Annotated Guide to Employability Skills Curricula and Resources

PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

A JFF & HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION INITIATIVE

JFF conducted an extensive scan of the top curricula, reports, resources, and frameworks focused on employability skills currently used in the field. This annotated guide provides descriptions of each resource, along with its format, cost, and accessibility. The document is designed to be used as a companion resource to the Guide to Employability Skills Resources matrix, which includes the resources listed below and indicates whether they identify, prioritize, or aim to teach the top skills identified by employers in a 2015 employer survey conducted by the National Association of College and Employers.

CURRICULA

Common Employability Skills, American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Foundation

Format: curriculum
Cost: free
Access: http://www.ahimafoundation.org/education/CommonEmployabilitySkills.aspx
Description: The AHIMA Foundation developed a set of modules addressing the gap between traditional education and the technical/employability skills needed for workplace success. The skills identified by AHIMA are transferable to any type of position and industry. The key skills identified as "common employability skills" are: communication, teamwork, ethics, and critical thinking to supplement the technical curriculum and on-the-job-training. Within the module, participants are taken through an interactive lesson focused on the aforementioned employability skills and are tested at the end of lessons to assess their competency in each skill.

GeorgiaBEST (Business Ethics Student Training), Georgia Department of Labor

Format: curriculum
Cost: free
Access: https://dol.georgia.gov/documents/georgiabest-fact-sheet
Description: The Georgia Department of Labor provides information regarding the training and certification program for Georgia students under the GeorgiaBEST (Business Ethics Student Training) program. This fact sheet highlights the soft skills standards and overall impact to date (from the 2011-2012 cohort to 2014-2015 cohort of students) of GeorgiaBEST. The factsheet also describes the overall benefits to students that participate in the program.

NAFTrack, NAF

Format: curriculum
Cost: n/a
Access: http://naf.org/
Description: NAF is a leading organization in developing best practices and approaches to integrating and assessing career readiness in high school. The NAFTrack Certification is an online platform for purchase, designed to assess students' college and career readiness through culminating projects, end-of-course exams, and internship assessment. NAF members can take advantage of NAF one-semester courses in four career themes. In order to receive NAF certification, students must complete 4 semesters of NAF courses or NAF-approved courses (NAF approves third-party curricula like Project Lead the Way, among others, that meet NAF's standards). The NAF certification is linked to NAFTrack Certified Hiring, an initiative that includes numerous large companies that have committed to give special consideration to NAF-certified candidates.

New World of Work

Format: curriculum

Cost: free with access code request

Access: http://www.newworldofwork.org; http://www.newworldofwork.org/downloadable-resources/

Description: The New World of Work initiative operates out of Feather River Community College in Northern California. With support from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the team at Feather River has developed and piloted a 21st Century Skills curriculum currently being used in several CA community colleges. In 2013, the college organized a series of "skills panels" with employers, educators, researchers, and students that informed both the identification of "Top 10" 21st Century Skills and an open source curriculum that includes over 20 lesson modules and accompanying materials designed to be integrated into other curricula and classroom instruction. The curriculum was also informed by current literature on brain science, economic forecasting, and other research. Assessments for the learning modules are forthcoming.

***Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success*, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor**

Format: curriculum

Cost: free

Access: https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/

Description: The Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor developed a workforce readiness curriculum designed for youth and young adults between the ages of 14-21, including individuals with disabilities. The curriculum is structured around six key employability skills: communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, and professionalism. The entire curriculum, which comprises short lesson plans and activities, as well as supplementary materials and resources, can be downloaded and used in both in and out-of-school settings.

Career Solutions Publishing Group

Format: curriculum

Cost: $795-$3295 annual subscription

Access: http://www.careersolutionspublishing.com/index.htm

Description: Career Solutions Publishing Group provides a range of online work readiness curricula focused on topics entitled: Job Ready Career Skills, It's for Real Workplace Ethics, Competitive Advantage, Hands on Academics, and Managing Your Money. Each curriculum license includes short lesson plans, modules, assessments and supplementary materials that can be integrated into existing lesson plans and classroom settings or taught independently.

SkillsUSA

Format: curriculum

Cost: $7/student

Access: http://www.skillsusa.org/programs/career-readiness-curriculum/

Description: SkillsUSA is a national membership-based organization that developed the Career Readiness Curriculum (CRC). CRC is free with SkillsUSA membership and includes 29 lessons adaptable to a range of classroom settings. The curricula contain lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, handouts and additional student resources. The CRC lessons are informed by the SkillsUSA framework that consists of: personal skills, technical skills grounded in academics, and workplace skills, and can be introduced as the initial step in the SkillsUSA Professional Development program.

***Workforce Development/Soft Skills Workshop*, Goodwill's Center for Teaching and Learning**

Format: curriculum

Cost: n/a

Access: http://moodle.goodwillworks.org/moodle/

Description: Goodwill Industries offers several job training and skills development programs for youth and adults. The Goodwill youth employment program typically consists of on-site workshops held at either Goodwill centers or high school campuses that include an orientation and pre-assessment survey, in addition to classes on soft skills development and workplace training. Participants who complete the program successfully can earn an Employability Skills Training Class Certificate.

Habitudes, Growing Leaders

Format: curriculum
Cost: $300/curriculum package
Access: https://growingleaders.com/habitudes/
Description: Habitudes is a youth leadership curriculum separated into three content areas: character education, college and career readiness, and leadership. Each lesson is taught by a facilitator, using images and case studies to lead students in discussions on certain leadership and employability skills topics. Each curriculum comes with online tools and facilitation guides, as well as online/gamified interactive features that students can use individually or in small groups.

Career Success, Junior Achievement

Format: curriculum
Cost: free with community volunteer instructor
Access: https://www.juniorachievement.org/web/programs/home
Description: The Junior Achievement Career Success program is a free classroom-based curriculum that must be delivered by volunteers in the community who participate in specialized training. The curriculum consists of seven 45-minute lessons, focused on workplace knowledge and mastering employability skills in high-growth industries. Key topics include: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, strong soft skills, work priorities, STEM, personal brand and job-hunting tools.

The RealCareer Employability Skills Program, Reality Works

Format: curriculum
Cost: contact to request quote
Access: http://www.realityworks.com/products/realcareer-employability-skills-program
Description: The RealCareer Employability Skills Program is a 19-lesson curriculum for purchase that includes a teacher guide, 20 student workbooks and additional materials, presentation slides, and pre- and post-assessments. The curriculum is designed to supplement existing employability skills programs or lessons or can be taught as a stand-alone unit. The curriculum aims to encourage real-world discussions on how to apply the skills to workplace settings, as well as reflective journal writing.

Soft Skills Solutions Workbooks, JIST Career Solutions

Format: curriculum
Cost: $40/set of 7 booklets
Access: http://jist.emcp.com/softskillspkg.html
Description: Soft Skills Solutions Workbooks are a set of seven booklets sold in print or electronically for approximately $40/set. Each booklet in the program covers employability skills such as: goal setting, communication, etiquette and professional dress, self and time management, collaboration, organizational structures, ethics, leadership and integrity. With each booklet, students complete self-assessments and practice exercises to master the skills, as well as understand the importance and role of these skills in the workplace.

The Work Ethic Site, University of Georgia

Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://workethic.coe.uga.edu
Description: The Work Ethic Site at the University of Georgia (UGA) was developed as a result of the research conducted by Roger B. Hill for his dissertation on the history of work. The website includes a variety of resources including materials for a 10 day unit and six online lessons on the topics of employability skills and work ethic. Additionally, the website offers an online assessment of these skills as well as a framework for creating a guide to preparing individuals for the workforce and the theoretical context and research related to the history of work.

Career Exploration, VirtualJobShadow.com
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: contact for quote
Access: http://www.virtualjobshadow.com
Description: VirtualJobShadow.com is a fee-based online career exploration platform that allows students to learn about different types of career fields and the skills and education associated with different occupations. Career Exploration is a feature of the platform that provides educators short lesson plans on soft skills development, goal-setting and navigating the postsecondary to career transition process.

ONLINE RESOURCE/FRAMEWORK

Employability/21st-century Skills, **Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE)**
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: https://www.acteonline.org/general.aspx?id=2219#.WGxy3bGZOu4
Description: The Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE) is a national organization dedicated to advancing and advocating for career and technical education across the country. While the association is membership-based, the website offers a clearinghouse of online materials, reports, and videos on the topic of employability skills.

Employability Skills Framework, **Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE)**
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://cte.ed.gov/employabilityskills/
Description: In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) published an Employability Skills Framework that identified a subset of key employability skills organized by three categories: Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills. These skills and competencies are informed by an extensive scan of current curricula, presented in an interactive matrix that complies different curricula with the skills each intends to teach. The website offers another interactive "selection tool" that can help individuals identify factors like school size and audience to consider when selecting an assessment. The site also provides a compilation of reports and research for further reading.

Assessment & Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATCS)
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://www.atc21s.org
Description: Assessment & Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATCS) is a research collaborative project headquartered at the University of Melbourne (sponsored by Cisco, Intel, and Microsoft) that focuses on accelerating global education reform by mobilizing the following: international education and political and business communities. The mobilized groups then look to improve/transform teaching, learning, and measurement of 21st century skills. ATCS is responsible for defining and measuring the stated "21st century skills" through effective convening and research development with all partners.

Core SEL Competencies, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Format: online resources/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/
Description: In this resource, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identified five core competencies from its integrated framework (the framework promotes "intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence") for the purposes of informing curriculum and student educational development.

College and Career Readiness Framework, ConnectEd

Format: online resource, framework
Cost: free
Access: http://www.connectedcalifornia.org/direct/files/resources/CACR%20Version%20V1-2%20Apr%2012%20 2012_FINAL.PDF
Description: This resource draws upon other leading organizations and research in the field of college and career readiness and 21st century skill building to offer a framework through which educators can integrate clear definitions of what it means to be both college and career ready into classroom instruction. The document outlines the framework into these four categories: knowledge, skills, productive dispositions and behaviors, and educational, career, and civic engagement.

MHA Labs

Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://mhalabs.org/mha-overview/
Description: MHA Labs has developed a toolkit along with a series of materials focused on 21st Century skills that can be integrated into lesson plans in any subject area. The framework is organized around six "skill building blocks:" personal mindset, planning for success, social awareness, verbal communication, collaboration, and problem solving. Together, these building blocks represent 35 core socio-emotional skills that researchers at MHA labs believe are critical to college and career success.

Framework for 21st Century Learning, Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)

Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework
Description: The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) is a national organization dedicated to partnering with educators and business leaders to identify and define the relevant skills for young people to be successful in careers. P21 has published numerous resources and reports focused on the implementation and assessment of 21st century skills. In addition to this recent framework, P21 aims to change the 3Rs from "Reading, Writing and Arithmetic" to "Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships." P21 also hopes to integrate the 3Rs with what it describes as the 4Cs: Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity. The organization is in the process of updating its Assessment of 21st Century Skills: A Landscape, which will result in a new assessment tool that incorporates research and development on assessments over the last decade.

Youth.Gov

Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: www.youth.gov
Description: Youth.Gov is a federal website geared toward youth that covers a range of topics, including employment. Within this section, there are resources specific to soft and technical skill development and training. The website provides overview information about other sites that can link users to more information, including the U.S. Department of Labor's Soft Skills to Pay the Bills curriculum.

RESEARCH/REPORTS

***Assessing 21st Century Skills: Summary of a Workshop*, National Resource Council**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13215/assessing-21st-century-skills-summary-of-a-workshop
Description: The National Resource Council convened a committee of researchers and practitioners over the course of four years to identify categories of key 21st century skills and how to assess these skills. The group identified three broad clusters: cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, and intrapersonal skills. The committee then commissioned a series of research papers to evaluate current thinking and results on assessments of skills related to these clusters. The downloadable resources summarize the discussion and findings presented at the last workshop the committee held in 2010.

***Workforce Connections, Key "Soft Skills" That Offer Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields*, Child Trends**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2015-24WFCSoftSkills1.pdf
Description: This white paper analyzes the trends in research on the "soft skills gap" and provides recommendations for a set of key soft skills that increase the chance of success for youth ages 15-29 in the workforce. The recommendations are informed by an extensive review of research (more than 380 resources) and broad stakeholder input. The research examined the relationships between the following soft skills and key workforce outcomes: employment, performance on the job, wages, and entrepreneurial success. Overall the report identified five critical skills that likely increase success in the workforce: social skills, communication, higher order thinking skills, self-control and positive self-concept.

***Future Work Skills 2020*, Institute for the Future**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: http://www.iftf.org/futureworkskills/
Description: The Institute for the Future and the University of Phoenix Research Institute analyzed the "key drivers" that are redefining the landscape of necessary skills emerging over the next 10 years (by 2020). To be noted, the report specifically focuses on skills rather than jobs/occupations.

***A Foundation for Success in the Workplace: The Skills All Employees Need, No Matter Where They Work*, National Network of Business and Industry Associations**
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://businessroundtable.org/sites/default/files/Common%20Employability_asingle_fm.pdf
Description: This four-page resource describes the top employability skills identified by the National Network of Business and Industry Association. The Association has developed a framework for organizing these skills into four categories: personal skills, people skills, applied knowledge, and workplace skills.

***Skills Requirements for Tomorrow's Best Jobs: Helping Educators Provide Students with Skills and Tools They Need*, IDC**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: http://news.microsoft.com/download/presskits/education/docs/IDC_101513.pdf
Description: This IDC white paper presents research that forecasts the most "in demand" skills and competencies in 2020. Those skills, widely considered as "soft" skills, are commonly reflected in nearly all occupations but will be in particular demand in jobs that are both high growth and well above the median salary potential.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH/REPORTS

Integrating Employability Skills: A Framework for All Educators, College and Career Readiness and Success (CCRS) Center, **American Institutes for Research (AIR)**
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://www.ccrscenter.org/implementation-tools/integrating-employability-skills
Description: The College and Career Readiness and Success (CCRS) Center housed at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, and RTI International collaborated to expand upon the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) framework to develop a series of tools focused on interactive learning modules that build educators' knowledge and capacity to integrate employability skills into their teaching. The audience for these tools are: regional comprehensive centers, state educational agencies, and state regional centers. The modules contain PowerPoint slides, handouts, sample agendas, workbooks, tools for individuals or state working groups, and a facilitators guide.

21st Century Skills and Competency MetaGrid, **Mozilla Foundation**
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9qOTaXg3UmRdXBDOEttSllpNFU/view
Description: This index, compiled from an overview of several research briefs and reports, provides a meta breakdown of college and career readiness competencies for entry-level careers and emerging 21st Century jobs in the "digital age." Several competencies (e.g. adaptability, communication, digital literacy, problem solving, and many more) are also linked to an actionable methods of evaluation.

Employability Skills Standards Program, **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**
Format: online resource/framework
Cost: free
Access: http://dpi.wi.gov/cte/skills-standards/employability
Description: The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction developed the "Employability Skills Certificate Program" to develop a student's mastery of skills and behaviors critical to the 21st Century. The program is intended to achieve the following: recognize the student's mastery of employability skills (developed in partnership with employers), support students in exploring career interests, and to provide a state recognized credential of employability skills mastery. The program provides state guidelines to support local districts in offering school-supervised work-based learning programs.

The 2012 State New Economy Index Report, **The Information Technology & Innovation Foundation (ITIF)**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: http://www2.itif.org/2012-state-new-economy-index.pdf
Description: In this report, the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF), a nonpartisan think tank focused on innovation policies and advances in technology to benefit economic growth in the United States, conducted a comparative analysis of states' economic profiles and how they aligned with the "ideal structure" of the "New Economy." The report identified 26 indicators to measure the state economies, which were divided into the following five categories: knowledge jobs, globalization, economic dynamism, the digital economy, and innovation capacity.

***The 4Cs Research Series*, Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: http://www.p21.org/our-work/4cs-research-series
Description: The Partnership for 21st Century Learning, in collaboration with the University of Connecticut, released this research series analyzing the "key aspects of conceptualizing, developing, and assessing" four critical areas of "21st century learning" called the Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. The briefs outline research in the field pertaining to the 4Cs and then outlines necessary actions/steps to embed them into practice.

***Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success, Selected Finding from Online Surveys of Employers and College Students Conducted on Behalf of the Association of American Colleges & Universities*, Hart Research Associates**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2015employerstudentsurvey.pdf
Description: This report analyzes results from online surveys of employers and college students, conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU). Hart Research Associates outline several key findings highlighting learning outcomes and proficiencies that employers value highly for employees. The learning outcomes that were rated as "most important" by employers were the following: written and oral communication skills, teamwork skills, ethical decision-making, critical thinking, and "the ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings." The report further dives into key findings from both employers and students, and how these findings connect with teaching and learning at the postsecondary level.

***Job Outlook 2016*, National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free limited access
Access: http://www.naceweb.org/s11182015/employers-look-for-in-new-hires.aspx
Description: The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) presents findings from their "Job Outlook 2016" survey in which over 200 employers participated. The survey is designed as a "forecast of hiring intentions of employers" with an emphasis on the skills that employers seek in candidates' resumes. The following attributes were the five highest rated by employers: leadership, ability to work in a team, communication skills (written), problem-solving skills, and strong work ethic.

***Information & Communication Technology: Shared Prosperity in the Digital Age, Skillworks, JPMorgan Chase & Co.*, Economic Advancement Research Institute (EARI)**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: http://www.skill-works.org/documents/SkillWorksICTReportProofweb.pdf
Description: SkillsWorks (a funding collaborative comprised of leadership from various sectors including: philanthropy, government, and business, among others), JPMorgan Chase & Co., and the Economic Advancement Research Institute (EARI) outline key findings in this report analyzing the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. The report pulls from labor market data (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau), employer survey, and current ICT professionals (this study interviewed over 100 ICT workers), primarily focused within the state of Massachusetts. Key findings identified "misaligned education requirements" by ICT employers and recommended that employers more accurately align their hiring requirements with the desired competencies and skills that they seek from employees. The non-technical skills identified as important by employers were: work ethic, dependability, and critical thinking.

***The Growing Importance of Soft Skills in the Labor Market*, David Deming**
Format: research/reports
Cost: free
Access: https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/ddeming/files/deming_socialskills_august2015.pdf
Description: Economist David Deming presents research analyzing the growing relevance/importance of "social skills" in relation to the labor market. Since 1980, Jobs with high social skill requirements have seen significant growth throughout wage distribution. While many jobs in recent decades have shifted from human operated functions, high-skill and "difficult-to-automate" jobs increasingly necessitate social skills. Deming provides evidence showing the employment growth in jobs requiring social skills and its relation to wage distribution across all positions (not exclusive to management and other top-end positions). He also draws connections between cognitive skills and social skills and reveals the growth in occupations requiring both sets of skills (cognitive and social).

ASSESSMENT

***WorkKeys*, ACT**
Format: assessment and certification
Cost: $15-$75/Instructor's guide; $8/individual assessment
Access: http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/workforce-solutions/act-workkeys.html
Description: WorkKeys is an online skills assessment system developed by ACT, that supports employers in making the following workforce decisions: hiring, training, development, and retention. The WorkKeys assessment provides different levels of assessment that correspond to increased complexity and quantity of information. WorkKeys assessments can be administered online or in paper format. ACT WorkKeys offers instructor guides, assessments, and certifications, including the National Career Readiness Certificate.

***Critical-thinking Assessment Test (CAT)*, National Science Foundation (NSF), Tennessee Tech**
Format: assessment
Cost: $10/test and $200 annual fee
Access: https://www.tntech.edu/cat
Description: Tennessee Tech, with support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), elicited input from faculty at a range of institutions across several disciplines to create the Critical-thinking Assessment Test (CAT). The CAT instrument was designed to assess a "broad range" of skills that have been determined (by faculty) to encompass important components of critical thinking and applicable problem-solving. The instrument was developed to engage faculty in the assessment and improvement of students' critical thinking.