Building Life Skills for Career Readiness and Workplace Success

Finding success in today's workforce is difficult without life skills such as relationship-building, problem-solving, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and self-management. Research-based personal and interpersonal skill-building for students (often referred to as social-emotional learning) can lead to improved outcomes at school and later success in the workplace.[1]

> Careers that require the mastery of personal and interpersonal skills have outpaced the growth of all other occupations—and employers increasingly look for these skills in their employees.[2]

Employers highly seek employees with:

- **Personal skills** such as integrity, initiative, dependability and reliability, adaptability, and maintaining a positive attitude[3, 4]
- **Interpersonal skills** such as communication, collaboration, and respect[3, 4, 5]
- **Workplace skills** such as problem-solving and decision-making[3, 4, 5]
- **The ability to work in a team**, which ranked as the second most desirable attribute of new college graduates, after only leadership skills[6]

> Ten of the top 15 skills identified by the World Economic Forum as the most important for employability in 2025 involve personal and interpersonal competence: analytical thinking, active learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, leadership, resilience and flexibility, emotional intelligence, service orientation, and negotiation. [7]

However, employers report difficulty finding employees with adequate skills:

- Nearly 80 percent of employers identified personal and interpersonal skills as being the most important qualities needed for success—and at the same time, the hardest qualities to find in the labor force[8]
- More than 50 percent of employers said they had trouble finding recent graduates who possessed skills—like communication, adaptability, decision-making, and problem-solving—needed to do the job[9]
- Ninety-five percent of CEOs reported they have problems finding candidates with the personal and interpersonal competencies and training to fill open positions at all skill levels[10]

Policy Recommendations

- Incentivize and support the inclusion of research-based personal and interpersonal skill-building programs in preschool, elementary, and secondary schools as well as career and technical education programs, colleges, and universities.
- Ensure access to funding for personal and interpersonal skill-building instruction that is adequate, prioritized, and applied with high-quality controls.

Committee for Children

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