

Business Creation Competition



Georgia Employability Skills Task Force Recommendation No. 1 School Goal 3

- ▶ Formalize relationships and partnerships with postsecondary institutions, advisory boards, and local businesses to coordinate employability skills initiatives and support systems.

Overview

During the Employability Unit in her Digital and Web Design classes, Gwinnett County Teacher Danielle Swaby held a business creation competition where eight groups of students across two classes designed business logos, brochures, flyers, t-shirts, marketing plans, grand opening commercials, and forms of payment for potential businesses. During this process, students studied employability skills including communication, problem-solving, planning and organization, teamwork, and self-management. At the end of the business contest, the classes voted to create an actual printing business in the school's Design Lab and implement different portions from various groups' presentations, for instance pulling logos from one group and t-shirt ideas from another.

The Design Lab Student-Based Enterprise

Since the Digital and Web Design students launched the printing business, South Gwinnett High School student entrepreneurs as well as external clients have come to the Design Lab for assistance creating promotional items for their businesses. To facilitate the printing process and running the business, Ms. Swaby worked with the school's work-based learning (WBL) coordinator to hire student employees to work on orders. They also have Digital Design and students from other academies working in the Design Lab. For example, Marketing students handle business marketing and social media, Finance students track funding, and Design students create designs.

Next year, Ms. Swaby plans to expand the operations and create new business roles that will include students from additional academies.

Skills Development

The main purpose of the Design Lab – Student-Based Enterprise is to do the following:

- ▶ Provide students with real-world skills and exposure in preparation for their exit from high school.
- ▶ Provide students with soft skills required in the workplace.
- ▶ Teach students first-hand about running a business.
- ▶ Give students credible employment experience that they can add to their college applications and/or résumés.
- ▶ Ultimately use a portion of business income to fund scholarships for students.

Through participation in the Design Lab, students receive training on how to

- ▶ Conduct themselves in the work environment
- ▶ Communicate with customers and peers in a professional manner
- ▶ Arrive at work on time
- ▶ Dress in work appropriate attire

Students are often sent to meet with customers to discuss order details. They also manage email communication and order delivery. Feedback gathered from customers about their student interactions is used as a coaching opportunity with students and to fine-tune their employability skills. In subsequent years, experienced students will help coach new Design Lab employees.

Audience and Initiative Impact

Students in two Digital and Web Design classes at South Gwinnett High School were tasked with competing in the business competition, completing their employability reflection assignments, and running the printing business. In running this business, students developed employability skills by putting to use their skills of communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, and gained experience overseeing day-to-day operations of a business. In fact, three local businesses recognized the talent of the students and offered Design Lab students summer internships.

Additionally, the students secured a deal with Macy's to make 30 t-shirts for their Women in Technology Organization. Following completion of that order, Macy's committed to having South Gwinnett High School students provide t-shirts for all internal information technology (IT) departments, totaling more than 500 t-shirts. Finally, since the soft opening in February 2018, Design Lab students have earned \$2,000, a portion of which will be used to fund scholarships for students.

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Georgia Employability Skills Task Force Recommendations

1. Integrate employability skills into curriculum and learning experiences from prekindergarten through postsecondary education.
2. Support educators and other stakeholders in developing employability skills instruction.
3. Develop deeper and stronger relationships between industry and education to enhance teacher and mentor roles in quality work-based learning and career development opportunities.

To learn more about college- and career-readiness work in the southeast states, please contact Beth Howard-Brown (bhoward-brown@air.org), Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) director, or visit the SECC website (southeast-cc.org).

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