

Encouraging the Development of Critical Thinking and Employability Skills: Preparing Students for Success

**The Excel Center National Conference
July 7, 2020**

**Maria Brown, Moderator
Khalilah Palmer, Presenter
Susan Sheets, Presenter**



Introducing The Excel Center Shelbyville's Presentation Team

Maria Brown, moderator: special education coordinator; math remediation and IT Fundamentals teacher; life coach; technology champion

Khalilah Palmer, presenter: school director; lead teacher; Financial Foundations and dual credit business management teacher; life coach

Susan Sheets, presenter: college and career readiness coordinator; Senior Seminar teacher; lead life coach



Introducing The Excel Center Shelbyville

- Opened in 2015
- Rural location: Shelby County, Indiana
- Small physical structure (5 classrooms)
- One of the smallest models within The Excel Center network
 - Twelve staff members
 - Student enrollment: _____
- Rated an “A” school for four consecutive years
- Graduates in 2019-2020: _____



Why do we emphasize critical thinking and Indiana's Employability Skills Benchmarks so heavily?

Our staff-created mission statement guides us to do so!

The Excel Center Shelbyville mission:

to graduate at least 30 students annually who possess not only a **high school diploma**, but also an industry-recognized **certification**, preparation to earn a **sustainable wage** in the workforce, and the **positive citizenship skills** necessary for contributing members of society



Indiana's Employability Skills Benchmarks

- Thirty-two skills identified by Indiana employers as essential for success in the workplace
- Four categories:
 - Mindsets
 - Learning strategies
 - Social & emotional skills
 - Work ethic

Link to Indiana Employability Skills Benchmarks:

http://inpea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/IN_Employability_Skills.pdf

Link to printable poster:

https://www.in.gov/dwd/files/Employability_Skills_Poster.pdf

Do you Have The Skills Indiana's Employers Are Searching For?

INDIANA EMPLOYERS WANT HIGHLY-SKILLED EMPLOYEES. DEVELOPING THESE 32 Employability Skills CAN HELP YOU LAND YOUR DREAM JOB!

MINDSETS

- Lifelong Learning**: Possess belief in your ability to succeed and adopt self when necessary. DEMONSTRATE WILLINGNESS TO WORK AND LEARN AND CONTINUALLY APPLY NEW KNOWLEDGE.
- SELF-CONFIDENCE**: Possess belief in your ability to succeed and adopt self when necessary.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

- Effective COMMUNICATION**: Apply skills to clearly, effectively, and concisely express ideas and messages to others appropriate to the environment.
- DECISION-MAKING**: Utilize critical thinking skills and perspectives of others to make informed decisions based on options, rewards, risks, limits, and goals.
- INITIATIVE**: Apply self-motivation and self-direction to work and learning.
- Attention to Detail**: Achieve thoroughness and accuracy when accomplishing a task.
- PROBLEM SOLVING**: Apply critical and creative thinking skills to resolve problems.
- APTITUDE Awareness**: Identify and communicate individual interests and skills that align coursework and experiences to potential career paths and to in-demand occupations.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

- Connection**: Demonstrate the ability to network with others through social awareness and cultural sensitivity.
- REGULATION**: Recognize and manage one's emotions.
- Collaboration**: Work well with others in a team.

WORK ETHIC

- Self-Discipline**: Successfully carry out expectations with minimal supervision.
- INDEPENDENCE**: Demonstrate self-control and behave in accordance to rules with minimal direction.
- PERSEVERANCE**: DEMONSTRATE ENDURANCE AND CAPACITY TO COMPLETE TASKS.
- TIME MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATION**: Plan and organize long and short-term goals while understanding how to balance school, home, and community activities.
- INTEGRITY**: Manage transitions and adjust to changing situations and responsibilities. ACT WITH TRUSTWORTHY AND HONEST HANDS.
- ADAPTABILITY**: Manage transitions and adjust to changing situations and responsibilities.
- PROFESSIONALISM**: Demonstrate skills and behaviors appropriate for school and work.

Indiana World Skills | Indiana Education | Indiana Learning and Opportunity | Want to learn more? www.employabilityskills.in.gov

Encouraging the Development of Employability Skills, Including Critical Thinking, at The Excel Center Shelbyville

It's a schoolwide effort!

- Recognition of students' demonstration of the employability skills through end-of-term awards and including them on the Wall of Honor
- Weekly academic and attendance recognitions
- Employability Skill of the Week
- Meditation Mondays
- Straight Talk, led by graduates
- Coaching sessions
- Class activities focused on critical thinking, including the Barriers Essay in Composition



Encouraging the Development of Employability Skills, Including Critical Thinking:

Sustained Focus in the Senior Seminar Classroom

Eight weeks of focus on professional behavior in the workplace:

- Successful interviewing techniques
- Avoiding distractions and achieving maximum productivity in the workplace
- Recognizing discriminatory practices in the workplace



Speaking of Distractions in the Workplace . . .

Suggested Video Clips for Discussion

Video clip: *Your phone is trying to control your life* (8:43)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MacJ4p0vITM&t=32s>

Video clip: *Smartphone Disrespect* (2:55)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTGRMWhclgM>



And some photos for discussion, too . . .

Enjoying coffee and conversation . . .



Having dinner with friends in a restaurant . . .



Visiting an art museum . . .



Enjoying a day at the beach . . .



Supporting the team at the big game . . .



Enjoying a drive in the open air . . .



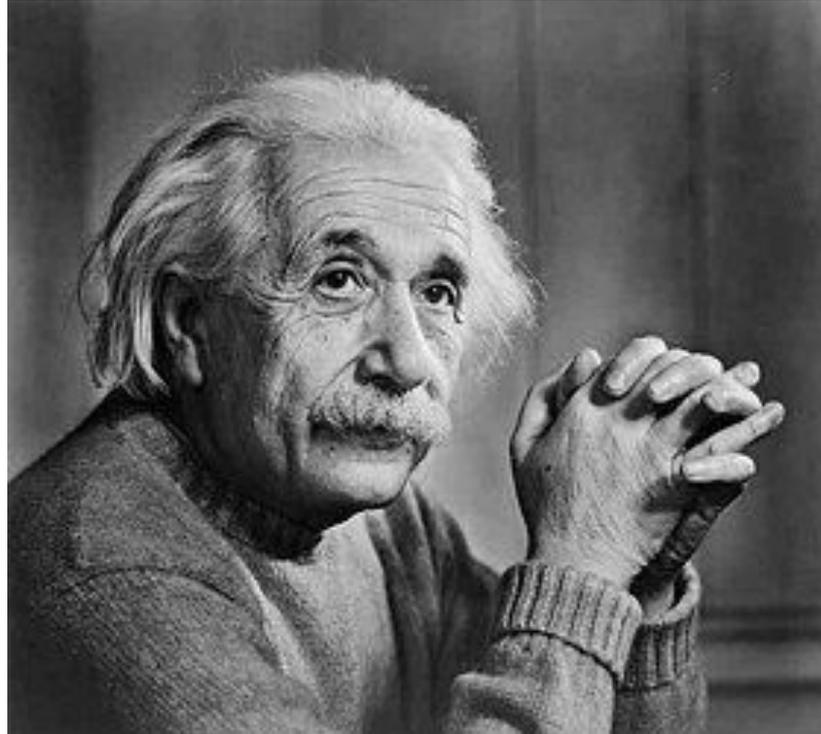
Impressing prospective employers at a job interview . . .



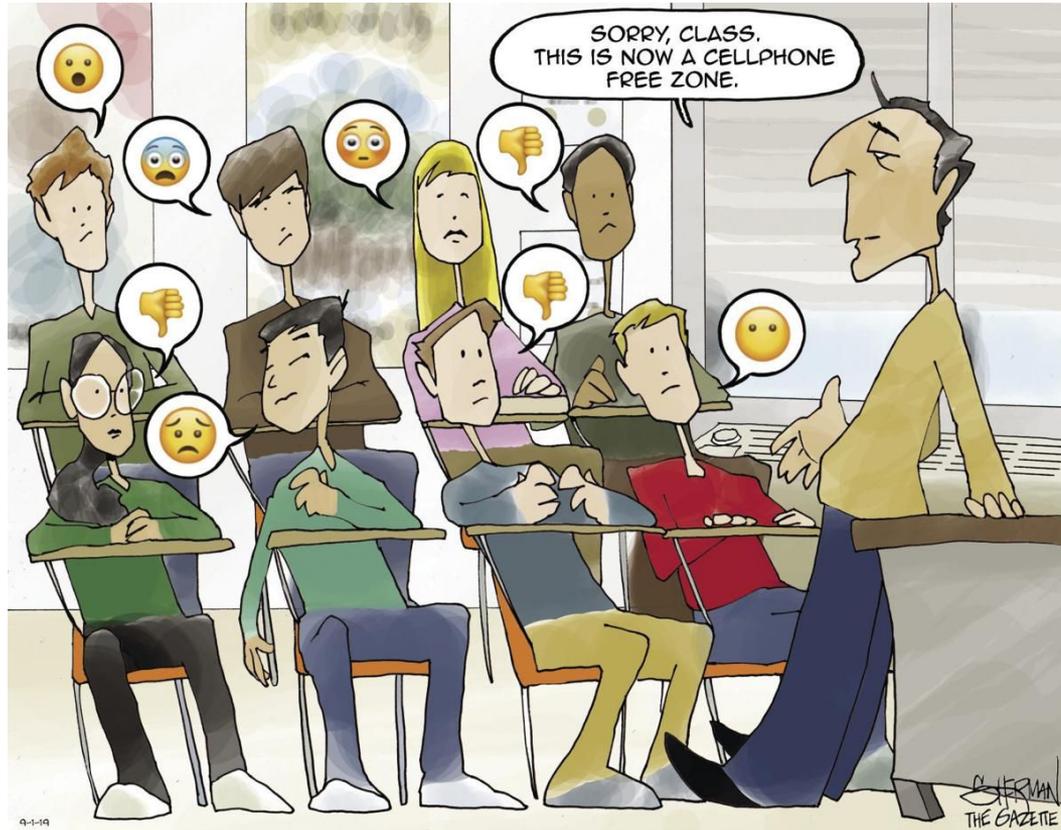
Demonstrating focus and productivity at work . . .



“I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.” -- Albert Einstein (1879-1955)



The Senior Seminar “workplace” is a cell phone-free zone.

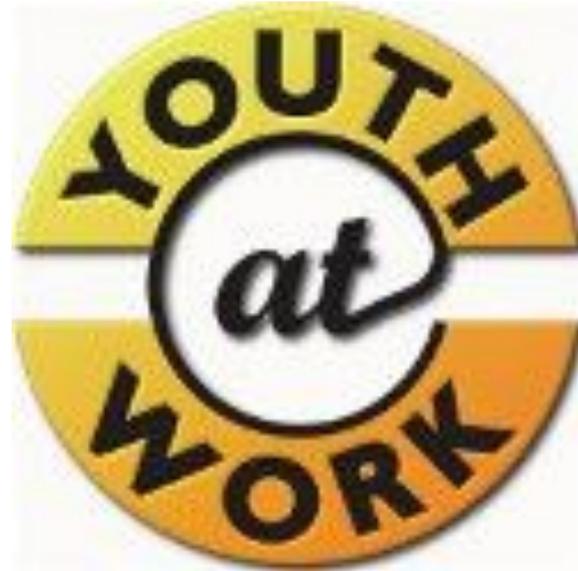


Developing a Recognition of Discrimination in the Workplace

- Age
- Disability
- Compensation
- Genetic information
- Harassment
- National origin
- Pregnancy
- Race/color
- Religion
- Retaliation
- Sex
- Sexual harassment
- Prohibited practices

Link to United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) *Youth at Work* video and other classroom materials:

<https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/classroom-materials>



Encouraging the Development of Employability Skills, Including Critical Thinking: **Sustained Focus in the Senior Seminar Classroom**

Eight weeks, eight employability skills:

- Attendance
- Goal striving
- Adaptability
- Integrity
- Self-control and awareness
- Emotional intelligence
- Grit
- Leadership

Avenues for reflection and growth:

- Class, small group, and partner discussions
- Hands-on activities (“The Puzzle”; “Graduation Game”)
- Self-assessments
- Video clips
- Written reflections



Four-Day Focus on Adaptability:

Sample Mini-Lessons

Day 1: What is adaptability?

-- the ability to manage transitions and adjust to changing situations and responsibilities

Video clip: *Stuck on an Escalator* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrSUE_m19FY

Discussion: What does the escalator represent in a discussion about adaptability?

Exit ticket: Written reflection, adaptability

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dDa-sxhfvQZF_NGPhjaGYPqKC1MkkT58/view?ths=true



Four-Day Focus on Adaptability:

Sample Mini-Lessons

Day 2: Definition of adaptability (review)

Share-out: Volunteers read yesterday's written reflection

Video clip: *First-Ever Surf Therapy Dog Inspires World!* (5:15)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGODurRfVv4>



Discussion: What does the video clip illustrate about adapting to change?

Four-Day Focus on Adaptability:

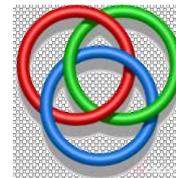
Sample Mini-Lessons

Day 3: Small-group rotation reflections on giant Post-It Notes: Difficult changes with positive outcomes (moving to a new school; moving to a new home; ending a relationship; making a career change; replacing unhealthy decisions with healthier ones)

Share-outs



Four-Day Focus on Adaptability: Sample Mini-Lessons



Day 4: Great Expectations Game

Materials needed: one- or two-liter bottle of Coca-Cola; rings that fit over the soft drink bottle (Pool rings work great!); masking tape to mark three lines on the floor (2-, 6-, and 12-feet away from the soft drink bottle)

The situation: You have just enrolled for your first term at The Excel Center, and after meeting with your coach, you have learned that you will need to earn an additional 16 credits prior to graduating. In addition to being a high school student, you are a spouse, the parent of two preschool-aged children, and a part-time employee at a local restaurant.

Your task: Work toward graduation by earning credits. You will be awarded 4 credits for ringing the soft drink bottle from a distance of 2 feet away, 8 credits for ringing the bottle from a distance of 6 feet away, and 16 credits for ringing the bottle from a distance of 12 feet away.

Note to teacher: Most students will make several attempts at ringing the bottle from 12 feet away in their rush to “graduate.” Inevitably, though, at least one student decides to attempt credits in more reasonable quantities to increase his or her likelihood of being successful. That student will move to the two-foot line and begin earning smaller number of credits with great consistency.

Follow-up discussion: What’s the “take-away” from this game? Who adapted well to achieve his or her goal? How was his or her level of success impacted by his or her willingness to make changes in his or her approach to earning credits?

Focus on Attendance: Suggested Resources

Activity: “Washing an Elephant”

- Description: The teacher invents a reason for one student to leave the room for 2-3 minutes, perhaps to run an errand. While the student is out of the room, the teacher asks for a volunteer to mime the act of washing an elephant after the student returns. (The teacher explains that everyone except the student who has left the room already knows what the volunteer will be miming.) When the student returns, the teacher asks for a volunteer to perform a charade, or mime. The previously selected volunteer steps forward, and after the teacher pretends to whisper instructions to the volunteer, he or she begins “washing an elephant.” After a few minutes, the teacher asks if anyone can guess the action. Inevitably, the student who was “absent” is the only member of the audience who doesn’t know that the volunteer is washing an elephant!

Video clip: *Teen Truancy Public Service Announcement*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9ggiC07UXc>

Exit ticket: Written reflection, attendance

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Nln6m0WnxXOvSW_7gCDuKx_FDNRDArF/edit



Focus on Goal-Striving: Suggested Resources

Video clip: *Tales of Mere Existence: Procrastination* (1:21)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P785j15Tzk&t=6s>

Video clip: *Navy Admiral Shares Reasons to Make Bed Every Day* (1:42)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgzLzbd-zT4>

Video clip: *212, the Extra Degree: Extraordinary Results Begin with One Small Change* (2:50)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPEeEqkEjAQ&t=3s>

Video clip: *10 Great Motivational Quotes* (1:25)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGRW3q_SkmM&feature=youtu.be

Exit ticket #1: “Identifying and Writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals”

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ihIG_FM41fZ8z2JKUwEdnVXocYI-v4xu/edit

Exit ticket #2: “Writing a S.M.A.R.T. Goal”

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eiufERMp0YGRHxhosesMCYBYpHi65DLd/edit>



Focus on Integrity: Suggested Resources

Video clip: *Walk the Talk* (2:57)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4AJFyK63Hg&t=23>

Video clip: *Coach John Wooden Makes Bill Walton Get a Hair Cut* (2:18)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OPu3fnbmvo>

Video clip: *Do What You Say You Will Do* (2:46)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jS-7PfzNlgl&t=14s>

SAY  DO

Video clip: *The Pursuit Of Happiness* - “Job Interview after a Night in Jail” (4:15)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHXKitKAT1E>

Exit ticket: “Integrity Checklist” and written reflection, Integrity

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Lpgq2W1CLe1y83eKxa7RTZkziW3ZSmdG/edit#>

Focus on Self-Control and Awareness:

Suggested Resources

Video clip: *The Marshmallow Test* (2:44)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y6R5boDqh4&feature=fvst>

Video clip: *M&M Dilleys* (2:35)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CYr4FqMYGI>

Video clip: *Matt Cutts: Try Something New for 30 Days* (3:20)

http://www.ted.com/talks/matt_cutts_try_something_new_for_30_days.html

Exit ticket #1: Written reflection, integrity

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N4ETFeOzeiq4gckV9QOguy3DMAZS01oE/edit>

Exit ticket #2: “The Puzzle,” activity and written reflection

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1L-Cj9dEdBMfuOBxwzfzNSZRt9T4B2KS1T/edit>



Focus on Emotional Intelligence:

Suggested Resources

Video clip: *Jessica's Daily Affirmation* (:49)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR3rK0kZFkg&feature=player_embedded

Video clip: *Kid Gives Speech After Learning to Ride a Bike* (:55)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0zVPZBykSE>

Video clip: *The Winners' Pledge 2* (3:31)

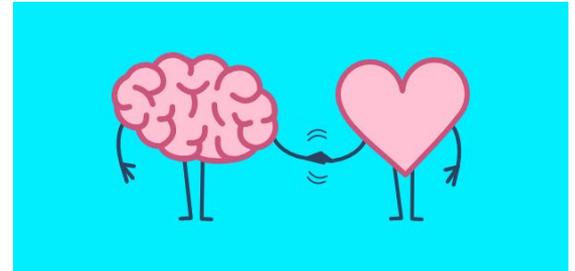
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzYaU33ZYOs>

Video clip: *Video That Will Change Your Life* (4:35)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT-HBI2TVtl>

Exit ticket: "Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment"

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VU21P7gh9DYkwj815xEukeZpZSmtBry9/edit>



Focus on Grit: Suggested Resources

Video clip: *Famous Failures* (2:49)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLYECljmnQs&list=PLsgOUPLhd47jG3ZPlpG3KNG_3f15kB9gd

Video clip: *Best Motivational Video Ever* (1:17)

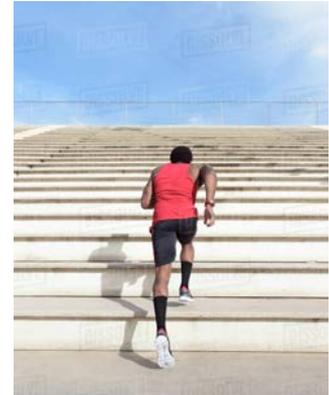
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMpSjB7LErs>

Video clip: *Empire Strikes Back*: "Yoda training Luke, Part 3 -- "Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try." (4:25)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3-CpzZJl8w>

Paragraph writing: Grit prompts

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/15FkmOBZSg1TZpaCfCNkv4ZdNQc3JA59U/edit#>



Focus on Leadership: Suggested Resources

Video clip. *Best Leadership Video Ever* (stop at 2:15)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-VjisHm4sw&t=58s>

Paragraph writing: Leadership prompt

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u-67u_DkWR3Ey92Rqs4n-byO85VoeYbC/edit#



References

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United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). (2020). *Youth at Work Classroom*

Materials. <https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/classroom-materials>

YouTube video titles, running times, and URLs provided throughout slideshow.