

Work-Based Learning Expo and Conference



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

- ▶ Expand opportunities for students to develop employability skills and career readiness experiences beyond work-based learning, including career exploration and project-based learning, across all grade levels.

Overview

Fulton County Schools' inaugural Work-Based Learning (WBL) Expo and Conference allowed students enrolled in the district's WBL program to learn more about employability skills and to understand the connection of the skills to postsecondary plans and career opportunities. To accomplish this, the district established the following objectives for the expo:

- ▶ Prepare students with knowledge about postsecondary education and career opportunities.
- ▶ Enhance the employability skills of students.
- ▶ Encourage students to plan for their next steps after high school prior to their senior year.

Students participating in WBL programs across the district's 18 high schools were invited to attend the expo. To help with transportation and increase the number of students that could attend, organizers arranged transportation from each respective high school to the event's venue. The expo leveraged support from each school's WBL coordinator, who was tasked with preparing students to attend the event. Coordinators worked with students to practice elevator speeches that they were encouraged to use when meeting industry representatives at the expo. WBL coordinators also served as facilitators during breakout sessions. To meet the expo's objectives, students attended four sessions ranging on topics such as the following:

- ▶ "What Employers are Looking for in the 21st Century Employees"
- ▶ "Best Tools and Practices for Capturing Up-to-Date Content Effectively!"
- ▶ "Logistics: Moving Commerce and Careers that Move You Forward"
- ▶ "The Power of Teamwork"

After sessions, students had the opportunity to meet with industry representatives. To further connect the events at the expo with WBL program activities, students visited exhibitor tables and scanned QR codes, linking them to a set of questions they answered after every encounter. WBL coordinators used answers to these questions to facilitate group discussions during WBL monthly meetings at their respective schools. Organizers also created additional assignments for students to complete after the expo. Students were assigned activities focused on preparing them to tackle issues such as paying for college and how to capitalize on their college experience. The assignments also covered test-taking strategies and tactics for improving students' writing skills. In addition, the expo highlighted emerging industries and high-paying jobs that students could pursue.

Skills Development

All elements of Standard 1 were addressed at this event. The Business and Industry breakout sessions covered how to communicate effectively and use the latest technology tools to efficiently take notes. Hands-on team work exercises and projects taught team communication and thinking creatively. Manufacturing and logistics sessions taught skills for interviewing and résumé writing, appropriate etiquette for dining, customer service, and networking.

Audience and Initiative Impact

Over 800 students from the district's 18 high schools attended the expo, and 60 representatives from 25 local companies participated at the event. Most attendees were seniors, as expo organizers hoped that the event would encourage seniors to begin their postsecondary planning. To gauge the extent to which the expo had enhanced the employability skills of students in this WBL program, organizers surveyed attendees. Over 76% of attendees surveyed said they agreed or strongly agreed that the expo had increased their awareness "of the skills needed in a job or career." In addition, 60% of attendees surveyed indicated that they felt "more aware of career opportunities in different industries." Overall, the post-expo activities helped connect the expo content with additional lessons geared at helping students further prepare for college or careers after high school.

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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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