Introduction to Transferable Skills

During the Exploration and Preparation phases of Career & Postsecondary Development at YouthBuild programs, students research and plan for their future career tracks. As they begin speaking with employers, interviewing, writing resumes and cover letters, they must be able to identify the skills they have and the skills they need, and they must be able to talk about those skills with potential employers. As YouthBuild programs help young people to develop skills that they will need in the workplace, they must also help them to analyze their skills and communicate about them.

This document is intended to introduce ways of integrating the concept of individual and transferable skills into Career Development activities. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide.

What are Transferable Skills?

Transferable skills are the skills that one develops through education, work and life experience that are not just useful to one particular job, but that all employers look for, and that can be useful in many different types of jobs.

Examples of Transferable Skills

The following is a list of examples of transferable skills.

- Multi-Tasking
- Attention to detail
- Computer literacy
- Decision-making skills
- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Research
- Training or teaching others
- Dealing with obstacles
- Record keeping
- Time Management
- Ability to work under pressure
- Problem Solving
- Planning and organizing
- Creativity
- Oral Communication
- Written Communication
• Professional Correspondence
• Teamwork

Any of these skills could be listed in a job description and should be highlighted by students in their resumes and cover letters. When asked about their ability to utilize these skills, students should be able to provide a coherent answer with specific examples.

Transferable Skills Activity Ideas

• Ask for a volunteer to describe the work he/she does on the construction site or at an internship or other kind of job. Have the student describe their tasks and responsibilities to the class. Challenge the class to identify as many different skills used by the student in his or her job as possible.

• Ask students to read sample job descriptions in small groups. From these job descriptions ask students to identify the transferrable skills (as opposed to specialized skills solely related to the job). Have them present their findings to the class. As a class, ask students if they can identify top skills that employers look for from different sectors and career tracks.

• Provide students each with a slip of paper with two different transferrable skills. Ask them to answer the question: What experience do I have with this skill? When do I use it? Provide specific examples. Push them to come up with examples even if they think they don’t have any. If they struggle to describe how they use certain skills, ask them to think of ways they could develop those skills.

• Job Center of Wisconsin, “Transferable Skills” Activity. This activity asks students to identify skills they have gained through education and life, and of those skills they possess to identify those they will need in their next job. This activity is intended to help students to think through connections between relevant experience and transferable skills.

Resources

Building Blocks for Competency Models—United States Department of Labor. Industry competency models promote an understanding of the skill sets and competencies that are essential to educate and train a globally competitive workforce. This document outlines the skills and efficiencies that are the building blocks for competency models across various industries. For further information about competency models visit the Competency Model Clearinghouse, part of the CareerOneStop website.

Leadership Development and Workplace Competencies
CareerOneStop Skill and Ability Videos - These videos on the CareerOneStop website introduce students to the kinds of skills required by a variety of different positions. Can be used to get students thinking about what skills they have and how they can be applied to the workplace.

Career Preparation