

Preparing Students to Meet Workforce Demands: Employability Skills for 21st Century Success

Jennifer R. Curry, Ph.D., Professor
Louisiana State University

Two real and very different cases...

Iberville Parish



St. Vrain

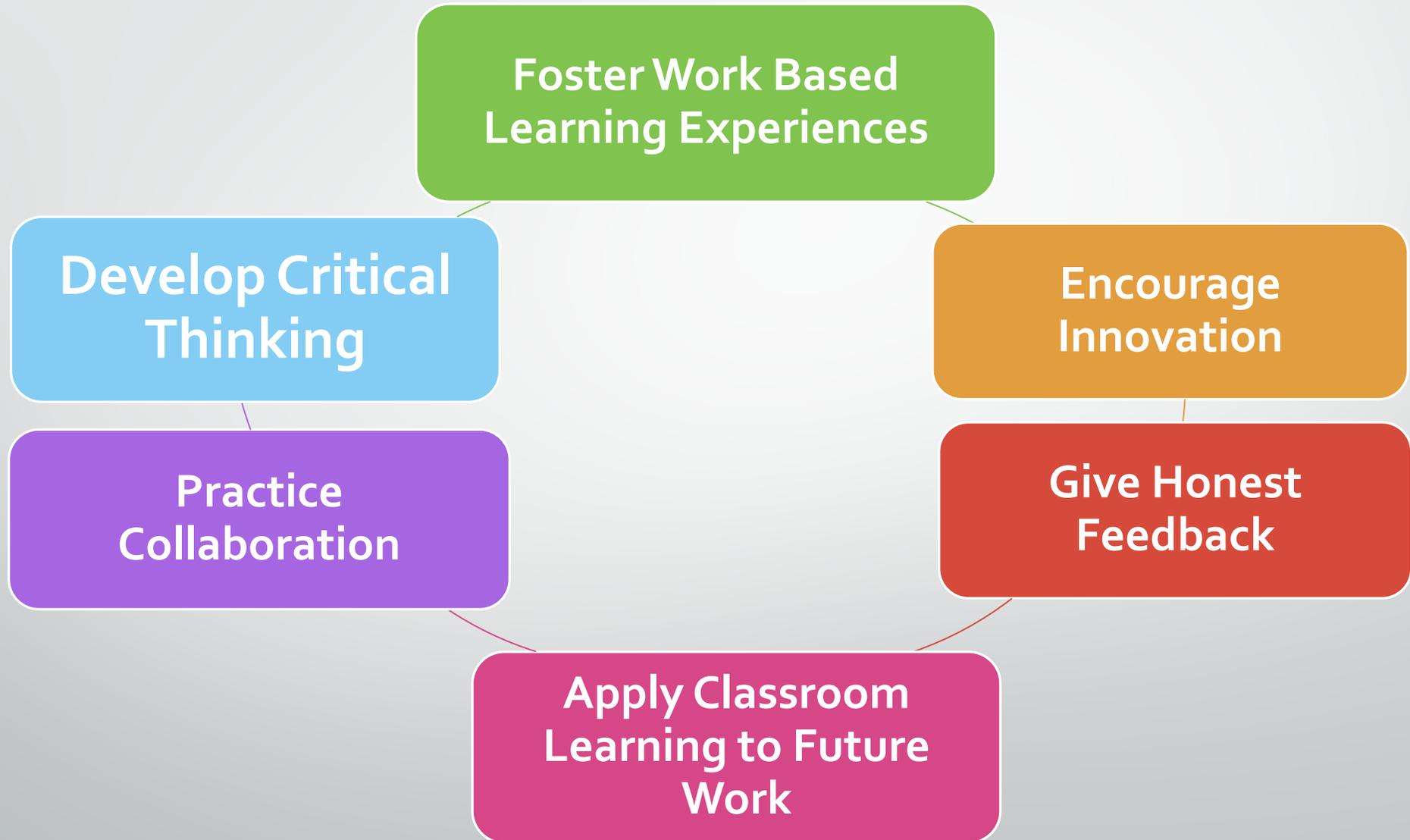


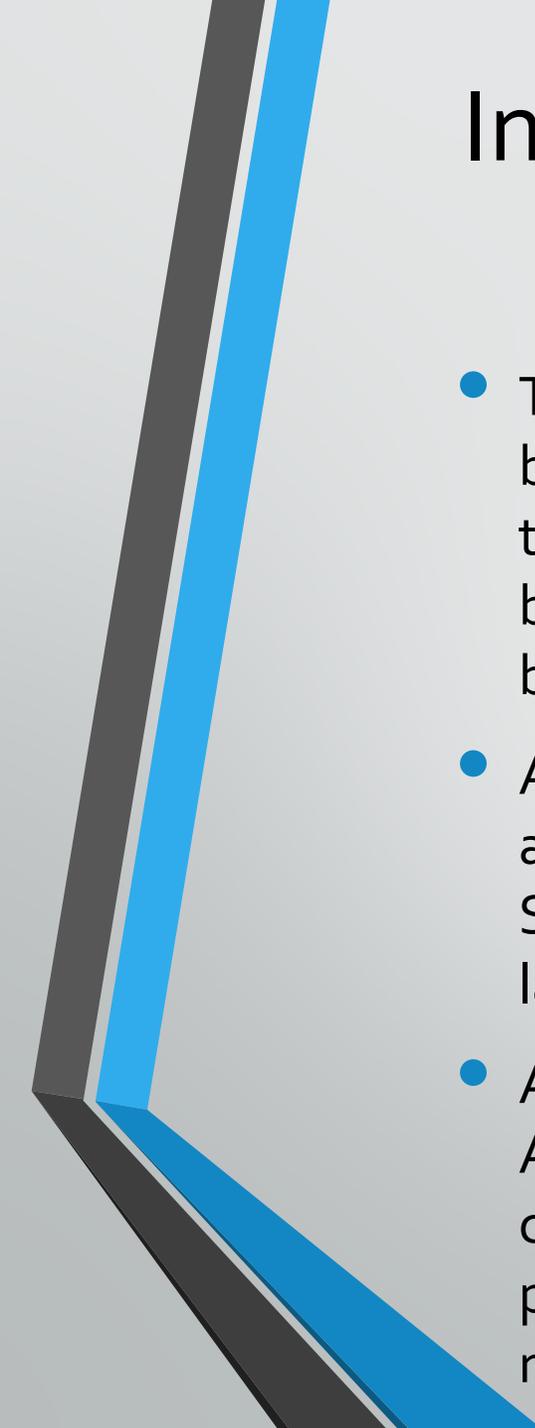
Characteristics Desired by Employers

- Dependable/Self-Reliant
- Self-Motivated/Self-Initiating
- Problem Solver
- Team Player
- Understand Priorities
- Positive Attitude
- Ability to Take Feedback
- Flexible/Adaptable
- Honesty & Integrity



To Promote Future Employability





Integrating Innovation: Building Problem Solving Skills

- The accountability focus promoted under NCLB (2002) fostered a standards-based, outcomes-driven, and testing environment in education. Although there may be some benefits to this approach, the predominant assessment basis left little time for classroom creativity, innovation, project and problem-based learning.
- Although students learned to master test materials and content under the accountability model, they did not learn to be effective critical thinkers. Schools have increasingly faced criticism from employers because students lack the necessary metacognitive skills to be real world problem-solvers.
- According to a survey of over 300 employers conducted by Hart Research Associates (2013), 93% of employers agree, “a candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems” is weighed more heavily in the hiring decision than degree or major.

Integrating Innovation: Building Problem Solving Skills



Underscore the importance of innovation through:

- Curriculum Integration (e.g., the Aquaponics program)
- Extracurricular Activities (e.g.,
- Community Partnerships
- Co-Curricular Activities
- Examples
 - Community café
 - Horticulture Program Florist Shop
 - Briggs and Stratton Lawn Mower Classroom Training Kits (Grand Junction Program)
 - Apple Tech Certification in Longmont
 - Aeronautical Engineering

Give Honest Feedback

Ask teachers and mentors to give students feedback on employability skills with regularity. The ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors (2014) can offer a guide for behaviors to target. For example:

B-LS 3. Use time-management, organizational and study skills

B-SS 1. Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills

Wilkinson et al. (2013), noted that there are two types of feedback delivery: (1) directive and (2) elaborative. In a directive approach, the supervisor simply tells the learner what was observed and what he or she can improve. In an elaborative approach, the supervisor shares observations, and then engages the learner in a more complex conversation based on a model of mutual learning and co-observation. The model suggested by Wilkinson et al. (2013) for the elaborative approach is the Henson Model.

1. What do you think about the recommendation(s) I made as a whole?
2. What do you think you did well?
3. What do you think you could improve?
4. What do you think I did well?
5. What could I have done differently to improve or enhance your learning experience?

Give Honest Feedback

Integrate Employability Rubrics

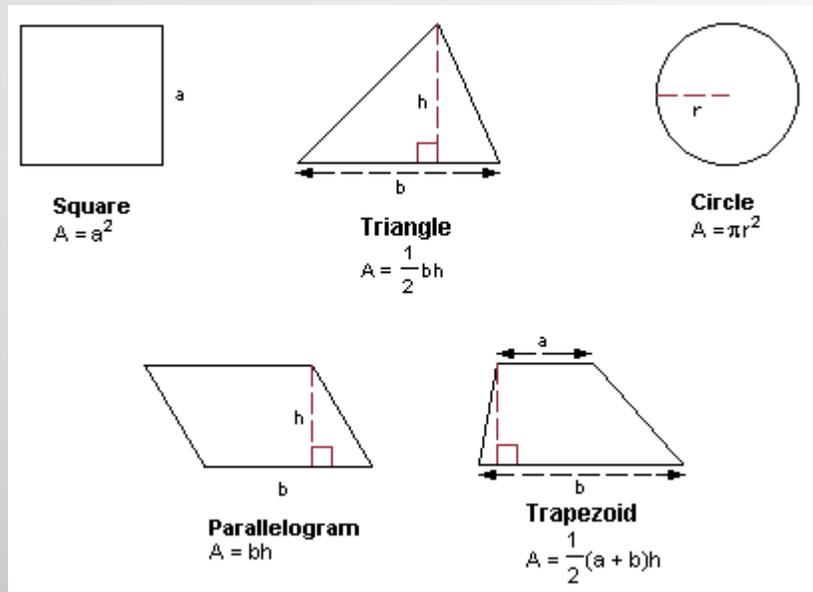
Mock Interviews

(ASCA Employer Career Conversations)

Resume and Cover Letters



Apply Classroom Learning to Future Work



Why do I have to learn this? I'm never going to use it!

- Help teachers connect academics to the world of work in meaningful ways (e.g., project based learning)
- Example: Geometry is used in transportation, construction, survey, cartography, urban and regional planning, archaeology, drafting, graphic design, interior design, engineering and much more!
- *Example: The future cosmologist*

Work-Based Learning Opportunities

- Dual Enrollment
- Chunking
- Practicum Experiences
- Internships
- Externships
- Job Shadowing



Work-Based Learning Opportunities



- NCLB left students college prepared but not workplace ready, focus on core four academics rather than career
- Workforce has pressured legislators and educators to better prepare students for employment; educators have pushed back asking for industry partners to invest in students growth and development in the education process
- Workplace experiences range from practicum, internships, job shadowing to 1, 2, and 3 year apprenticeships
- U. S. Bureau of Labor registered apprenticeships have 5 necessary components: national occupational credentialing, business involvement, structured on-the-job training, related instruction, and reward for skills gain



CASE EXAMPLES

Terri is Competent but not Employable

Terri is in high school and an apprentice at a local bakery. She is enrolled in her high school's culinary arts program and is receiving dual enrollment credit in an Associate's program at a community college. Terri loves to bake and wants to own a bakery. Her high school apprenticeship program awards her dual enrollment credit with the local community college for successful completion of the apprenticeship program. This is the first year her high school has implemented this program. At the conclusion of the first semester of her apprenticeship, Terri received her evaluation from her supervisor at the bakery and she received high praise for her baking competencies. She was ranked high for cleanliness in the kitchen, skill in baking, and creativity. However, her employability skills are ranked very low including tardiness and absences, not wearing the proper uniform, and poor customer service.

Her school counselor, Mr. Lancaster, was given the task of assigning her a grade for the apprenticeship class. However, he is unsure how to give her a grade because she has met the competencies for culinary arts for the semester, but not employability skills. His district has not outlined a policy for how to assign the grade based on the two different rubrics given in the performance evaluation from the company. In the Memorandum of Understanding with the community college, determination of grades are made by the high school staff based on performance feedback provided by the company. However, the MOU does not designate what performance feedback is used and how it is weighted. In other words, Mr. Lancaster is unsure if employability skills should have equal weight in the grade as the competencies for culinary arts. Moreover, each company uses different evaluations based on the competencies of their industry so he is unsure how to proceed with giving a grade.

Discuss with a partner...

1. Although work based learning experiences are important, what crucial issues are present in this case study?
2. How might you go about resolving some of these issues if you were on a counseling team at the same high school with Mr. Lancaster?
3. How would you approach a discussion with Terri? What would you want to hear from her and her supervisor?

Reflecting on the Workplace

Ms. James, a high school counselor, meets monthly with the school's junior class student- apprentices (students in their first year of the apprenticeship program). The students have dinner sponsored by a local restaurant and then they are placed in discussion groups with different topics each month. For the February meeting, the students drew ecomaps of their workplaces to show reporting structures related to the units they worked in. Then they used colors and various design tap to demonstrate the relationships and communication styles of individuals within the units they worked in. They talked about what they were learning about each person's unique leadership style, strength, and communication patterns and the overall culture and dynamic of the work environment. Students were asked to choose three people in their work environment that they admire and would like to emulate and discuss why. Throughout the activity students were given questions to reflect on silently while they worked on their ecomap and were occasionally given questions to discuss out loud at their group table. At the end of the night students were asked to share with each other one insight they learned about their worksite culture from completing the activity. Ms. James took pictures of the students work to document the activity but did not attach students' names to their work for confidentiality.

Discussion Questions

- How might sessions like these help students build their employability skills?
- Would pros and cons do you see to having students participate in an activity like this?
- Would it be more beneficial to have the students complete the activity at the workplace? Why or why not?
- Should the student have to share their answers? Should they have to share their artwork?
- Should students have to attend these sessions? If so, how many should they have to attend?

References

American School Counselor Association. (2016). High school career conversations. Alexandria, V.A.: Author. Retrieved from

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/HSCareerConversations.pdf>

American School Counselor Association. (2016). Middle school career conversations. Alexandria, V.A.: Author. Retrieved from

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/MSCareerConversations.pdf>

American School Counselor Association. (2014). *ASCA mindsets & behaviors for student success: K-12 college- and career-readiness standards for every student*. Alexandria, V.A.: Author. Retrieved from

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/MindsetsBehaviors.pdf>

Curry, J. (2018). *Promising practices for secondary school apprenticeships*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

Curry, J. & Milsom, A. (2017). *Instructor's Manual: Career and college readiness counseling in P-12 schools* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.

Hart Research Associates. (2013). *It takes more than a major: Employer priorities for college learning and student success*. Executive Summary. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from

https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2013_EmployerSurvey.pdf

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P.L. 107-110, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2002).

White, M. C. (June 4, 2019). Who's got a side hustle? Postgrads and people earning \$80,000 or more. Retrieved from

<https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/who-s-got-side-hustle-postgrads-people-earning-80-000-n1013621>

Wilkinson, S. T., Couldry, R., Phillips, H., & Buck, B. (2013). Preceptor development: Providing effective feedback. *Hospital Pharmacy*, 48(1), 26-32. doi: 10.1310/hpj4801-26