

Glossary of Terms

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Academic skills

Those skills including communications, mathematics, science, and basic literacy proficiencies necessary to achieve career success and to facilitate lifelong learning.

Basic skills

Essential academic and personal abilities that enable a person to succeed in school and the workplace. Traditionally referred to as basic education skills - reading, writing, and arithmetic. In recent years, educators and employers have expanded the definition to include a number of cognitive and interpersonal abilities, including the capability to think and solve problems, communicate information in oral, written, and electronic forms, work effectively alone and in teams, and take personal responsibility for self-development.

Benchmarking

The continuous process of measuring products, services, and practices against strong competitors or recognized industry leaders. It is an ongoing activity that is intended to improve performance and can be applied to all facets of operation. Benchmarking requires a measurement mechanism so that the performance "gap" can be identified. It focuses on comparing best practices among dissimilar enterprises.

Block scheduling

A means of circumventing the time constraints of a single class period. The traditional school day is typically divided into six or seven classes of 45 to 55 minutes. In contrast, blocked courses may be scheduled for two or more continuous class periods or days to allow students greater time for laboratory or project-centered work, field trips, or work-based learning and special assemblies or speakers. Block scheduling reduces instructional time lost in passing classes.

Capstone course

A career cluster capstone course is a structured experience that provides students the opportunity to tie together vocational and academic coursework in a way that is meaningful, experiential, and connected to the student's chosen career pathway. Generally offered at the 12th grade, a capstone experience could be a structured mentorship, senior project, or summer academy geared to the student's career interests and yielding a portfolio.

Career academy

A school-within-a-school that offers students academic programs organized around broad career themes. Integrating classroom instruction with work-

based learning, academies equip students with the necessary skills for both workplace entry and post-secondary admission. Staffed by a team of teachers from various disciplines, academy classes are block scheduled and smaller than those in the typical high school. This enables teachers to structure activities that build students' sense of membership in the academic community. Curricula are often planned with the assistance of business partners, who suggest program structure, provide classroom speakers, host school field trips, and provide mentors for individual students. Where possible, students are placed in jobs related to their field of study in the summer following their junior year, and may spend part of their senior year participating in a work experience program.

Career awareness

Instruction that introduces students to a range of career options. These school-based programs, often aimed at elementary and middle school levels, help expand the occupational knowledge of youth by helping them identify occupations and career cluster areas they may be interested in pursuing during their secondary years. Introducing students to a wide range of labor market issues and teaching them about the education and training requirements of different occupations, career awareness activities may include studying and producing work products, participating in career inventory and assessment programs, and interacting with and listening to presentations by employers and career counselors.

Career clusters

Groupings of occupations from one or more industries that share common skill requirements. Career clusters provide a means of organizing the thousands of career choices for implementation in the school curriculum.

Career day/Career fairs

Special events that allow students to meet with post-secondary educators, employers, or career development professionals to learn about future work opportunities. Career day activities are designed to help students think about their skills and knowledge in relation to potential careers and to meet service providers who can assist them in acquiring the necessary skills and experience for workplace skills.

Career guidance/counseling

Programs that: (A) develop individual career awareness, career planning, career decision making, placement skills, and knowledge and understanding of local, state, and national occupational, educational, and ongoing market needs, trends, and opportunities; (B) assist individuals in making and implementing informed educational and occupational choices; (C) help students develop career options with attention to surmounting gender, race, ethnic, disability, language or socioeconomic impediments to career options; and (D) encourage careers in nontraditional employment.

Career development

Securing additional training and on-the-job experience over time.

Career-focused education

Educational programming in which curriculum content and learning experiences clearly connect to the world of work.

Career pathway

A series of academic, technological, and occupational coursework and other educational experiences leading to a career specialty.

Contextual learning

Instruction that imparts knowledge within the "context" in which it will later be used. Linking abstract concepts with real-life problems, contextual

learning enables students to test and prove academic theories via tangible, real work applications.

Credential

Certificate or diploma that certifies that a student has met the training requirements for a particular career, job, or skill. In some instances, a credential is "portable," meaning that the credential is accepted any geographic location that a student may chose to live; e.g., high school diploma.

Employability skills

Personal development and leadership abilities essential for increased productivity, economic self-sufficiency, career flexibility, business ownership, and effective management of work and family responsibilities.

General track

Unlike the academic track (which offers advanced instruction to the college-bound) or the vocational track (which outfits youth with entry-level job skills), the general track is characterized by a less rigorous and more broadly defined curriculum that neither prepares students for college nor the workforce.

High performance workplace

A workplace model that suggests a robust, thriving economy can be sustained if more sophisticated, technically advanced and efficient production techniques are employed. This type of workplace requires workers with advanced academic and occupational skill sets that enable them to learn on the job, adapt to rapidly changing technology, and work in teams to solve problems. The emerging "high performance workplace" stresses more flexible, decentralized systems in which multi-skilled workers share greater responsibility for and control over their work.

High skill, high wage

In a high skill, high wage economy, employers pay workers higher salaries than they might otherwise earn because workers' advanced skill holdings make them more efficient, and thus more profitable to the firm. Shifting to this type of workforce may require reforming secondary and post-secondary curriculum and emphasizing instruction that smoothes the transition from school to work. Employees must have a solid foundation in basic and higher level academic knowledge, a variety of general and specialized work skills learned over time, as well as the ability to work in teams, accept group responsibility and constantly learn new skills while adapting to changing technology.

Internships

For a specified period of time, students work for an employer to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Students' workplace may include special projects, a sample of tasks from different jobs, or tasks from a single occupation.

Job shadowing

A student follows an employee for one or more days to learn about a particular occupation or industry. Students explore a range of career objectives and select a career major for the latter part of high school.

Mentors

Role models for youth. Mentors understand the world of work and have proven to be valued workers concerned about their customers and fellow employees.

Occupational skills

Those skills involving the technical abilities to perform required workplace tasks, including problem solving and critical thinking.

Portable Credential

See Credential.

Portfolio

A collection of work that documents a student's educational performance and employment experiences over time. Typically includes a range of work (e.g., reports, photographs) assigned by the teacher and selected by the student. Portfolios may be used for a variety of purposes including: increasing student learning opportunities; helping students demonstrate a wide variety of skills; assisting students in recognizing their own academic growth; and teaching them to take greater responsibility for their own learning and development.

Post-secondary educational institution

A two- or four-year school that provides formal instructional programs with a curriculum designed primarily for students who have completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalency certificate. Curricula include academic, vocational, and continuing professional education purpose but excludes vocational and adult basic education programs.

SCANS

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was convened in February 1990 to examine the demands of the workplace and to determine whether the current and future workforce is capable of meeting those demands. The Commission was directed to: (1) define the skills needed for employment; (2) propose acceptable levels of those skills; (3) suggest effective ways to assess proficiency; and (4) develop a strategy to disseminate the findings to the nation's schools, businesses and homes. Based on its research, the Commission identified five competencies skills necessary for work place success and three foundations skills and qualities that underline competencies. These include:

Competencies - Effective workers can productively use:

- Resources - allocating time, money, materials, space, and staff; Interpersonal
- Skills - working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds;
- Information - acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files, interpreting and communicating, and using computers to process information;
- Systems - understanding social, organizational, and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance, and designing or improving systems;
- Technology - selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks, and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies.

Foundations - Competence requires:

- Basic Skills - reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening;
- Thinking Skills - thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn,

- and reasoning;
- Personal Qualities - individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity.

School-To-Work

A systematic approach to workforce preparation that has three basic elements: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. Local partnerships, with employers as key members, plan and operate School-To-Work systems. School-To-Work transition system A school-to-work transition system is a critical part of the broader workforce development system. It is a system designed to help all young people get the academic and technical training to prepare them for high performance workplaces. The components of such a system include:

- The kind of restructured school system that helps all students meet the world-class academic and applied learning standards represented by a universal literacy qualification (Certificate of Initial Mastery);
- Applied learning experiences throughout elementary, middle, and high school to help all students meet those standards;
- Ways of helping students make choices about their futures, including career awareness activities and workplace experiences integrated into the elementary, middle and high school curriculum as well as high quality counseling and advising services;
- Multiple choices for the future, including rigorous technical training programs that combine school and work-based learning and result in nationally recognized industry skill certificates; and
- Flexible and open pathways between college preparatory, community service/work and technical programs for all young people.

This system would be governed by the same governing structure overseeing the broader workforce development system.


Work-based learning

Learning that takes place in the workplace. Work-based learning includes activities that can range from shorter-term, introductory types of experiences to longer-term, more intensive ones, including paid work experiences and formal training. Although work-based learning activities vary, they generally involve schools and employers working together to devise objectives, activities, and work tasks, and sometimes, criteria for monitoring or assessing students.

Workforce Development System

System designed to provide all citizens with the skills they need to attain a high standard of living. The components include:

- A universal literacy qualification representing the foundation set of academic and applied learning standards that most young people would meet by age 16. It would be the same set of standards young people would meet in school or in alternative education settings and that adults would meet in adult basic education programs. Such a qualification presumes a basic education system that can help all young people and adults meet these standards.
- Standards for key work in our economy represented by a skill



certificate that young people work toward in school-to-work programs and adults would work towards in adult initial and upgrade training programs;

- Rigorous technical training programs designed to assist young people to meet skill standards (school-to-work programs) and provide opportunities for adults to upgrade their skills (adult training programs); and
 - A labor market system that helps individuals in school, in training, at work, and out of work access career development services, job search services, job matching, and enrollment in quality education and training programs that lead to skill certificates;
 - Economic development policies supporting training for a more competitive economy.
 - These components would be help together by unified governance structures at the state and regional levels with representation from the full range of state agencies involved in the workforce development system and business and labor that coordinate policy and strategic and local plans for workforce development, including school-to-work, one-stop career centers and economic development efforts, and insure system-wide accountability.
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