

Project/Play-Based Learning Venture



Georgia Employability Skills Task Force Recommendation No. 1 School Goals 1 and 3

- ▶ Involve stakeholders in developing the scope and sequence of the curriculum to integrate employability skills.
- ▶ Formalize relationships and partnerships with local businesses to coordinate employability skills initiatives and support systems.

Overview

Nicholson Elementary School, in Cobb County, worked to establish Starville, a project/play-based learning venture, in which special-needs students in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade role play as local business employees and customers. Planning for Starville began in December 2017, and the event was held on March 16, 2018. Prior to the event, the first grade and kindergarten classes each received four individualized lessons focused on subjects such as financial literacy, job acquisition, basic career information, and future careers. First graders also completed mock job applications and mock interviews for potential jobs, while kindergarteners earned money by exhibiting good behavior prior to the event.

During the Starville event, students posed as employees and customers of Home Depot, Waffle House, Kroger, and a fire station/emergency response team. These businesses donated supplies for the event and sent employees to discuss working at their respective businesses and to support students. “Customer” students cycled through the businesses completing a variety of activities, such as building a planter at Home Depot; eating waffles at Waffle House; planting seeds in cups; or buying cookies at Kroger. Students also learned about Stop, Drop, and Roll with the fire station/emergency response team. “Employee” students were focused on activities including maintaining inventory and not giving away too many items at Home Depot, collecting money for waffle orders at Waffle House, restocking shelves after each rotation at Kroger, and helping customers through an obstacle course at the fire station/emergency response team station.

After a period, the “employee” and “customer” students switched roles. Following the event, students were graded on a rubric assessing their understanding of the world of work, the performance of their business team, and employability skills. Starville proved so successful for the students and community members that it was recreated for fifth-grade students, and the program will go school-wide in the 2018–2019 school year.

Skills Development

Starville focused on employability skills with special-needs preK, kindergarten, first grade, and fifth grade students. The best way for students to learn and understand is through performing a specific job. The idea for this project came from visiting the Children’s Museum of Atlanta where young children were playing at a grocery store and Waffle House. It is vital that schools educate students on employability skills at an early age. In addition to the skills lessons taught to

students daily, teachers at Nicholson Elementary included this project within the curriculum. Students focused on how to count money in mathematics, learned how to write about careers in writing, and read books about careers in reading. Besides the classroom core curriculum, the school counselor taught additional lessons.

Audience and Initiative Impact

Across prekindergarten, kindergarten, first grade, and fifth grade, approximately 290 students participated in Starville. Students bolstered their employability skills through lessons prior to the event and by role playing during the event. Students also learned about various career paths and related job functions. The event additionally strengthened community partnerships, with both business partners and parents reporting that they enjoyed the event.

School/District: Nicholson Elementary School

Contact: Andrea Hodgkin, Counselor

Email: andrea.hodgin@cobbk12.org

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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