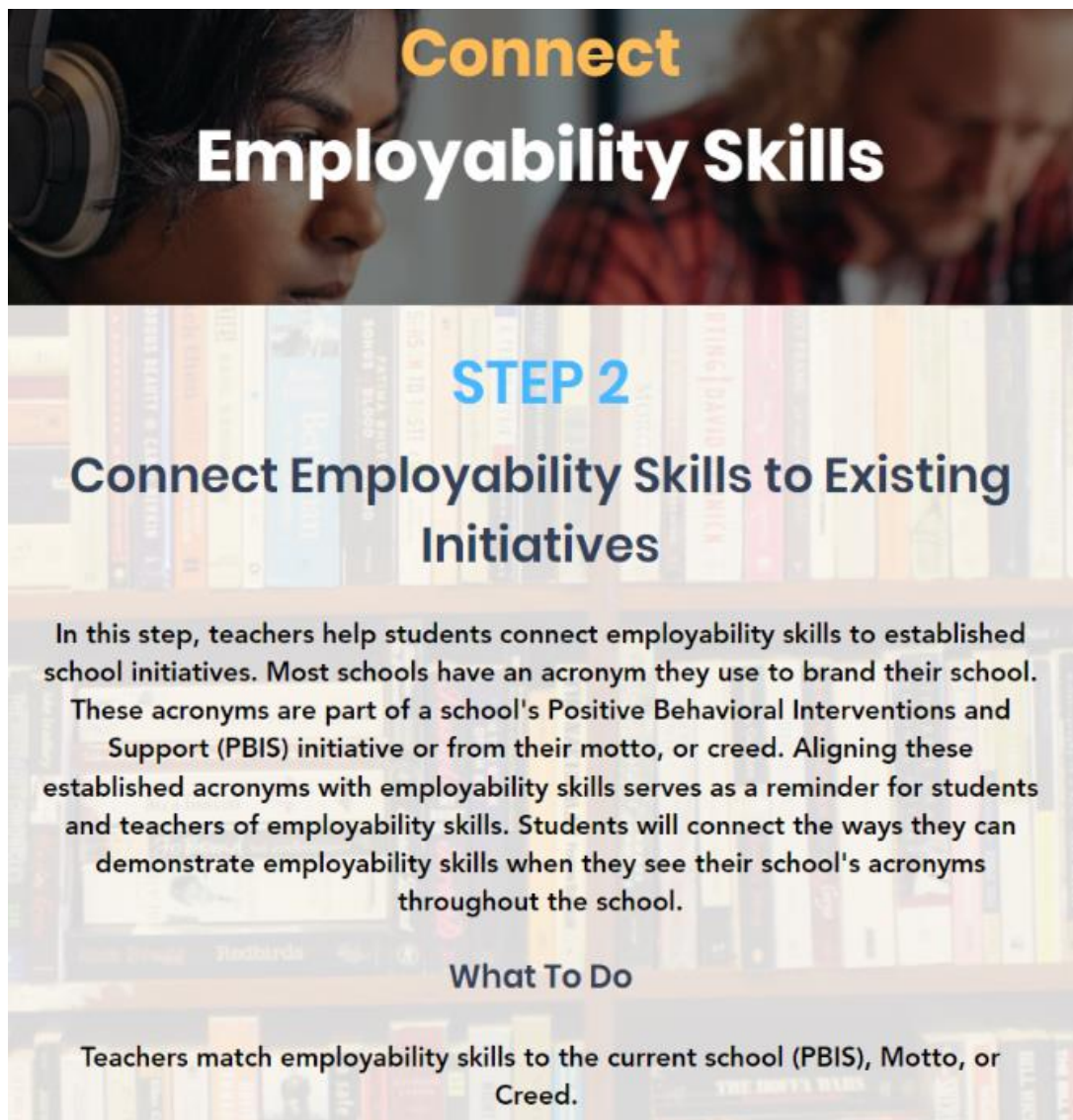
The companion worksheets to the website is a helpful tool for teachers to use to keep track of their progress as they work through the steps. The worksheets have activities for each step in this process. While it is advised that teachers use these worksheets, they are free to use the tool that works best for them.

Step 2 – Connect Employability Skills

Users are then directed to the Connect page, where they learn how to connect employability skills identified in Step 1 to their school's existing value statements (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Connect Employability Skills Page



Connect Employability Skills

STEP 2 Connect Employability Skills to Existing Initiatives

In this step, teachers help students connect employability skills to established school initiatives. Most schools have an acronym they use to brand their school. These acronyms are part of a school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) initiative or from their motto, or creed. Aligning these established acronyms with employability skills serves as a reminder for students and teachers of employability skills. Students will connect the ways they can demonstrate employability skills when they see their school's acronyms throughout the school.

What To Do

Teachers match employability skills to the current school (PBIS), Motto, or Creed.

Schools widely use a Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS), school creed, or motto used to communicate the school’s values and expectations. These school-wide initiatives typically revolve around a four to six letter acronym the school uses with their students and staff, and places them on everything from murals to t-shirts. To ensure that teachers do not view employability skills as yet another initiative to implement, employability skills can line up with or match a school’s current PBIS, creed, or motto. The website gives teachers examples showing how to connect school initiatives with employability skills to make embedding easier (see Figure 9). There is space on the worksheet to write or brainstorm about these connections.

Figure 9

Practical Examples Found on the Connect Page

Example #1

Using the School Creed

Teachers at ABC High School connected their school creed to employability skills for embedding in the classroom. "Listen and Follow Directions" is an example of a Communication Skill, one of their identified employability skills. When students see the letter L they make the connections to listening and following directions as a communication skill. Same for the remaining letters of the acronym.

Leader Rules	Employability Skill
L - Listen and Follow Directions	L - Communication Skills
E - Engage in Learning	E - Personal Skills
A - Accept Correction	A - Personal Skills
D - Do your Best	D - Personal Skills (Positivity)
E - Eliminate Excuses	E - Critical Thinker
R - Respect yourself and others	R - Collaborator

The Connect page provides a rationale for connecting a school value statement with the skills identified by the teacher. The page explains what to do and

how to do this step. Teachers should download the worksheets using a link conveniently placed on the page. By scrolling down the page, teachers can see examples of what this step looks like in practice. As shown in the first example (Figure 10), a school uses the word LEADER for its school creed. The goal is to use an existing mnemonic to help students remember the employability skills and recognize when they do or do not demonstrate or not demonstrate them.

Step 3 – Develop Employability Language

Step 3 is where teachers start to develop how they're going to talk about the employability skills with students. The language a teacher uses must come naturally to them and fit with their content area. When teachers are given the freedom to adapt a concept to something that is meaningful to them, it becomes more authentic. The Develop page explains what "developing language" means and how to do it (see Figure 10).

Figure 10*Develop Employability Skills Language*

Develop
Your Employability Skill Language

STEP 3

Develop Your Employability Skill Language

Quick and positive reinforcement is important to embedding employability skills. Using the employability skill areas you want to embed into your classroom content, develop the language you will use when students demonstrate an employability skill.

What To Do

Develop language you will feel comfortable using when acknowledging a student that demonstrates the use of an employability skill.

How To Do It

Review the example below to help you develop responses you will use when students demonstrate the use of an employability skill. The [worksheet](#) will help you organize your language. Best practices include the use of authentic [phrases that are meaningful to you and part of your core values.

The second half of the Develop page presents four examples to help teachers start thinking about what they can say when providing feedback to students (see Figure 11). The examples provided show how teachers might observe and comment

on how students' everyday behavior in the school environment could be tied to a specific employability skill. Teachers often miss these opportunities for discussing employability skills by providing vague feedback that does not connect to the skills employers are looking for in employees. These ultimately become missed opportunities for students to understand how the academic activities of the class are directly related to a specific employability skill.

Figure 11

Practical Examples of Ways to Talk About Use of Employability Skills

Example #1 Communicator (Written)		
Scenario Student emails teacher to inform them that an assignment will be late.	Positive Student Behavior The student is being an effective communicator by informing the teacher of a situation in advance.	Response Thanks "Student Name" for letting me know. Being proactive is an important employability skill.
Example #2 Communicator (Active Listener)		
Scenario A student is actively engaged in the class presentation.	Positive Student Behavior The student demonstrates active listening by giving verbal and nonverbal feedback to the teacher during a lesson.	Response Hey, "Student Name" you were an active listener in class today. Being engaged and giving constructive feedback is really important to employers.
Example #3 Effective Collaborator		
Scenario Students are having an orderly and constructive discussion on a topic for a project.	Positive Student Behavior The group was engaged in the activity by listening, validating, and discussing each member's contribution to the project.	Response "Group A" You'll were demonstrating effective collaborators in your discussion today. That skill will get you far in the real world.

The scenarios provided on the Develop page are intended to help teachers visualize what to do when they see students demonstrating these skills. By using the worksheet, teachers can start to brainstorm and jot down the language they can use to acknowledge the use of those skills by students. By developing authentic phrases that

mean something to that individual teacher, they will become more aware of when a student demonstrates a skill and how to acknowledge it.

Step 4 – Evaluate Employability Skills

Step 4 is where teachers develop their own rubric or evaluation tool to use with students (see Figure 12). This section includes best practices for developing a rubric along with two examples of what they may look like if you use a motto, creed, or a PBIS initiative. The worksheet provides a blank rubric for teachers to use in completing this step. The blank rubric is a good beginning, but it can be adapted to meet the needs of each teacher's teaching style. Again, the goal is for this to be a tool to start a conversation about how a student can improve their use of employability skills. Teachers have the freedom to make the evaluation system any style they want. Stars, checks, numbers, or even tomatoes are all acceptable if the teacher has a way to make it meaningful to the students.

It has been said we manage what we measure, and employability skills are no exception. The Evaluating page explains why evaluating employability skills is important and how to do it (see Figure 12). Some might find the idea of evaluating the employability skills of students to be uncomfortable because the subject matter is relatively subjective. However, the truth is that nearly all employee performance evaluations involve assessment of soft skills, whether an employee has gone to college or started work right after high school. Helping students become familiar with this type of feedback can make them better prepared for the world of work.

Figure 12*Evaluate Page*

Evaluate Employability Skills

STEP 4

Develop a tool to evaluate student use of employability skills

Evaluating the use of employability skills with each student is an important step in ensuring their long-term use. Best practices include the use of a point system that builds off the school's value statement (PBIS, Motto, or Creed), where the student evaluates him/herself, the teacher evaluates the student, and they share mutual feedback. The following [worksheet](#) provides a blank rubric for your use.

What To Do

Develop a scoring rubric for the employability skills you identified to use in evaluating students' progress.

How To Do It

Use the rubric provided in the [worksheet](#) or develop your own. Provide places for students to evaluate themselves and a place for teachers to evaluate the student on their use of employability skills. Include a column to total up the scores and a place for comments. See the examples below.

These identified employability skills must be evaluated for students to learn how they are progressing. Evaluating employability skills is harder than evaluating


academic skills because there is so much variability with all the skills. For example, a student solves a math problem and they do not get a correct answer, then the student is wrong. Employability skills evaluation is subjective to the background and experiences the teacher has with different work environments. An evaluation tool to help teachers work with students to understand how they are or are not using employability skills in the classroom can be found on the Evaluate page (see Figure 13).

Figure 13*A Sample Evaluation Rubric from the Evaluate Page*

Example #1

Using a school motto

1 of 1
Automatic Zoom



EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Evaluation tool using a school's Motto

1= I can do better
2= I Struggled
3= Almost there
4= I was awesome

Feel free to make any comments in the comment/feedback box.

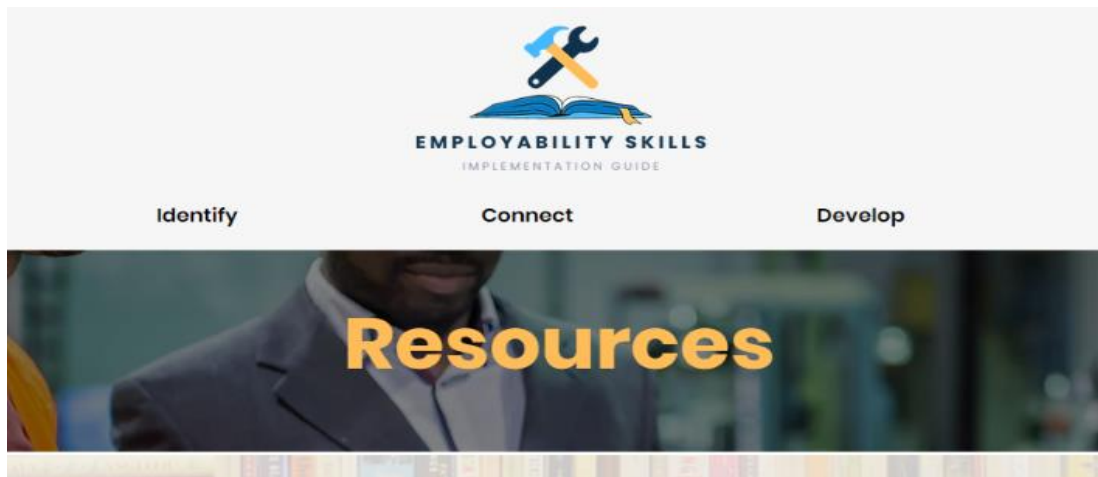
Leader Rules / Employability Skills	Student Score (1-4)	Teacher Score (1-4)	Comments / Feedback
L isten and follow directions (Communicator)			
E ngage in your learning (Personal Skills)			
A ccept Correction (Personal Skill)			
D o your best (Critical Thinker)			
E liminate excuses (Critical Thinker)			
R espect yourself and others (Collaborator)			

Resources

The Resources page is where teachers can view and download the worksheet and chart of employability skills that are referenced in the Guide (see Figure 14). The Employability Skills Worksheets contain all the material teachers can use to go through the four steps and it can be downloaded from the Resources. It also contains the blank rubric for the evaluation tool.

Figure 14


Resources Webpage



All pages of the worksheets are shown on website so they can be seen without having to download the pdf (see figure 15). This makes it easier for teachers who may be viewing the Guide on their phone. The Resources page also includes a chart of different employability skills with student indicators that were referenced on the Identify webpage. The resources page allows me to add different resources as I see the need after getting feedback.

Figure 15

Screenshots from the Resources page



Employability Skills Implementation Guide Worksheet

The following worksheet is to be used with An Educators Guide to Implementing Employability Skills Across the Curriculum.

<https://cloudeducational85.wixsite.com/employabilityskills2>

Step 1

Identify Employability Skills

From the Employability Skills Chart, identify skills you can embed in your classroom.

Employability Skills you can embed in your classroom	1) _____
	2) _____
	3) _____
	4) _____
	5) _____
	6) _____



Step 2

Connect Employability Skills to School Values

Write down your school's PBIS, motto, or creed and connect it to the employability skills you identified in Step 1. Use the chart from the Employability Skills Implementation Guide to help you identify employability skills that naturally connect to your school's values.

PBIS, motto, or creed	Employability Skill
1) _____	1) _____
2) _____	2) _____
3) _____	3) _____
4) _____	4) _____
5) _____	5) _____
6) _____	6) _____



Step 3

Develop Your Language

The skill language is what you would say when a student demonstrates an employability skill in your classroom. For each of the employability skills from step 2, develop a response(s) in providing student feedback.

Employability Skill	Response(s)
1) _____	1) _____ _____ _____
2) _____	2) _____ _____ _____
3) _____	3) _____ _____ _____
4) _____	4) _____ _____ _____
5) _____	5) _____ _____ _____
6) _____	6) _____ _____ _____



Step 4

Employability Skills Evaluation

Build a student evaluation rubric for the employability skills you have identified to be used regularly with students. The blank template on page 5 can be used as an example in helping to create one for your classroom. Fill in the School Value-Employability Skills developed in step 2. Assign student point values and a place for feedback.



Name _____

Point Values:

1-

2-

3-

4-

School Value-Employability Skill	Teacher Feedback	Student Feedback	Comments
Point Totals			



Employability Skills with Student Examples

The following table shows six different employability skills with student examples.

You will refer to this chart frequently as you work with employability skills. Feel free to add to this chart as you use other examples as you find examples to match your curriculum.

Critical Thinking	Communicator	Stewardship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinks outside the box • Creative Thinker • Reasonable Thinker • Problem solver • Analyzes information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Communication • Oral Communication • Listening Skills • Gives encouraging feedback • Open to others' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Finances • Time management • Resources

Technology	Personal Skill	Collaborator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper use of cell phone • Proper use of computer • Proper use of social media • Aware of cyber bullying • Knowledge of technology trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent worker • Good attitude • Self-motivator • Responsible for one's learning • Flexible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a leader • Can be a group member • Conflict resolution • Open minded • Task oriented • Digital collaborator

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