Elevating Employability: Regional Approaches to Essential Skills Validation

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GPEAK

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Awareness to Action: Promoting Equity in Education and Careers
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 to 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.
### Core Components of the System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance indicators</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curricular resources</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and Badging system</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Teamwork and Conflict Resolution Journal**

**GPEAK**

**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 these 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
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](http://gpeak.org) to learn more and please email [hpenczak@niu.edu](mailto: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

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

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## Academies and Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Biomedical Lab Sciences</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
<td>Nursing/Pre-Med</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>Mental Health &amp; Wellness</td>
<td>Industrial Technology</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Production</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio Art</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transportation Tech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

3%
Soft Skills!

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Work Study Program

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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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working with Others</th>
<th>The Thought Process</th>
<th>Self-Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability and Flexibility</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Initiative and Self-Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competence</td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>Reliability and Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork and Conflict Resolution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Career Coach</strong></th>
<th><strong>Students</strong></th>
<th><strong>Employers</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the job training students in Soft Skills</td>
<td>Let their job coach know where they work &amp; when</td>
<td>Allow job coaches into company where students are employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting students at their place of employment</td>
<td>Job Coach supports students’ soft skill development</td>
<td>Connect with job coach to provide feedback on students’ demonstration of soft skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting with employers to support students</td>
<td>Students earn elective credit with demonstration of soft skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

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Badging System Platform

**Teamwork & Conflict Resolution: Demonstrating**

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Issued by: Rockford Public Schools

Students can use their understanding of working cooperatively with others to complete work assignments and achieve mutual goals.

Skills:
- Confidentiality
- Coordinates with others
- De-escalates difficult situations
- Encourages others to contribute
- Problem Solving
- Trust

Attributes: Visible
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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
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
How it Works

1. **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.

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

3. **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.
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 to record PP/PF credit.

9. **Student indicates 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th># of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>144</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th># of Credits Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>115</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summer Results

Community Partners Engaged: 47
New Partners to the District: 30

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Badges Earned</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>331</td>
<td>80%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Fall Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th># of students</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th># of Credits earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>203</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>188</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Badges Earned</td>
<td>Success Rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>494</td>
<td>93%</td>
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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
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
Questions?

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