

Building the Employability Skills of BTE Youth

Handout 1: Building the Employability Skills of BTE Youth – Session Agenda

Goals

- ✓ Build an understanding of key employability skills;
- ✓ Explore strategies for building employability skills among youth; and
- ✓ Extend knowledge and techniques for working with youth.

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Warm-Up Activity
- Content Presentation: Employability Skills
 - Core Academic Skills
 - Higher Order Thinking Skills
 - Soft Skills
 - Common Workplace Skills
- Brainstorming Activity
- Learning Activity
- Closing
- Evaluation

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Handout 2: Employability Skills

Employability Skills are the competencies needed to be successful in any work setting, regardless of the job. They are not job-specific. Instead, they are skills, attitudes and actions that are important throughout a career, from entry-level jobs to senior management. Sometimes called “job readiness skills,” critical employability skills include:

- **Core Academic Skills** – basic knowledge of core subjects, such as:
 - Basic Math Computation
 - Reading
 - Reading Comprehension
 - Writing
- **Higher-Order Thinking Skills.**¹ The ability to think, reason, and make sound decisions is crucial for employees desiring to do well and advance. Higher-order thinking skills include:
 - Ability to Evaluate Situations
 - Creative Thinking
 - Desire to Learn
 - Ethical Decision Making
 - Logical Thinking
 - Problem Solving
 - Reasoning
- **Soft Skills.** Soft skills, also known as *Interpersonal skills* or *people skills*, are a cluster of personal traits or behavioral competencies that complement technical skills and are an important part of an employee’s ability to be successful in the job and contribute to the organization. Proficiency in these skills can include:
 - Active Listening
 - Adaptability
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Critical Thinking
 - Flexibility
 - Honesty
 - Independence
 - Integrity
 - Leadership
 - Oral Communication
 - Reliability
 - Responsibility
 - Self-awareness
 - Self-confidence
 - Self-direction
 - Self-motivation
 - Team Work
 - Time Management
- **Workplace Skills** – a core understanding and utilization of key workplace values and norms, including, but not limited to:
 - Appropriate/Inappropriate Behaviors
 - Communicating with Co-workers
 - Cultural Competence
 - Dress Code
 - Efficiency
 - Empathy
 - Office Etiquette
 - Personal Grooming
 - Punctuality
 - Respect
 - Work Schedule / Work Hours

¹ Alabama Cooperative Extension System

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Handout 3: Building Employability Skills

Regardless of the focus of the career interest, adults can offer important opportunities, supports, and services to help youth build employability skills.

- **Opportunities** help young people test-out ideas and behaviors and experiment with different roles. Done by young people, targeted opportunities can explore new information and skills, as well as increase cognitive development.
- **Supports** in the form of one-to-one relationships with an adult who acknowledges the student's accomplishment, serves as a role model, offers encouragement, sets standards, expectations, and boundaries, and provides safety and security.
- **Services** provided to young people, including resources or goods (i.e. clothing, meals, school supplies, scholarships, stipends, or transportation). Without services in youth programs, many young people would have difficulty taking advantage of opportunities and supports.

Best Approaches

Employability skills are skills that can be taught in school and employment settings, as well as through informal and formal interactions. Specifically:

- **Core Academic Skills**
 - Applied Learning Activities (an activity that directly relates or applies to the world of work)
 - Service Learning Projects
 - Tutoring
- **Higher-Order Thinking Skills**
 - Brainstorming Sessions
 - Case Studies
 - Individual Assignments
 - Inquiry & Investigation
 - Group Discussion & Discovery
 - Group Projects & Work
 - Oral Presentations
 - Training Sessions
 - Service Learning Projects
 - Workshops
- **Interpersonal Skills**
 - Coaching or Role Modeling
 - Community Service
 - Critiques & Feedback
 - One-on-One Discussion Sessions
 - Peer Networking
 - Recognition
 - Service Learning Projects
- **Workplace Skills**
 - Applied Learning Activities
 - Job Shadowing & Internships
 - Training Sessions
 - Videos
 - Workshops

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Handout 4: BTE Volunteers Can Help

Regardless of the focus of the career interest, adults can offer important opportunities, supports, and services to help youth build employability skills.

BTE Volunteers can support the development of youth employability skills by:

- ✓ Coaching or teaching, not telling
- ✓ Communicating with youth the skills employers' require
- ✓ Holding youth responsible for their behavior
- ✓ Modeling appropriate behavior
- ✓ Organizing team-based (group) applied learning projects
- ✓ Providing opportunities for youth to observe and practice appropriate work place behavior
- ✓ Replicating the features of real work settings
- ✓ Setting high expectations for youth
- ✓ Targeting specific employability skills
- ✓ Having fun

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Handout 5: How Can BTE Build Employability Skills?

Directions. In the space provided, list some employability skills that you believe are important for BTE students to possess. Then, identify youth-based activities that the BTE program currently implements to build the specific employability skill among students; if the current BTE activities do not address the specified skill, brainstorm new ways that the skill could be addressed.

Key Employability Skills		Current or Potential BTE Activities
Academic Skills		
Higher-Order Thinking Skills		
Soft Skills		
Workplace Skills		

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Handout 6: Newspaper Towers

Overview

Work as a team to build “Paper Towers.” The team with the tallest tower wins; those that collapse, fall-over, or are supported with anything other than the materials provided will be disqualified. Teams must also overcome and deal with a series of “challenges” (see Handout 5: Challenge Cards).

Materials

- Newspaper
- Straws
- Masking Tape
- Challenge Cards

Directions

1. Choose a team leader, who will organize the team, coordinate the building of the tower, and ensure that adequate progress is being made to complete the tower on time.
2. Use the provided materials to build the tallest tower possible; no other materials or supports are allowed.
3. Structure the tower so that it does not fall over or collapse.
4. You have 30 minutes to complete the tower.
5. After 10 minutes, take a “Challenge Card” and follow the directions on the card.
6. After another 10 minutes, take a second “Challenge Card” and follow the directions on the card.

Reflection

After completing the activity, discuss the following:

- What employability skill or skills does this activity address?
- How did your team leader manage the team? What did you like / dislike about this style?
- What was the most difficult aspect of this activity?
- How did the challenge cards impact your team?
- How did your team overcome the “challenges”?
- What did you learn from this activity?
- What additional information could you provide to the students to further develop their employability skill(s)?

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Handout 7: Challenge Cards

Instructions. Cut the challenge cards along the dotted lines, shuffle and stack. The team should select its first a Challenge Card 10 minutes into the activity; a second card should be drawn after another 10 minutes.

<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>A member of your team calls in sick.</p> <p><i>Instructions: One member of your team must sit out of the exercise for 3 minutes.</i></p>	<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>Management replaces the Team Leader.</p> <p><i>Instructions: The Team Leader should appoint a new Team Leader.</i></p>
<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>Your organization implements a spending freeze, resulting in significant budget cuts for your team.</p> <p><i>Instructions: From this point forward the team is not allowed to use straws.</i></p>	<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>The production timeline is revised; there is a new project deadline.</p> <p><i>Instructions: The team has only 5 more minutes to complete the task.</i></p>
<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>One team member is not contributing to the project.</p> <p><i>Instructions: The person receiving this card should “act” unhelpful and not support the team’s efforts.</i></p>	<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>One team member is talkative.</p> <p><i>Instructions: The person receiving this card should “act” very talkative, consistently talking and making various suggestions.</i></p>
<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>Two members of your team take a vacation at the same time.</p> <p><i>Instructions: Two members of your team must sit out of the exercise for 5 minutes.</i></p>	<p>CHALLENGE CARD</p> <p>A team member resigns from the organization.</p> <p><i>Instructions: One individual Team can no longer actively participate in the exercise.</i></p>

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Handout 8: Personal Credo

Overview

Learn about the Johnson & Johnson Credo, as well as its significance, and write a personal Credo.

Materials

- Johnson & Johnson Credo
- Paper & Pencil

Key Vocabulary

- *Credo*: A set of fundamental beliefs or a guiding principle. Created in 1943 by Robert Wood Johnson, Chairman of Johnson & Johnson, Johnson & Johnson's Credo is the company's framework for ethical dealings with its customers, employees, communities, and stockholders – with priority in that order.
- *Principles*: a guiding sense of requirements and/or obligations of appropriate or correct conduct; accepted or professed rule of action.
- *Values*: the ideas or customs of a person or society. These values may be positive (such as ethical, freedom, or education) or negative (cruelty or crime)
- *Beliefs*: an opinion or conviction

Directions

1. Review the definition of a Credo: a set of fundamental beliefs or a guiding principle.
2. Discuss the origin of Johnson & Johnson's Credo.
3. Read the Johnson & Johnson Credo.
4. Discuss why the importance of Johnson & Johnson's Credo.
5. Discuss why you think it is important for companies and individuals to have a credo.
6. Brainstorm how a personal Credo can inform career and life decisions.
7. Draft a Personal Credo:
 - ✓ The Credo should articulate your personal beliefs, guiding principles and values.
 - ✓ Your Personal Credo can follow the same form as a Johnson & Johnson Credo, or it can be in a style of your own making.
 - ✓ Consider including educational, professional, and personal goals that might demonstrate or serve as examples of some of your beliefs, guiding principles, or values.
8. Have one or two individuals share their Personal Credo with the group.
9. Discuss, as a group, how you will use the Credo in the future.

Reflection

After completing the activity, discuss the following:

- What employability skill or skills does this activity address?
- What was the most difficult aspect of this activity?
- What did you learn from this activity?
- What additional information could you provide to the students to further develop the employability skill(s)?

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Handout 9: Johnson & Johnson Credo

Our Credo

We believe our first responsibility is to the doctors, nurses and patients, to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services. In meeting their needs everything we do must be of high quality. We must constantly strive to reduce our costs in order to maintain reasonable prices. Customers' orders must be serviced promptly and accurately. Our suppliers and distributors must have an opportunity to make a fair profit.

We are responsible to our employees, the men and women who work with us throughout the world. Everyone must be considered as an individual. We must respect their dignity and recognize their merit. They must have a sense of security in their jobs. Compensation must be fair and adequate, and working conditions clean, orderly and safe. We must be mindful of ways to help our employees fulfill their family responsibilities. Employees must feel free to make suggestions and complaints. There must be equal opportunity for employment, development and advancement for those qualified. We must provide competent management, and their actions must be just and ethical.

We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work and to the world community as well. We must be good citizens — support good works and charities and bear our fair share of taxes. We must encourage civic improvements and better health and education. We must maintain in good order the property we are privileged to use, protecting the environment and natural resources.

Our final responsibility is to our stockholders. Business must make a sound profit. We must experiment with new ideas. Research must be carried on, innovative programs developed and mistakes paid for. New equipment must be purchased, new facilities provided and new products launched. Reserves must be created to provide for adverse times. When we operate according to these principles, the stockholders should realize a fair return.

Johnson & Johnson

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Handout 10: Spaghetti Bridge

Overview

Build a “Spaghetti Bridge” or lightweight bridge made of dried pasta that can hold weight. Success is determined by the bridge that can hold the most weight without breaking. The steps outlined below give the basic information needed to design and build a spaghetti bridge.

Materials

- Raw spaghetti (a bridge three feet long requires about two pounds of pasta)
- White glue or a hot glue gun
- Rubber bands
- Graph paper
- Clear plastic wrap
- Weights

Key Vocabulary

- *Compression*: The act or process of compressing (pressing together).
- *Deck*: The roadbed or the part of the bridge upon which the load will be placed.
- *Supports*: A vertical column that holds up the bridge.
- *Tension*: The act or process of stretching something tight or taut.
- *Trusses*: The substructure and superstructure of the bridge that support the deck.

Directions

1. **Develop an overall design concept for the bridge.** The team should collaborate on a design, listening to each team member’s best thinking and recommendations. Prior to beginning the build, the team should come to consensus on the design and the team leader should assign specific tasks to each member.
2. **Build supports for the bridge.** Bundle several strands of pasta together in the shape of a tube. Apply glue to each strand as you go. Hold each bundle together with a rubber band until the glue dries.
3. **Build the bridge deck.** Two possible designs are: 1) a round bundle of unglued spaghetti (lack of glue allows the spaghetti to shift under the weight); or 2) several layers of spaghetti, with each layer consisting of pieces of spaghetti glued side by side to the width of the deck, and the resulting layers glued one atop another to form a thick stack—10 or more layers.
4. **Design the trusses.** Build the trusses to scale on a piece of graph paper. This will serve as a template for the building of the bridge.
5. **Build the trusses.** Cover the graph paper with a sheet of clear plastic wrap, allowing you to see your template as you build your bridge, without getting glue on the graph paper. Cut the spaghetti to fit the template; lay it out on the template and glue together using white glue or a hot glue gun.
6. **Build the bridge.** Glue all the components of the bridge together (supports, deck, and trusses).

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Handout 10, continued

Tips & Warnings

- Don't cook the spaghetti.
- The best truss designs consist of a series of triangles, which are stronger than squares; a triangle that points down is more stable than one that points up. Experiment with triangle shapes: M, W, V.
- Bridges must withstand the forces of both compression and tension, which are balanced when the top and bottom of the truss are made up of more material than the center (usually triangular) portion; the top and bottom are subject to the most compression and tension, respectively.

Reflection

After completing the activity, discuss the following:

- What employability skill or skills does this activity address?
- What was the most difficult aspect of this activity?
- What did you learn from this activity?
- What additional information could you provide to the students to further develop the employability skill(s)?