Elevating Employability: Regional Approaches to Essential Skills Validation

Presented by:
Heather Penczak, Director of Innovation and Implementation, EdSystems

Bridget French, Executive Director, College & Career Readiness
Jessica Hayes, Work Based Learning Coordinator
Rockford Public Schools

Awareness to Action: *Promoting Equity in Education and Careers*

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GPEAK

Heather Penczak, Director of Innovation and Implementation, EdSystems

What is GPEAK?

The Greater Peoria Essential Abilities and Knowledge (GPEAK) system was developed by Illinois Central College, in partnership with Peoria's CEO Council and Regional Workforce Development Alliance, the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council, and the Illinois Community College Board. Over 85 community members collaborated develop a regional approach for assessing and validating essential skills needed in the workplace.
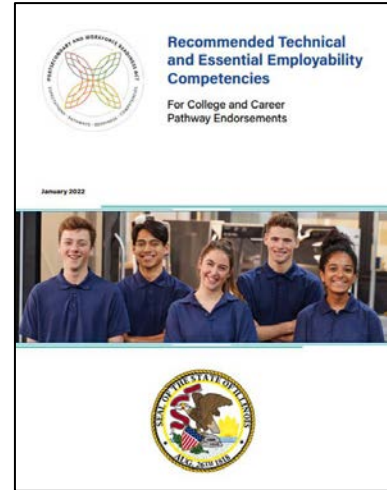
GPEAK measures an individual's demonstration of essential skills needed for meaningful employment while encouraging learners to reflect on their growth and development.

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Core Components of the System

Performance indicators	At the foundation of the GPEAK system are the ten Illinois' Essential Employability Competencies which are each broken down into 5 key actions and behaviors per competency.
Curricular resources	GPEAK participants receive access to case studies, journal activities, reflection prompts, workshop ideas and mentor moments to help individuals reflect on and develop their essential employability skills.
Assessment and Badging system	GPEAK participants submit pre- and post-assessments and upload evidence to support the attainment of the GPEAK competencies. Validators review the information and award competency badges. Once an individual earns all ten badges, they will be GPEAK certified.

Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies

For College and Career Pathway Endorsements

January 2022

Teamwork and Conflict Resolution: Please mark the level that the Participant has achieved for each performance indicator

	Progression Level Attained			
	N/A	Learning	Demonstrating	Leading
Establishes a high degree of trust, confidentiality, and credibility with others to develop shared purpose	○	○	○	○
Encourages others' contribution of ideas, opinions, and perspectives through thoughtful and positive interactions	○	○	○	○
Coordinates with others to achieve identified outcomes and objectives	○	○	○	○
De-escalates difficult situations constructively and positively	○	○	○	○
Is committed to solving problems/findings resolutions	○	○	○	○

GPEAK

Journal
Teamwork and Conflict Resolution

Teamwork and Conflict Resolution Journal

Teamwork and Conflict Resolution: Individuals can use their understanding of working cooperatively with others to complete work assignments and achieve mutual goals.

In this journal you will find tools and activities to help you understand what skills teamwork and conflict resolution entail. Through self-reflection, activities, examples, and questioning, you will develop a better sense of why being a good team worker and being able to resolve conflicts calmly and efficiently are necessary in the workplace and how you can demonstrate those qualities to the best of your ability. You will be able to see your own growth by completing a self-check at the beginning and end of the process.

Self-Check

A. **Consider This….**

A person who knows how to work in a team builds trust with others. They keep information confidential, being sure not to gossip. They follow through on tasks assigned to them. They ask for others' ideas and perspectives and thoughtfully consider all input before making a decision. They communicate with other team members when needed. They seek to resolve conflicts through constructive, creative, and positive behaviors. They reflect on their own behaviors in a problem situation and assume responsibility for their own actions and mistakes.

B. **Self-Reflection Questions** *(consider your own experiences—classroom, work, or activities—and answer the following)*

1. In your experience, what are three important aspects of teamwork?
2. How can you tell when a team is not working well together?
3. What are three things that would escalate a conflict?
4. What are three ways to resolve a conflict?

> *"The GPEAK assessments make you think about yourself and what direction you are going in your career. They give you an inner reflection about where you currently are, what areas you need to improve, what areas you are strong in, and what you need to look at in order to push yourself to be more successful, to gain knowledge and experience, and to refine your skills."*

Participant

ESSENTIAL EMPLOYABILITY COMPETENCY BADGES

- Teamwork & Conflict Resolution
- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Critical Thinking
- Adaptability & Flexibility
- Initiative & Self-Drive
- Reliability & Accountability
- Cultural Competence
- Planning & Organizing
- GPEAK Certification

Interested in using all or part of the GPEAK system?

We are always here to thought partner on how you might integrate this in your community!

Visit gpeak.org to learn more and please email hpenczak@niu.edu if you would like to discuss this further and we can get a conversation scheduled with your team.

In the works:

- Training site for teachers to utilize the resources and assessments
- Self-guided videos for participants to engage in and reflect on the essential employability competencies

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Rockford Public Schools, District 205

Our **MISSION**

To collaboratively engage **ALL STUDENTS** in a world class education.

Our **VISION**

Be the first choice for **ALL FAMILIES**.

College & Career Academies of Rockford

BUSINESS ACADEMY

BUSINESS MODELS
NEW IDEAS CREATING
COMPUTERS
BRAINSTORMING
THE ARTS DRAWING

PRODUCTION ACADEMY

STRUCTURE
CONSTRUCTING
DESIGNING PLANES & CARS
BUILDING
WORKING WITH TOOLS

HEALTH ACADEMY

TERMINOLOGY
CARE SCIENCE
MEDICINE
HEALTH SPORTS
HUMAN BODY

SERVICE ACADEMY

PROCESSES
LEADER JUSTICE
EDUCATION
HELPING OTHERS CARING
CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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Academies and Pathways

Business

- Business & Entrepreneurship
- Graphic Design
- Information Technology
- Media Production
- Studio Art

Health

- Biomedical Lab Sciences
- Nursing/Pre-Med
- Mental Health & Wellness

Production

- Construction
- Engineering
- Industrial Technology
- Manufacturing
- Transportation Tech

Service

- Hospitality
- Education
- Public Safety

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Work-Based Learning & Career Development Continuum

By the end of grade 8 complete:

Personal interest/
career cluster survey

Framework for
a ten-year plan

High school visit

By the end of grade 9 complete:

Academy Expo
attendance

Freshmen
orientation on
career clusters

Ten-year plan

Select Academy
and Pathway

Community
college visit

Digital portfolio
launch

By the end of grade 10 complete:

Two business
site visits

First course
in Pathway

One additional
career exploration
activity

By the end of grade 11 complete:

Job shadow
experience

Creating resume &
personal statement

Mock interviews

Second course
in Pathway

One additional
career exploration
activity

Internship
experience

College essay/
personal statement/
job application

A college fair

By the end of grade 12 complete:

Capstone course
or experience

Final resume &
personal statement

One team-based
challenge

One additional
career exploration
activity

Third course
in Pathway

Community service

Financial aid/
scholarship
applications

Internship

Soft Skills!

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Work Study Program

Illinois Employability Skills

- Ten cross-sector essential employability competencies
- Quality indicators of student's readiness to enter an industry or pursue further education
- Also includes competencies by endorsement area

[Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies for College and Career Pathway Endorsements](#)

Employability Skills = Soft Skills

Working with Others	The Thought Process	Self-Regulation
Adaptability and Flexibility	Critical Thinking	Initiative and Self-Drive
Communication	Decision Making	Planning & Organizing
Cultural Competence	Problem Solving	Reliability and Accountability
Teamwork and Conflict Resolution		

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Program Start Up

Developed a [job description](#)

ARP ESSER funded through August 30, 2024

Hired three people of five

- Current para

- Former teacher

- 2nd career

Developed Program Framework

Students earn credit for working (job they already have)

Students must demonstrate soft skills at their job

Students meet with job coach at least once per month

Students may earn one elective credit per semester

Program Overview

Career Coach

On the job training students in Soft Skills

Meeting students at their place of employment

Connecting with employers to support students

Students

Let their job coach know where they work & when

Job Coach supports students' soft skill development

Students earn elective credit with demonstration of soft skills

Employers

Allow job coaches into company where students are employed

Connect with job coach to provide feedback on students' demonstration of soft skills

Advertising the Program

Students learn about work study program

- Counselor
- Signage around school
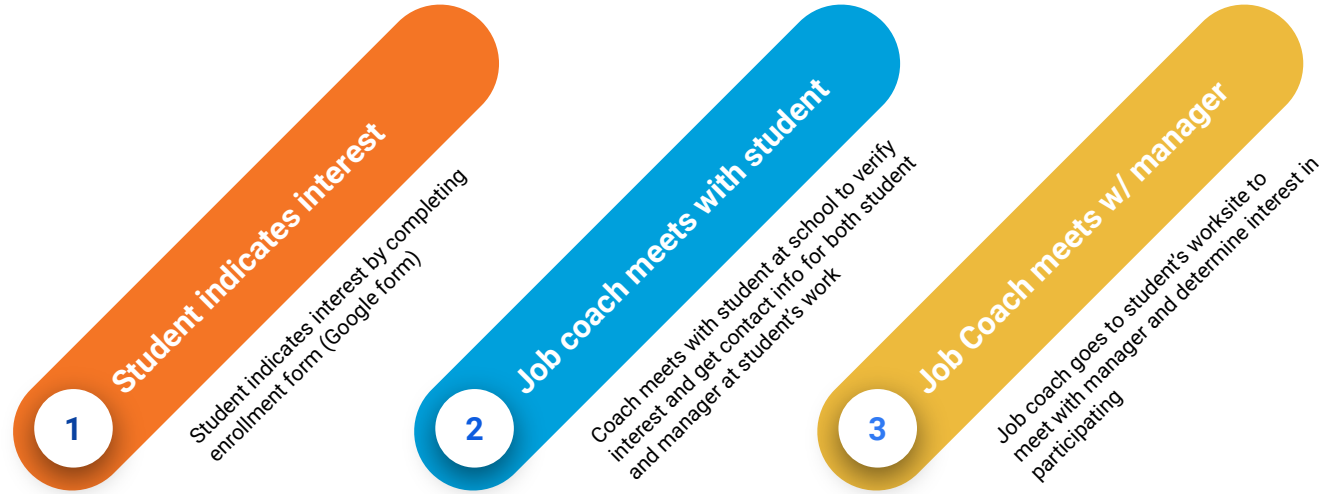- Peachjar
- Job Coaches have tables in cafeteria; library

Three Badges = 1 Credit

RPS 205 | PROBLEM SOLVING
LEARNING
CERTIFIED

RPS 205 | PROBLEM SOLVING
DEMONSTRATING
CERTIFIED

RPS 205 | PROBLEM SOLVING
LEADING
CERTIFIED

Badging System Platform

How it Works

1 — **Student indicates interest**
Student indicates interest by completing enrollment form (Google form)

2 — **Job coach meets with student**
Coach meets with student at school to verify interest and get contact info for both student and manager at student's work

3 — **Job Coach meets w/ manager**
Job coach goes to student's worksite to meet with manager and determine interest in participating

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Employer meetings

Job Coach meets with the student's manager to determine willingness to participate

Manager will also meet with job coach monthly to discuss student's performance at work

Student, manager, job coach determine mutually agreed upon time to meet going forward

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How it Works

4 — **3 - 6 meetings per semester**
Job coach meets with each student and each manager 3 times per semester; sometimes separate, sometimes manager and student together

5 — **Job coach submits badge**
One student has demonstrated proficiency in a skill, job coach enters and awards badge through Credly

6 — **Job Coach meets w/ manager**
Job coach goes to student's worksite to meet with manager and determine interest in participating

How it Works

Some employers prefer to meet with job coach & student together; sometimes they prefer to meet only with job coach
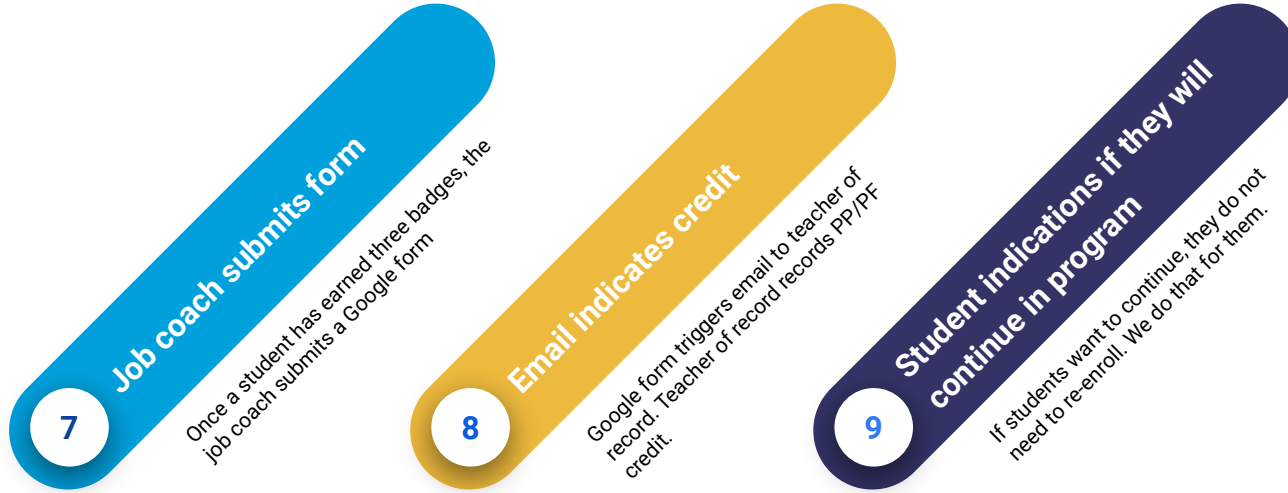
Students can demonstrate skills in any area

- Does not have to be subsequent

    1. Learning Communication

    2. Learning Problem Solving

    3. Learning Planning and Organizing

Students have to accept badges in Credly

- Badges go into student profile that can be shared on Indeed, LinkedIn, and other compatible sites

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How it Works

7 Job coach submits form
Once a student has earned three badges, the job coach submits a Google form

8 Email indicates credit
Google form triggers email to teacher of record. Teacher of record records PP/PF credit.

9 Student indications if they will continue in program
If students want to continue, they do not need to re-enroll. We do that for them.

Program Results

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Summer Results

Building	# of Students
Auburn	35
East	7
Guilford	62
Jefferson	26
Roosevelt	14
Total	144

Building	# of Credits Earned
Auburn	35
East	5
Guilford	42
Jefferson	21
Roosevelt	12
Total	115

Summer Results

Community Partners Engaged

47

New Partners to the District

30

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Summer Results

# of Badges Earned	Success Rate
331	80%

Fall Results

Building	# of students
Auburn	41
East	20
Guilford	51
Jefferson	59
Roosevelt	32
Total	203

Building	# of Credits earned
Auburn	41
East	17
Guilford	49
Jefferson	49
Roosevelt	32
Total	188

Fall Results

of Badges
Earned

494

Success
Rate

93%

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What We've Learned

Growing Pains

Seniors participated, but we found more juniors asking to be in the program

Added juniors, now we have large caseloads

Growing Pains

Started with:

- For each student:
    - One in person visit at school upon program startup
    - Three additional visits at the workplace

- For each employer:
    - One visit in person upon program startup
    - Three additional visits at the workplace

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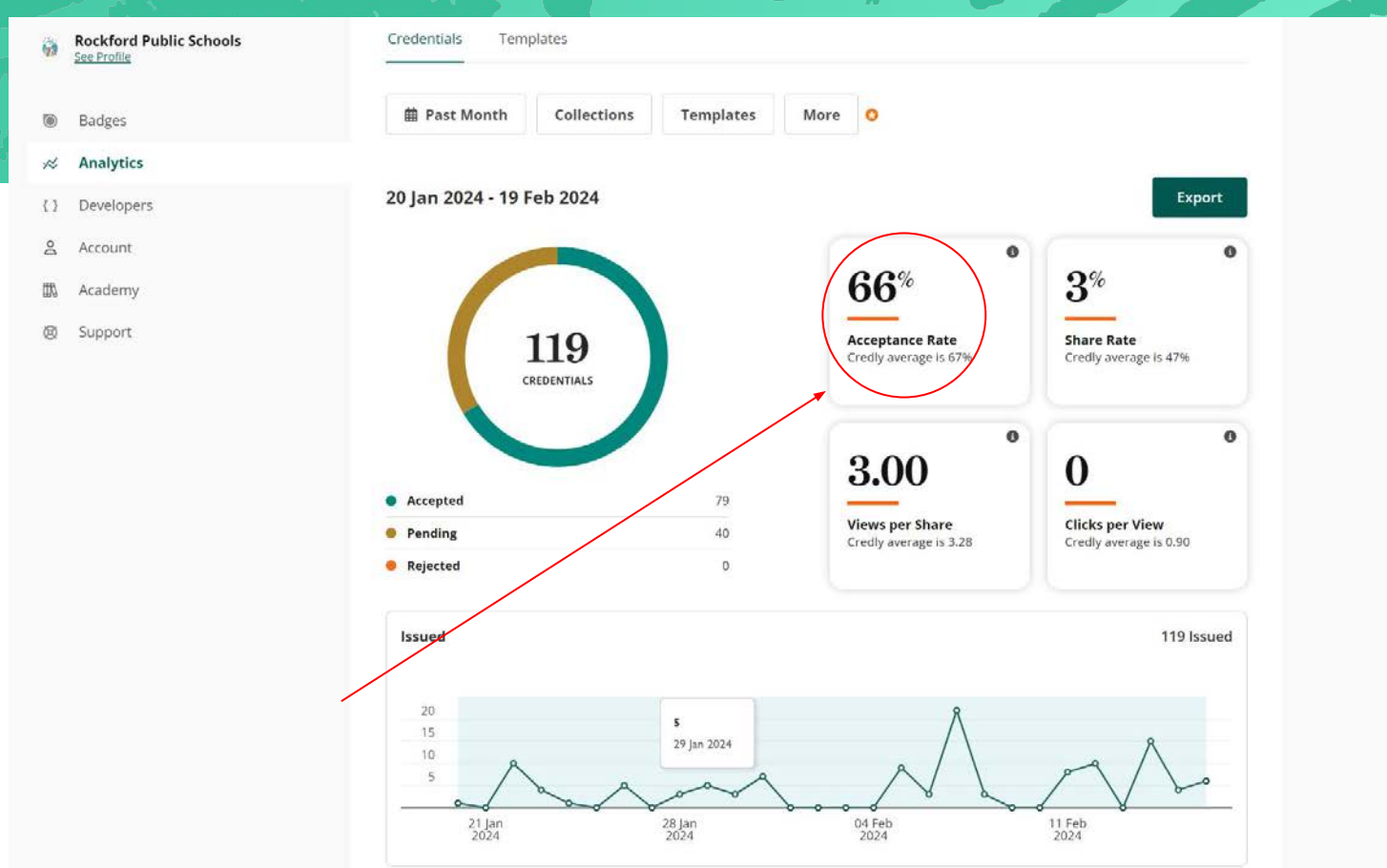SUCCESS NETWORK

Growing Pains

Shifted to:

- For each student:
    - One in person visit at school; one visit at workplace
    - 2 - 3 other check-ins at school or by phone

- For each employer:
    - One visit in person
    - All other check-ins by phone or email

Difficulty getting students to accept their badges

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Questions?

Bridget French
bridget.french@rps205.com

Jessica Hayes
jessica.hayes@rps205.com