Improving Employability Competencies for High School Students

Angela Williams

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Improving Employability Competencies for High School Students

Angela Williams

Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa
Improving Employability Competencies

Abstract

This School Improvement Plan aims to enhance the employability skills of high school students at Clayton Ridge by strategically addressing components essential for success in the modern workforce. Employability skills, encompassing a range of personal qualities, communication abilities, digital literacy, and leadership proficiencies, are paramount for students' future careers. The plan focuses on developing a structured framework, integrating reflective practices, and documenting career opportunities within Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to better prepare students for success in the workforce and lifelong learning. Through collaboration with local businesses and industry professionals, students will gain invaluable insights into industry expectations and real-world applications of classroom learning. The alignment of the proposed improvement plan with existing research underscores its potential for positive impact, emphasizing key areas identified in the literature as critical for students' success. By addressing the gap between academia and industry expectations, the plan seeks to position Clayton Ridge as a leader in preparing students for future success in the workforce.

Keywords: employability skills, high school education, career readiness, reflective practices, work-based learning
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Improving Employability Competencies for High School Students

Employability skills refer to a set of skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics that increase an individual's likelihood of securing a career and succeeding (Okolie et al., 2020). Common employability skills include problem-solving, leadership, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and personal qualities (Krishnan et al., 2021). Reddy and Shaw (2019) emphasize that learning to become, or ontology, should be a key element in education, stating that merely being knowledgeable is insufficient; individuals in the workforce must continually learn to become and act professionally. Providing students with opportunities for work-based learning, work-integrated programs, MOOCs, and other real-life experiences in the classroom are all ways to enhance students' employability skills. Poor employability skills may significantly contribute to increasing unemployment rates (Ng et al., 2021). The lack of relevant workplace skills among graduates is a major factor preventing students from securing, retaining, or succeeding in jobs (Okolie et al., 2020). Okolie (2020) further argues that one of the primary reasons Higher Education Institutions struggle to teach generic skills effectively is the lack of pedagogical knowledge content on how to do so. Consequently, students continue to graduate from high school and enter the workforce or pursue secondary education without adequate employability skills.

The purpose of this school improvement plan is to strategically address components aimed at enhancing employability skills in high schools. While students are already exposed to employability skills in various classrooms, there is a need for more consistent practice and additional opportunities for skill development. Following discussions with local business owners, it became evident that professional skills such as communication, conflict resolution, problem-solving, and the ability to learn on the job are often lacking in workers, yet are highly desirable.
As a response, the school improvement plan will offer opportunities for all high school teachers to engage in reflective practices within their classrooms, provide a checklist aligned with industry standards, and offer documentation for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

Research for this literature review utilized scholarly journals available at the DeWitt Library at Northwestern College. All articles were peer-reviewed, with the majority published within the past ten years. The focus was on articles addressing in-demand employability skills and how educational institutions can foster them. This research scope allows for consideration of the necessary skills for all workers and how work-integrated learning can positively impact students.

The author believes that providing work-integrated learning experiences will enhance students' employability skills upon graduation. These experiences may include cooperative learning in any classroom, work-based learning opportunities, and participation in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs). Growth in employability skills will occur as teachers implement classroom activities that encourage the development of workplace skills, such as fostering collaborative learning environments and instilling lifelong learning practices to help students adapt to changing workplace demands. Additionally, growth will be facilitated through a structured framework aimed at improving the overall employability skills of graduating students, which includes a definitive checklist, reflective practices for teachers, and clear documentation of career opportunities within CTE programs, all geared toward preparing students for success in the workforce.

The literature review has been organized by key themes deemed effective in understanding employability skills in the workplace and how educational systems can intervene.
The literature review will begin with an exploration of definitions of employability skills and how these skills may differ from those required before the fourth industrial revolution. Next, the literature review will cover the impact of employability skills within the workforce, followed by a focus on the importance of classroom environments and opportunities that encourage workplace skills, ultimately benefitting all high school students as they prepare for the future workforce.
Review of the Literature

Foundations of Employability Skills Development

In the contemporary landscape characterized by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the challenges stemming from technological advancements, various industries, including communication and media, have undergone significant transformations. Research conducted in Malaysia by Siti Nor Amalina et al. (2022) delves into the expectations of employability skills during this transformative period. Their mixed-methods study, involving 47 employers and 313 respondents, along with qualitative interviews with middle and top-level management, identified personal qualities, communication skills, digital proficiency, leadership abilities, and interpersonal competencies as priority skills in the communication and media industry.

Employers in this study expressed concerns about the preparedness of graduates, stressing the need for practical abilities and real-world application of knowledge, particularly in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The study also identified avenues for future research, suggesting a broader exploration of employability skills across diverse disciplines and settings (Siti Nor Amalina et al., 2022). The themes emerging from this study underscored the widespread impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with advancements such as artificial intelligence shaping job requirements and necessitating the development of both technical and soft skills. Despite this increase in automation, the demand for interpersonal skills and adaptability remains crucial, emphasizing the significance of holistic skill development for prospective employees. The study by Siti Nor Amalina et al. (2022) offers valuable insights into the evolving landscape of employability skills in the communication and media industry amidst the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Employers' expectations highlight the importance of a multifaceted skill set encompassing technical expertise, communication skills, and leadership
skills, underscoring the importance for educational institutions to align their curricula with industry demands.

Similarly, Winterton and Turner (2019) examined graduate work readiness (GWR) from diverse stakeholder perspectives, emphasizing the "duality of employability" and the importance of aligning educational outcomes with industry demands. They conducted a comprehensive review to explore diverse perspectives on GWR and its implications for stakeholders, including universities, governments, and corporate industries. Their study aimed to explain the varying viewpoints among stakeholders and identify potential gaps in employability between educational institutions and the labor market.

Their review, drawing on qualitative data from the UK and the Asia Pacific Region, highlighted the dynamic interactions within the "triple helix" paradigm involving universities, industry, and government. While stakeholders unanimously acknowledged the significance of employability skills, variations across industries emphasized the need for tailored approaches to GWR. Employers expressed dissatisfaction with the skills and competencies of graduates, highlighting a growing emphasis on soft skills and adaptability in addition to technical expertise, while also stressing the necessity of aligning educational curriculum with industry standards.

The study by Winterton and Turner’s (2019) study sheds light on the complexities surrounding GWR and the diverse perspectives held by stakeholders. The study emphasizes the importance of acknowledging industry-specific nuances in employability skills and fostering closer collaboration between universities, government agencies, and corporate entities to bridge the gap between education and employment.

Furthermore, Mahajan et al. (2022) investigated the evolving demands of employability skills in the post-COVID era, particularly in the Delhi-NCR region. Through a quantitative
approach involving 35 management graduates, 32 academicians, and 42 business/HR professionals, the researchers sought to explain the tripartite perspective on employability skills. The study employed three distinct questionnaires, each tailored to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, to assess the perceived importance of various skill dimensions.

Findings from the study identified ten key factors of employability skills, including digital competencies, core business skills, personal attributes, teamwork, communication, cross-cultural competency, customer orientation, domain knowledge, decision-making skills, and stakeholder management skills. A notable finding in the study by Mahajan et al. (2022) was the consensus among stakeholders regarding the importance of communication skills in the post-COVID workplace, with students ranking it as a top priority. Additionally, all stakeholders recognized the significance of the identified employability factors, highlighting their universal relevance across diverse occupation contexts. Furthermore, findings stress the need for explicit and comprehensive employability skills to equip graduates with a broad skill base necessary for workforce readiness and lifelong learning. The study underscores the dynamic nature of employability skills development in the post-pandemic landscape, with a heightened demand for digital competencies and adaptable skills.

Understanding the fundamental employability skills required for successful job performance has been a focal point of research aimed at bridging the gap between education preparation and workforce demands. Rosenberg et al. (2012) contribute to this discussion by examining basic employability skills from the perspectives of business school students, faculty members, and human resource managers. Their triangular approach revealed discrepancies in the prioritization of employability skills among stakeholders, highlighting the nuanced nature of workforce expectations. The description of eight dimensions of basic employability skills
provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the varied nature of workforce readiness.

Rosenberg at al. (2012) examine the core question of identifying essential employability skills and assessing the need for additional training to enhance workforce readiness. Through a qualitative methodology conducted at a business school in southern California, the researchers surveyed 532 business school students, 343 recent graduates, 92 faculty members, and 97 human resource managers. The survey encompassed 47 items measuring eight dimensions of basic employability skills, including leadership, interpersonal skills, literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, information technology proficiency, system thinking, and work ethic.

Findings from the study revealed varied perspectives among the three stakeholder groups regarding the prioritization of employability skills. Recent graduates emphasized the importance of leadership and work ethic, while faculty members highlighted interpersonal skills as paramount. Conversely, human resource managers placed greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills for effective job performance. This discrepancy underscores the nuanced nature of employability skills and the varying expectations across different segments of the workforce. The study identifies areas for future research, advocating for a triangular approach to examine basic employability skills in international settings.

These studies collectively reinforce the evolving landscape of employability skills during the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic. They emphasize the importance of aligning educational curricula with industry demands, creating a balance between technical proficiency and soft skills, and recognizing the powerful nature of employability skill development. Collaborative efforts between educational institutions, governments, and industries are essential in preparing graduates for success in a rapidly changing workforce.
Employability Skills and Workforce Success

Transitioning from student to professional constitutes a critical phase in an individual’s career trajectory, particularly evident in fields like psychology and hospitality management. Reddy and Shaw (2019) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study focusing on the graduate transition within BSc Psychology. Over three years, the research explored the experiences of individuals transitioning from students to graduate professionals. The study, based at Birmingham Southern College, involved four students engaged in one-year work placements, followed by interviews with five graduates at graduation and two years later (Reddy & Shaw, 2019).

The findings emphasized the significance of vocational higher education with integrated work experiences in facilitating transformative learning experiences for individuals entering the professional domain (Reddy & Shaw, 2019). Attributes such as reflection, self-awareness, and immersion in a community of practice were identified as pivotal for becoming a professional (Reddy & Shaw, 2019). Thus, practical, hands-on experiences alongside theoretical knowledge play a crucial role in preparing graduates for their careers.

The study also pointed toward future research areas, including further exploration of graduate transition experiences, workplace learning, and the influence of academic studies on graduates' professional lives (Reddy & Shaw, 2019). Moreover, it underscored the importance of higher education in preparing individuals for post-graduation careers, emphasizing the ontological aspect and the process of "learning to become" in addition to knowledge acquisition (Reddy & Shaw, 2019). Their findings underline the necessity of integrating work experiences into higher education curricula to foster professional development. Graduates' valuation of
practical work experiences emphasizes the need for a holistic educational approach that encompasses both theoretical knowledge and experiential learning, aligning with contemporary workforce demands.

In another study, Mohammad (2020) investigated the motivations, employability skills, employment aspirations, and training of Hospitality Management undergraduates, focusing on the impact of motivations on employability skills and aspirations. Conducted among 500 university students enrolled in a 4-year degree hospitality program in Egypt, the study utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches over an academic year (Mohammad, 2020).

The findings revealed significant influences of students' motivations for majoring in hospitality management and their commitment to pursuing a career in the field on their employability skills (Mohammad, 2020). Practical training in real hospitality workplaces was identified as essential for undergraduates to qualify for the future workforce (Mohammad, 2020). Thus, aligning educational programs with industry needs and providing relevant, hands-on experiences are crucial for enhancing students' employability.

Moreover, Mohammad (2020) highlighted the positive impact of motivations on both employment aspirations and skills among hospitality management undergraduates (Mohammad, 2020). This underscores the importance of educators understanding and leveraging students' motivations to enhance their learning experiences and prepare them for successful careers.

The study also identified the need for future research to explore the influence of sociodemographic characteristics of undergraduates on their motivations and employability (Mohammad, 2020). This suggests a potential avenue for further investigation into the complex interplay between individual characteristics and career-related outcomes in the hospitality industry, providing valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers.
Mohammad's (2020) study contributes to the literature by emphasizing the pivotal role of motivations in shaping the employability skills and aspirations of hospitality management undergraduates. The findings underscore the importance of integrating practical training experiences into academic programs to enhance students' readiness for the workforce while highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of individual motivations and their impact on career outcomes.

Krishnan et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the language proficiency, employability skills, and interview success of student graduates during job interviews in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The study involved 27 recent graduates holding bachelor's degrees in fields such as marketing, management, business administration, economics, and hotel management. The research focused on uncovering the correlation between language proficiency, employability skills, and interview success.

The qualitative analysis primarily involved recorded and transcribed job interview sessions centered on addressing workplace challenges. Themes were identified based on challenges encountered by employers during the recruitment process, allowing for an evaluation of interviewees' employability skills. Successful interviewees demonstrated a comprehensive set of skills, including problem-solving, leadership, teamwork, and effective communication. In contrast, reserved interviewees displayed partial competence, while unsuccessful candidates exhibited deficiencies in key areas, notably problem-solving, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. The study advocates for integrating employability skills modules into educational curricula to meet evolving workforce needs. Additionally, it suggests exploring alternative methods of evaluating graduate employability skills, such as using documents, evaluation forms and questionnaires from employers' perspectives.
The themes from Krishnan et al.’s (2021) study underscore the significance of employability skills in facilitating workforce success. Key skills identified include problem-solving, leadership, critical thinking, adaptability, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Moreover, the study highlights the crucial role of language proficiency in effectively conveying employability skills during job interviews, emphasizing the need for precise communication to demonstrate competence and professionalism.

Bak et al. (2019) investigated the role of soft skills within the context of supply chain management in the United Kingdom. The research aimed to identify the most essential employability skills needed for working in supply chains, comparing the perspectives of supply chain employees and experts. Employing a mixed-methods approach over two phases, the study involved 120 supply chain employees and six supply chain experts.

The findings highlighted the significance of soft skills, particularly behavioral skills like communication, planning, initiative, and negotiation, in supply chain management. These skills were deemed more crucial compared to traditional hard skills. The research underscores the importance of incorporating soft skills training into educational curricula to better prepare students for the demands of the supply chain industry.

Integration of Employability Skills in Education

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have emerged as a popular avenue for online education, offering learners access to diverse courses across various disciplines. Recently, attention has turned towards understanding the potential of MOOCs in upskilling the labor force. Goglio and Bertolini (2021) investigated the contribution of MOOCs to upskilling the labor force, focusing on whether MOOC participation leads to labor market advantages. Employing a qualitative approach, they conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 participants enrolled in
MOOCs offered by European Higher Education Institutions in 2019. Participants reported a significant increase in both job-specific skills and transferable soft skills as a result of MOOC enrollment. However, challenges related to the recognition of MOOC credentials by employers were noted, despite their potential cost-efficiency for lifelong learning. The study highlights areas for future research, including employer attitudes toward MOOC credentials and the impact of alternative credentials on labor market perception.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) have gained prominence in preparing individuals for the evolving workforce, particularly amidst global market changes and technological advancements (Hafid et al., 2019). TVET systems, influenced by historical, cultural, economic, and social factors, require adaptation to meet industry demands. Work-based learning (WBL) has emerged as a critical component of vocational education, offering learners practical experiences directly relevant to the workplace. Hafid et al. (2019) analyzed work-based learning models in vocational schools, noting strengths such as industry-aligned curricula but also highlighting challenges, including accessibility and the need for sustained partnerships between educational institutions and industry stakeholders.

In another study, Hanu et al. (2023) investigated the impact of work-based learning (WBL) on employee development and organizational competitiveness. Through a quantitative survey involving 443 employees from various enterprises in Ghana, the study found that engagement in WBL activities fosters proactive goal generation and promotes organizational ambidexterity. Additionally, a supportive organizational culture was identified as a moderator in the relationship between WBL and employee behavior. These findings suggest that WBL initiatives can positively influence employee development and organizational success.
Jill et al. (2019) explored the effectiveness of teaching and learning interventions in enhancing university students' ability to articulate their employability skills. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study found that the Structured, Targeted, Achievable, and Relevant (STAR) format facilitated students' articulation of employability skills effectively. Incorporating employability skills articulation into academic programs is crucial for preparing students for the workforce.

Work placements and experiential learning opportunities are recognized for their role in developing young people's employability skills and facilitating their transition to the workforce (Messer, 2018). Messer's (2018) study examined the impact of work placements on young students' perception and development of employability skills. Post-placement assessments revealed an increase in self-assessment scores, highlighting the effectiveness of work placements in enhancing employability skills among young individuals.

Managers' role in promoting workplace learning is crucial for fostering employee development and organizational success (Wallo et al., 2022). Learning-oriented leadership, characterized by creating a supportive learning environment and facilitating employee development, contributes significantly to shaping the organizational learning culture. Managers play a critical role in promoting workplace learning through their leadership practices and behaviors.

In conclusion, integrating employability skills through diverse avenues such as work placements, vocational education, managerial leadership, workplace learning initiatives, and online courses holds promise for enhancing individuals' readiness for the workforce and promoting continuous learning among employees. These studies collectively underscore the
importance of bridging the gap between education and industry to equip individuals with the skills necessary for success in today's dynamic workplace.

**Challenges in Employability Skills Development**

In today's rapidly evolving organizational landscapes, innovation has become imperative for businesses striving to maintain relevance and competitiveness amidst technological advancements and global competition. Among the factors influencing innovative work behavior, information sharing within the framework of Human Resource Management (HRM) has garnered significant attention. Battistelli et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive study to investigate the role of information sharing as an HRM practice in fostering innovative work behavior among employees. Battistelli et al. (2019) conducted their research within the Italian military organization, engaging 950 male employees to participate. Data collection spanned from 2018 to 2019, utilizing an online survey methodology with 756 participants. The study was embedded within an innovation program initiated by the Italian military organization, focusing on HRM practices and employee development activities.

Employing a quantitative approach, Battistelli et al. (2019) utilized an online survey instrument comprising items rated on a 5-point scale. The survey measured constructs including perceptions of information sharing, work-based learning, challenging tasks, organizational commitment, innovative work behavior, and control behaviors. Confirmatory factor analysis validated core constructs within the dataset.

The findings shed light on the relationship between information sharing, workplace learning processes, and innovative work behavior. The study identified a positive correlation between interactional learning and organizational commitment, highlighting the significance of fostering conducive workplace perceptions through HRM practices. Additionally, the study
emphasized the critical role of challenging assignments and organizational commitment in fostering innovation among employees. However, further exploration is needed to understand the dynamics underlying the relationship between information sharing, learning processes, and innovative work behavior.

The study highlights themes discussed by Battistelli et al. (2019), emphasizing the pivotal role of HRM practices in nurturing employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities to drive innovation. It also highlights the role of training initiatives in augmenting employees' job skills and overall performance. Challenges faced by organizations in creating conducive environments for experiential learning are discussed, along with the potential of information sharing as a catalyst for facilitating work-related learning and fostering innovative work behavior.

In summary, Battistelli et al.'s (2019) study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the interplay among information sharing, work-based learning, and innovative work behavior. By highlighting the pivotal role of HRM practices in fostering a culture of innovation, their research underscores the critical importance of nurturing supportive work environments conducive to continuous learning and professional development. This literature review provides valuable insights for scholars, practitioners, and educators seeking to enhance innovative capabilities within their organizations. By leveraging these insights, stakeholders can effectively drive sustainable growth and competitiveness in today's dynamic work environment while adequately preparing students for the demands of the future workforce.
School Profile

Community Characteristics

In Northeast Iowa, the small rural Clayton Ridge District serves students from the communities of Guttenberg, Garnavillo, and surrounding areas. The district includes Clayton Ridge Elementary, located in Garnavillo, Iowa, and the Middle and High School located in Guttenberg, Iowa. Guttenberg, Iowa, has a population of 1,667, and Garnavillo has a population of 790. The median age of the community of Guttenberg is 58, and the median age in Garnavillo is 38. The area is predominantly white, with 96% of the population being white, 3% Hispanic, and 1% being two or more other races. The surrounding community falls into income brackets typically ranging from average to below average in Iowa (Census Reporter).

School District Characteristics

The district’s mission statement focuses on providing equal and quality educational opportunities for all students to prepare them for their role in our changing world. The district’s vision statement involves the belief that the school should provide a safe learning environment, be student-centered, where the district meets the needs of individuals, seeks out community involvement, and pursues and examines educational trends as they impact students. The district also believes that all people have infinite worth and that quality education evolves from a partnership of students, staff, family, and the community that is equal and active. They believe that taking risks and trying new things are encouraged to be the foundation of lifelong learning, where the higher their expectations, the greater the individuals can achieve. The district also believes that growth occurs when there are changes and challenges and that every person is accountable for their actions, that family influences the development of a child, and that diversity should be celebrated (Clayton Ridge Community School District).
School Building Characteristics

The school district is composed of 194 High School Students, 99 Middle School Students, and 25 certified teachers (Clayton Ridge, 2022). At Clayton Ridge, students are offered a variety of high school courses, ranging from Common Core to Career and Technical Education (CTE) course offerings, along with opportunities to take concurrent enrollment classes online through Northeast Iowa Community College in Calmar, Iowa. The district has a 98% graduation rate. The district also has 1:1 technology (Clayton Ridge, 2022).

Student Portfolio & School Performance

Forty Nine percent of those who graduate from Clayton Ridge enroll in a college or university within one year of their graduation. The top job outlooks in this region in Iowa include nursing, general & operational managers, financial managers, and operating engineers, and other construction jobs (2022 HS Overview).

According to the Iowa Department of Education, the Clayton Ridge Community High School District is a Commendable school district. Previously, the Clayton Ridge High School District has grown since 2018, when the district was considered Acceptable, and then the district grew by 8 points, with an overscore of Commendable. The largest gains from the jump from Acceptable to Commendable were due to increases in math and reading scores (Iowa School Performance Profile).

The High School graduation rate from 2022 for a student graduate in 4 years was 95.56%. The statewide average graduation rate in four years is 90.15%. The percentage of students who graduated in five years was 100% with the state average being 93.51%. The Clayton Ridge High School District comprises 204 students in grades 9-12. The school's demographics consist of a majority White Population, at 91.7%, with 5.4% students being
Hispanic, 1% being Native American, 1.5% being Multi-Racial, and .5% being Black/African American. The High School has 35.8% of students from a Low socioeconomic status, 10.3% of students on an IEP, and 1.5% of students who are English Learners. The average daily attendance of students in the Clayton Ridge High School District is 93.6%. This is slightly higher than the state average of 92.8%. The percentage of students who are chronically absent is 22.9%. Chronic Absenteeism includes students who miss 10% or more of the days that they should be in school. Students of Low socioeconomic status make up 38% of those who are chronically absent, with students on an IEP making up 28.6% of those chronically absent. This means that the majority of students who are of Low socioeconomic status or on an IEP make up the chronically absent population. In the data from 2022, it was found that 12 students were either suspended or expelled during the school year. Ten of these students were of Low socioeconomic status. Eleven of these students were white (Iowa School Performance Profile).

**Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment**

In addition to enrolling in core courses, students have the opportunity to enroll in CTE courses, fine arts courses, foreign language, and college courses. The CTE courses at the district include Agriculture, Business, Industrial Technology, and Family Consumer Science. The Fine Arts courses include Art, Vocal Music, and Instrumental Music. The foreign language department includes Spanish. Students also have the opportunity to enroll in concurrent classes through NICC. These courses include Employability Skills, Business Intro to Computer Business Application, Cabinet Making, Drafting, U.S. History, Statistics, Calculus, and Composition. Students also can participate in Career Academies, which are programs of study offered to high school students through an agreement or contract between their high school and community
college. These opportunities bridge high school and community college CTE programs and may allow for a student to place into a program in a community college (Hansel, 2023).

Students are assessed and screened using FAST (Formative Assessment System for Teachers) testing to identify students who need intervention. Students were identified in the fall to be part of an intervention, and students meet regularly during a study hall with the High School Interventionist to review reading and math concepts. The results of this year's ISASP testing data may shed light on if the interventions are working and what else can be done to ensure that students can reach proficiency. The first indicator that interventions are on the right track is the data from fall FAST testing data to winter FAST testing data saw increases of five or more percentage points in three of the four tests (Kregel, 2023).

Teachers in the High School are also requested to implement Kagan strategies into their classrooms. These are instructional strategies designed to promote cooperative learning and communication in the classroom. Kagan encourages high engagement in classroom lessons (Kagan, 2009).

**Professional Development Practices**

Over the past two years, Clayton Ridge High School has prioritized the integration of Kagan strategies into its instructional framework. Faculty members from both the Middle and High School have completed specialized Kagan training sessions, facilitating the implementation of these strategies within their classrooms. To ensure ongoing professional growth and knowledge sharing, teachers convene for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) every Wednesday, taking advantage of early dismissal schedules.

PLCs at Clayton Ridge High School are structured around the concept of logical links and interdisciplinary teams, allowing for targeted collaboration based on shared student
demographics and instructional focus. For example, teachers who predominantly instruct freshman students form PLC teams with others who share similar teaching assignments. This approach facilitates focused discussions and resource sharing tailored to specific student cohorts and instructional needs. Additionally, interdisciplinary teams are formed to address areas such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Employability Skills or Fine Arts, leveraging common themes and instructional strategies across different grade levels and subject areas.

The PLC schedule follows a weekly rotation of thematic focuses, including Content, CogniCare, Celebrate, and Collaborate weeks. Content weeks provide opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative planning within their subject areas, ensuring alignment with curriculum standards and instructional goals. CogniCare weeks are dedicated to addressing the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students, with PLC strategies aimed at identifying and implementing targeted interventions through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Celebrate weeks serve as platforms for recognizing and showcasing the achievements and contributions of educators, fostering a culture of appreciation and mutual support. Finally, Collaborate weeks offer flexible meeting structures for cross-disciplinary exchanges and collaborative problem-solving between teachers (Williams, 2023).

In addition to scheduled PLC sessions, professional development initiatives at Clayton Ridge High School encompass training in technology integration, social-emotional learning, and strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships. These initiatives aim to equip educators with the tools and skills necessary to meet the diverse needs of students and promote inclusive learning environments.
Needs Assessment

The evolving landscape of education and workforce demands a reevaluation of high school curricula to ensure students are equipped with essential employability competencies. Employability skills, encompassing technical proficiency and soft skills, play a crucial role in preparing students for successful transitions into the workforce. This needs assessment aims to identify key areas for improvement within Clayton Ridge High School to better align with industry expectations and equip students with the skills necessary for future career success.

Recent research by Siti Nor Amalina et al. (2022), Winterton and Turner (2019), and Mahajan et al. (2022) highlights the importance of a multifaceted skill set, including personal qualities, communication skills, digital proficiency, leadership abilities, and interpersonal competencies, in meeting the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and post-pandemic workplace. Moreover, studies by Reddy and Shaw (2019), Mohammand (2020), and Krishan et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of practice, hands-on experiences, and work-based learning in facilitating students’ transition from education to employment.

Within Clayton Ridge High School, there is a recognized need to improve employability skills development. This includes integrating such skills into the high school curriculum, focusing on both technical proficiencies and soft skills essential for success in the workforce. Moreover, there is a necessity to provide students with more opportunities for work-based learning experiences, align educational outcomes with industry demands, and emphasize the development of effective communication skills.

Addressing employability skills should be approached comprehensively, involving all teachers rather than solely the Career and Technical Education (CTE) department. One proposed strategy involves curriculum revisions. Collaboration with stakeholders is essential to review and revise the high school curriculum, ensuring the explicit instruction and assessment of
employability skills are incorporated across subject areas. Additionally, work-based learning programs play a vital role. Documenting established partnerships with local businesses, industries, and community organizations provides students with opportunities for real-world experiences and mentorship. Professional development is also crucial. Providing ongoing opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of employability skills and effective instructional strategies ensures students receive quality education. Moreover, the implementation of industry certification programs aligned with high-demand sectors can validate students' mastery of technical skills and enhance their employability. Lastly, cross-curricular integration is key. By fostering collaboration between CTE and core subject teachers, employability skills development can be integrated into existing curricula, creating interdisciplinary learning experiences for students.

By addressing the identified needs through strategic interventions and collaborative efforts, Clayton Ridge High School can enhance the employability competencies of its students and better prepare them for success in the workforce. This needs assessment serves as a foundation for the development and implementation of a School Improvement Plan aimed at equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary for future career pathways for improved employability.
Data Analysis

The evolving demands of the workforce call for a focus on enhancing employability skills among high school students. This data analysis aims to evaluate the current state of employability skills development within Clayton Ridge High School's CTE programs and provide recommendations for improvement based on the data from the Comprehensive Learning Needs Assessment (CLNA) and Iowa School Performance Profile.

The CLNA data highlights a recognized need to integrate employability skills into the curriculum and provide more opportunities for work-based learning (Berns, 2024). This need arises from the demands of the current industry standards, where employers seek candidates with diverse technical and soft skills.

Data Analysis

The data indicates overall satisfactory performance among CTE students, although notable deficiencies are identified in math proficiencies, particularly among IEP populations. However, employability skills integration remains a challenge, as depicted in Figure 1. While the district offers various CTE programs, there is a need for improvement in integrating relevant Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) and providing more robust work-based learning experiences, as illustrated in Figure 2.
### Figure 1

**Element 1: Evaluation of Student Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How are CTE students performing compared to non-CTE students on the common federal accountability indicators of performance (both Perkins &amp; ESSA) for:</th>
<th>Briefly list strengths, progress and/or areas of focus for improvement.</th>
<th>Evidence Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Graduation rates</td>
<td>- ELA proficiency</td>
<td>- Mathematics proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Science proficiency</td>
<td>2023-2024 Rating</td>
<td>3 - This is a strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Year Graduation, we are exceeding the target. Graduation Rate, ELA proficiency, and Science are exceeding. Math is slightly below. Science is significantly above the target.</td>
<td>Iowa Perkins V &amp; CTE Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How are CTE students of different genders, races, and ethnicities performing on the Perkins indicators of performance? | 2 - This is satisfactory |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most populations are performing at a comparable rate within the Perkins indicators of performance. There are deficiencies within the math performance indicators, but all others are comparable or exceed performance indicators.</td>
<td>Iowa Perkins V &amp; CTE Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do CTE students from special populations perform on the Perkins performance indicators compared to the general CTE population? | 1 - This area needs some improvement |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Although Non-Traditional students are performing at 100%, the data indicates that IEP population is scoring significantly lower than the target.</td>
<td>Iowa Perkins V &amp; CTE Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where are the most prominent academic performance gaps between student population groups after analyzing the disaggregated Perkins indicators of performance results? | 1 - This area needs some improvement |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to the data given, it appears that math is an area where there is a performance gap.</td>
<td>Iowa Perkins V &amp; CTE Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Figure 2

**Element 2: Evaluation of Size, Scope, and Quality; and Progress Toward Implementing CTE Programs/Programs of Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The district/consortium/college offers programs in which students choose to enroll and have an interest.</th>
<th>2023-2024 Rating</th>
<th>Briefly list strengths, progress and/or area of focus for improvement.</th>
<th>Evidence Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3- This is a strength</td>
<td>Courses in each department are available to students in the areas of Agriculture, Business, Family Consumer Sciences, and Industrial Technology. All areas are full-time programs.</td>
<td>Clayton Ridge Course Guide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| The district/consortium/college offers a sufficient number of courses and course sections within programs. | 3- This is a strength | All students will graduate High School with at least 1 CTE Credit. | Clayton Ridge Course Guide |

| Integrated and relevant CTSOs are offered for each CTE program. | 1- This area needs some improvement | Agriculture CTSO: FFA Business CTSO: FBLA Family Consumer CTSO: FCCLA In need of Industrial Technology CTSO | District Advisers FFA: Jenna Beitz FBLA: Leah Eulberg FCCLA: Angela Williams |

| Students are engaged in work-based-learning experiences. | 1- This area needs some improvement | Students are allowed to be involved in Work Based Learning, but there is a small number of students in that course. Employability Skills is a course offered through NICC. Need improved promotion and documentation of these experiences and better availability for students to participate in these experiences. Limited access to these opportunities because of the size of the district and the location of the district, as well as restrictions on field experiences within the district. | Clayton Ridge Course Guide Class Lists |
Figure 2 (Continued)

| Element 2: Evaluation of Size, Scope, and Quality; and Progress Toward Implementing CTE Programs/Programs of Study |
|---|---|---|
| | 2023-2024 Rating | Briefly list strengths, progress and/or areas of focus for improvement. | Evidence Reviewed |
| Career guidance is offered to all CTE program participants in a manner that is inclusive and non-discriminatory. | 1- This area needs some improvement | All CTE courses are available for students to take. Students also establish the DCAP during freshmen year. We need increased communication with scheduling courses and the CTE team. 85% of parents were aware of the CTE programming available. 68% of students were aware of the CTE programming available. 87% of students wanted to take a CTE class but were unable to do so. 92% of students said there are barriers to being in the CTE classroom. 83% of students said they were receiving Career guidance in the CTE classroom. | DCAP CLNA Surveys |
| The district offers middle grades (5-8) CTE programs that connect to high school programming (minimum 7th and 8th). | 3- This is a strength | All 6-8 Students will have a CTE exploratory for 6 weeks. Each of these exploratory encourages career exploration. | DCAP |
Strengths include opportunities for students to enter occupations and participate in CTE courses regardless of ability level, but there is a need to utilize workforce and economic data to refine CTE programs, as indicated in Figure 3. Moreover, the retention and credentialing of CTE educators emerge as strengths with both male and female representation, all holding full-time positions through the school year. The availability of mentorship opportunities, although not specifically tailored to CTE, reinforces program stability. Notably, all CTE educators possess the necessary credentials underlining the commitment to educational standards. Previous experiences without an education background revealed significant challenges, emphasizing the importance of qualified educators in fostering successful CTE programs (Berns, 2024).

**Figure 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element: 3: Evaluation of Labor Market Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2023-2024 Rating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators review workforce and economic data annually to respond to changes in the labor market and develop new or refine existing CTE programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have the ability to enter emerging occupations and there are programs available to meet this need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs provide opportunities for students with disabilities, English learners, or other special populations to access the labor market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The district’s commitment to professional development is evident through offerings facilitated by Keystone, aimed at enhancing teacher competencies and instructional methodologies. This ensures that educators remain updated on industry trends and teaching practices, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes. While all students receive necessary accommodations within the CTE classroom, data reveals disparities in participation rates among students with IEPs. While 6% of IEP students are concentrators within CTE programs, suggesting a significant commitment to specialized coursework, a larger proportion (7%) are classified as participants, indicating a potential gap in engagement or access (Berns, 2024).

Safety concerns, including lack of formal maintenance schedules and documentation, highlight areas for improvement in ensuring a safe learning environment within CTE programs, as depicted in Figure 4. Although strong CTE programs positively influence post-secondary readiness, challenges persist concerning student participation in standardized tests like the ACT or SAT, as highlighted in Figure 4 & 5.
### Figure 4

**Element 6: Evaluation of Safety for CTE Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2023-2024 Rating</th>
<th>Evidence Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The district/college has certified maintenance staff or has contracted with providers for maintenance of CTE facilities.</strong></td>
<td>1 - This area needs some improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is no contract for maintenance, it is not documented. Repair as needed, there is no formal schedule of maintenance that is shared with CTE staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The district/college abides by and adheres to local, state, and national safety codes. This may include, but is not limited to, the minimum relevant OSHA training for faculty and support staff.</strong></td>
<td>1 - This area needs some improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The CTE Department is unaware of any formal documentation from the maintenance staff. Although, we do have fire extinguishers as necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrators have the requisite knowledge of the safety requirements and strategies for all CTE areas.</strong></td>
<td>1 - This area needs some improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators may know about general safety guidelines. However, when it comes to every CTE department, there is no overview or oversight that things are supposed to be handled in a specific way. This is a professional learning need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration assigns budget priorities and staff workloads with safety and health considerations in mind.</strong></td>
<td>1 - This area needs some improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class size and space limits need to be considered and followed. Middle School Exploratories are too large for the facilities available. There are no maximums that apply to Middle School Courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The district/college has routine safety inspections of CTE infrastructure.</strong></td>
<td>1 - This area needs some improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire Extinguishers are checked monthly. Although any other records the CTE Department is unaware of.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5

Clayton Ridge High School demonstrates several notable strengths in its CTE programs. First, the school exhibits strong performance in Perkins Indicators of Performance, with CTE students performing satisfactorily and comparably to non-CTE students. This suggests a solid foundation in educational outcomes within the CTE department. Secondly, the school boasts stable and qualified CTE educators, ensuring continuity and quality of instruction. These educators are properly credentialed and actively engage in professional development opportunities, contributing to the overall effectiveness of CTE programs. Additionally, Clayton Ridge High School provides broad access to CTE programs, offering a variety of options that cater to student interests. Middle school students benefit from exposure to CTE programming.
that seamlessly connects to high school offerings, fostering a comprehensive educational experience. Moreover, the positive impact of strong CTE programs on post-secondary readiness is evident, with a higher-than-average concentration of students participating in CTE programs, indicating effective preparation for success beyond high school.

**Weaknesses**

However, despite these strengths, Clayton Ridge High School faces several challenges with employability skills. One notable weakness is the limited integration of employability skills into the CTE and Core curriculum, highlighting a potential gap in preparing students for real-world readiness. Although CTE programs perform well academically, there is a deficiency in effectively incorporating essential employability skills, suggesting a need for a more comprehensive approach to skill development. Additionally, the school struggles with providing adequate work-based learning opportunities, as participation rates remain low, and field experiences and speakers within CTE classrooms are not sufficiently promoted or documented. Moreover, barriers to equity and access persist with students perceiving obstacles to being able to participate in CTE courses. These issues require attention to ensure equitable access and inclusion for all students. Furthermore, safety concerns within CTE programs, such as the lack of formal maintenance schedules and insufficient safety training for administrators, pose risks to student well-being and necessitate immediate action to establish a safe learning environment that reflects a real-world work environment.

**Assessment Needs**

To further enhance the school's employability skills improvement plan, additional assessments and evaluations can be conducted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the current state and identify areas for improvement. As noted by Hafid et al. (2019), learning
innovations need to involve all components of instructional management. Therefore, it is imperative to seek feedback from various stakeholders to inform decision-making and strategic planning.

One avenue for obtaining valuable insights is through community employer feedback. Surveying with local employers can provide valuable insights into the specific employability skills they seek in potential hires, the alignment between students' skill sets, and industry needs, and recommendations for improving the relevance and effectiveness of the district's programs.

Additionally, alumni surveys can offer valuable perspectives on the long-term impact of CTE experiences on post-secondary education, career pathways, and job readiness. Former students who have graduated from CTE programs can provide insights into the effectiveness of the school's employability skills development initiatives and highlight areas for improvement.

Furthermore, conducting a teacher survey can provide valuable information on how employability skills are currently being incorporated within the classroom. Understanding teachers' perspectives and practices can help identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement in the integration of employability skills across the curriculum.

By conducting these additional assessments, Clayton Ridge High School can gather comprehensive data to inform the development and refinement of its employability skills improvement plan. This approach will ensure that the school's initiatives are responsive to the needs and preferences of students, parents, employers, alumni, and the broader community, ultimately enhancing the preparation of students for success in the workforce and post-secondary readiness.
**Action Plan**

In today's dynamic and competitive job market, the acquisition of employability skills is paramount for high school students to thrive in their future careers. Employability skills encompass a range of personal qualities, communication abilities, digital literacy, leadership proficiencies, and interpersonal competencies (Siti Nor Amalina et al., 2022). Employers prioritize effective communication skills and digital literacy in prospective employees, making these competencies highly sought after (Siti Nor Amalina et al., 2022). Moreover, soft skills, including face-to-face interaction and organizational expertise, are crucial for success in the workplace (Siti Nor Amalina et al., 2022).

It is crucial to recognize the diverse requirements across industries and define workplace readiness accurately. Collaboration between universities, governments, and industries is essential to ensure that university students are adequately prepared for the workforce (Winterton & Turner, 2019). Additionally, employers and students alike emphasize the importance of communication skills, with students considering them a top priority. A comprehensive and consistent framework of employee skills can enhance graduates' readiness for the workforce and lifelong learning (Mahajan et al., 2022). Developing professionalism requires reflection, self-awareness, and immersion in a community of practice (Reddy & Shaw, 2019). Higher education institutions play a crucial role in cultivating generic skills among students, and demand effective pedagogical approaches (Okolie et al., 2020).

Active learning methods, collaboration, teamwork, problem-solving, and effective interaction are recommended to foster the learning of generic skills (Okolie et al., 2020). Moreover, graduates must possess not only academic credentials but also the requisite skills and attributes to contribute effectively to the workforce (Okolie et al., 2020).
Work experience placements offer numerous benefits beyond enhancing employability skills, including aiding career decision-making and bolstering confidence (Messer, 2018). Work-based learning (WBL) is integral to professional development and lifelong learning, providing opportunities for hands-on experience and knowledge acquisition within real-life contexts. Industry qualifications earned through WBL experiences further enhance students' employability (Hafid et al., 2019).

Creating a culture of knowledge sharing and supporting employee learning within organizations are essential for fostering continuous improvement and adaptability (Wallo et al., 2022). Research indicates positive relationships between WBL and proactive goal generation, employee ambidexterity, and agility, highlighting its significance in organizational development (Hanu et al., 2023). Practice-based approaches facilitate effective knowledge-sharing and learning within the workplace (Marina et al., 2021).

In light of these findings, it is evident that a holistic approach to skill development, encompassing academic instruction, experiential learning, and reflective practices, is crucial for preparing high school students for the demands of the modern workforce. This action plan aims to address these needs by implementing strategies to enhance employability skills among high school students.
Purposed Improvement Plan

1. Development of a Concrete Checklist:
   a. Create a checklist comprising the top ten employability skills aligned with industry standards.
   b. Utilize research findings on employability skills prioritized by employers (Siti Nor Amalina et al., 2022). (See Figure 6)

2. Implementation of Reflective Practices:
   a. Provide professional development for teachers on incorporating reflective practices within classroom activities.
   b. Integrate reflective prompts and activities into lesson plans.
   c. Emphasize the importance of self-assessment and goal setting for students’ professional development (Reddy & Shaw, 2019).

3. Documentation of Career Connections:
   a. Establish a system for documenting career connections and opportunities within Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
   b. Collaborate with local businesses and industry professionals to provide insights into career pathways.
   c. Ensure alignment with research on the significance of work experience placements in aiding career decision-making (Messer, 2018).
Figure 6

*Example Employability Skills Checklist*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employability Skills Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Skills:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Speak and write clearly and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Listen actively to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Present ideas confidently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in various formats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Analyze information to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify problems and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>propose solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Think creatively to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovate and improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Make decisions based on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logical reasoning and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teamwork and Collaboration:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Work effectively in diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teams with respect for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others' perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Communicate and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordinate tasks with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Resolve conflicts and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribute to a positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adaptability and Flexibility:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Embrace change and adjust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to new situations and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Learn quickly and remain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open to new ideas and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Manage multiple tasks and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priorities efficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Skills:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Take initiative and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for tasks and projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Inspire and motivate others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to achieve common goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Delegate tasks effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and provide constructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Literacy:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Use technology proficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for research, communication,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and problem-solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Navigate digital platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and tools with ease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Stay updated on emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technologies and trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevant to your field.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 6 (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employability Skills Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Management and Organization:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Set goals and prioritize tasks to meet deadlines effectively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Interpersonal Skills:** |
| ● Build and maintain positive relationships with colleagues and clients. | ● Demonstrate empathy and cultural awareness in interactions with others. | ● Handle feedback and constructive criticism gracefully. |

| **Self-motivation and Initiative:** |
| ● Take ownership of your personal and professional development. | ● Set ambitious goals and work persistently to achieve them. | ● Seek out opportunities for growth and learning. |

| **Professionalism and Work Ethic:** |
| ● Demonstrate reliability by showing up on time and meeting commitments. | ● Uphold ethical standards and integrity in all actions. | ● Take pride in your work and strive for excellence in everything you do. |

**Impact on Teaching and Learning**

The proposed improvement plan will have a profound impact on teaching and learning within the high school setting. By providing a clear checklist of employability skills, educators will have a structured framework to guide their instruction, ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary skills demanded by the workforce. Through reflective practices, teachers will continuously refine their methods, fostering collaborative learning environments that promote lifelong learning practices. Additionally, comprehensive documentation of career opportunities
within CTE programs will empower students to explore various pathways and maximize their potential within their chosen career fields.

**Alignment to Research**

The proposed improvement plan aligns closely with existing research on employability skills and workforce readiness. According to Siti Nor Amalina et al. (2022), employers prioritize communication skills and digital literacy in prospective employees. This reinforces the importance of incorporating these skills into the high school curriculum. Additionally, Mahajan et al. (2022) emphasize the significance of explicit skill frameworks in preparing students for the workforce, further supporting the development of a concrete checklist of employability skills. Furthermore, Reddy and Shaw (2019) highlight the importance of reflection and self-awareness in professional development, underscoring the need for reflective practices among teachers and students. The integration of work-based learning (WBL) experiences within the proposed improvement plan aligns with the findings of Hafid et al. (2019), who emphasize the positive impact of WBL on attitudes, knowledge, and skills development. Lastly, Okolie et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of active learning and collaboration in teaching generic skills, supporting the reflective teaching practices proposed in this improvement plan.

**Summary**

This action plan aims to enhance the employability skills of high school students through the development of a structured framework that aligns with industry standards. By providing educators with a clear checklist of employability skills, fostering reflective teaching practices, and documenting career opportunities within CTE programs, the project seeks to better prepare students for success in the workforce and lifelong learning. This improvement plan is grounded in research findings that emphasize the importance of communication skills, digital literacy,
reflective practice, and work-based learning in preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce.

**Implementation of School Improvement Plan**

**Introduction**

The implementation of this action plan aims to enhance the employability skills of high school students at Clayton Ridge through a structured approach that aligns with industry standards and current research findings. In today’s rapidly evolving job market, possessing robust employability skills is essential for students to succeed in their careers and adapt to changing workplace dynamics. By focusing on the development of a concrete checklist of employability skills, integrating reflective practices into teaching, and documenting career opportunities with CTE programs, this plan seeks to better prepare students for success in the workforce and lifelong learning.

**Timeline**

The implementation timeline is divided into three phases, each with specific milestones and deliverables.

1. **Phase 1: Planning (May - September 2024)**
   a. Conduct a comprehensive review of current employability skills frameworks and research findings to inform the development process.
   b. Develop a checklist of the top ten employability skills aligned with industry standards, ensuring input from educators, industry professionals, and other stakeholders.
   c. Organize and schedule professional development sessions for teachers on incorporating reflective practices into their teaching methodologies.
2. Phase 2: Implementation (October - December 2024)
   a. Distribute the finalized checklist of employability skills to educators and stakeholders, accompanied by guidelines for implementation.
   b. Integrate reflective prompts and activities into lesson plans across various subjects and grade levels, fostering a culture of self-awareness and continuous improvement.
   c. Establish a robust system for documenting career connections and opportunities within CTE programs, leverage technology platforms where applicable.
   d. Actively collaborate with local businesses and industry professionals to provide real-world insights into career pathways and industry expectations.

3. Phase 3: Evaluation and Adjustment (January - June 2025)
   a. Continuously monitor the implementation progress through regular check-ins, feedback session, and data collection efforts.
   b. Evaluate the effectiveness of the checklist and reflective practices in enhancing students’ employability skills, using both qualitative and quantitative measures.
   c. Solicit feedback from teachers, students, and stakeholders to identify areas of improvement and make necessary adjustments to the implementation plan.
   d. Reflect on the overall impact of the action plan on student outcomes and school culture, identifying best practices and lessons learned for future initiatives.

Role Clarifications and Assignments

1. Project Coordinator: Responsible for overseeing the implementation process, coordinating meetings, and ensuring alignment with project goals. This would most likely
be identified as the CTE PLC Strategist. Additionally, serves as the primary point of contact for stakeholders and facilitates communication among team members.

2. Teachers: Responsible for integrating the checklist of employability skills and reflective practices into their lesson plans and classroom activities, fostering a supportive learning environment that encourages self-reflection and skill development.

3. CTE Coordinators: Responsible for documenting career connections and opportunities within CTE programs, facilitating collaborations with local businesses, and organizing industry-related events or workshops for students.


**Progress Monitoring**

Progress will be monitored through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including:

1. Regular meetings and check-ins with project stakeholders to assess implementation progress and address any challenges or concerns.

2. Surveys and feedback sessions with teachers, students, and stakeholders to gather insights on the effectiveness of interventions and areas for improvement.

3. Analysis of data related to the adoption of employability skills checklist, integration of reflective practices, documentation of career connections, student engagement, and overall satisfactions with the implementation process.
4. Ongoing review of student performance data, including academic achievement, participation in extracurricular activities, and post-graduation outcomes, to measure the long-term impact of the action plan.

Limitations

While the implementation of the action plan holds great potential for improving student outcomes, several limitations may impact its scope and effectiveness. Limited resources and time constraints may restrict the extent to which interventions can be implemented or sustained over time. To address this challenge, efforts will be made to prioritize activities with the highest potential for impact and explore alternative funding sources or partnerships.

Resistance to change among teachers and stakeholders may pose challenges to the adoption of new practices and require ongoing support and professional development opportunities to foster buy-in and collaboration. External factors such as changes in educational policies or economic conditions may influence the outcomes of the action plan, necessitating flexibility and adaptability in implementation strategies.
Conclusion

The proposed school improvement plan presents a comprehensive approach to enhancing the employability skills of high school students at Clayton Ridge, aligning with industry standards and current research findings. By focusing on the development of a structured framework, integration of reflective practices, and documentation of career opportunities within CTE programs, the plan aims to better prepare students for success in today’s workforce and lifelong learning.

The incorporation of a concrete checklist of employability skills, informed by research findings on skills prioritized by employers, provides educators with a clear guideline for instruction. This structured approach ensures that students are equipped with the necessary competencies demanded by the job market, addressing the dynamic needs of various industries (Siti Nor Amalina et al., 2022). Furthermore, the implementation of reflective practices fosters continuous improvement among teachers and students, promoting collaborative learning environments conducive to lifelong learning (Reddy & Shaw, 2019).

Documenting career connections within CTE programs not only empowers students to explore various career pathways but also provides invaluable insights into industry expectations and real-world applications of classroom learning (Messer, 2018). Collaboration with local businesses and industry professionals enriches students’ educational experiences, bridging the gap between academia and the workforce.

The alignment of the proposed improvement plan with existing research on employability skills and workforce readiness underscores its potential for positive impact. By emphasizing communication skills, digital literacy, reflective practice, and work-based learning, the plan
addresses key areas identified in the literature as critical for students’ success in the workforce (Okolie et al., 2020; Mahajan et al., 2022).

In summary, this school improvement plan represents a strategic initiative aimed at equipping high school students with the skills and competencies necessary for success in today’s workforce. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to excellence in education, the plan seeks to empower students to thrive in their chosen careers and contribute meaningfully to society.

The lack of relevant workplace skills among graduates, as highlighted in the introduction, is a significant factor preventing students from securing, retaining, or succeeding in jobs (Okolie et al., 2020; Ng et al., 2021). Addressing this gap between academia and industry expectations is crucial for preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce.

The findings from the literature review underscore the importance of addressing employability skills within the high school curriculum. By implementing the proposed improvement plan, students will have increased access to opportunities for skill development and real-world experiences, better preparing them for success in the workforce.

Moving forward, the implementation of the school improvement plan will require ongoing evaluation and adjustment to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Continued collaboration with stakeholders, monitoring of student outcomes, and integration of emerging research findings will be essential for sustaining the impact of the plan over time. By remaining responsive to the evolving needs of students and the workforce, Clayton Ridge can position itself as a leader in preparing students for future success.
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