

Entrepreneurship Program



Georgia Employability Skills Task Force Recommendation No. 3 School Goal 3

- ▶ Expand opportunities for students to develop employability skills and career readiness experiences beyond work-based learning, including career exploration and project-based learning, across all grade levels.
- ▶ Identify integrated learning experiences that allow students to combine academic, technical, and employability skills learning.

Overview

Discovery High School's Entrepreneurship Program has created opportunities for students to develop employability skills and career readiness experiences through project-based learning. The program provides language arts instruction through an entrepreneurial and business lens. Students engage with a variety of texts and materials that encourage teamwork, critical thinking, and the practical application of reading, writing, and communication skills.

As a recently created Title I school, Discovery High School (DHS) is in the process of expanding its entrepreneurship program. It is one of four academies and currently enrolls approximately 100 students, currently freshman and sophomores, with plans to continue developing its curriculum for future students and to formalize opportunities and curriculum for rising juniors and seniors.

Discovery High School Entrepreneurship Program

DHS freshmen enrolled in the entrepreneurship program take Introduction to Business Technology and Ninth Grade English Language Arts (ELA); 10th grade students take Entrepreneurship as well as Tenth Grade ELA. In addition, the school has embedded career, technical, and agricultural education (CTAE) credits in Marketing in 9th grade and Legal Environments of Business and Oral Communications in 10th grade. Currently, juniors and seniors participate in work-based learning (WBL) by either developing their own viable business or participating in school-related enterprises.

The school's 9th grade curriculum focuses on four distinct units: Identity, Challenges & Choices, Courage, and The Journey. Students are exposed to a variety of employability skills as they progress through each unit. For example, the "Identity" unit integrates learning about personal research narratives and specific ELA skills such as perspective; tone; purpose; and audience with lessons on business branding; advertising; and establishing a company's mission, vision, and core values.

The school's 10th grade curriculum focuses on four units as well: American Dream, Global Perspective, Entrepreneurial Mindset, and Mentors. Teachers make use of outside resources and case studies to help students learn business competencies and to master language and literacy skills. For example, the Entrepreneurial Mindset unit makes use of a "Design a Shoe" lesson designed by the Arconic Foundation and Discovery Education. Through this lesson, students learn about the shoe manufacturing process, the process of testing and marketing a product, and working to accommodate client needs and input when developing products.

Skills Development

Applying a business lens to all lessons emphasized key workplace and employability skills. Each lesson demands students to be creative and critical thinkers, who make decisions independently and solve problems through an organized plan. Many of the problem-based learning lessons required working in teams, exercising leadership, and resolving conflict. Other personal qualities that are developed by students include the ability to work independently, to be flexible, to take initiative, have integrity, and to take responsibility for their personal growth.

Audience and Initiative Impact

DHS is working to change the mindset around college and career readiness and hopes to show its students that the conventional pathway is not the only way to achieve success. The school hopes to promote its vision of teaching core subjects with a CTAE lens and the acquisition of employability and technical skills through WBL and Move On When Ready courses. The school reports that in Spring 2017, no student in either Entrepreneurship Ninth Grade ELA Class 1 or Class 2 scored below Level 2 on the Georgia Milestone Assessments End of Course exam. In one class's end-of-unit survey, students reported an appreciation for interactive learning environments, remarking that the interactive lessons kept learners engaged. Students also self-reported learning more about employability skills and the skills necessary to start and maintain a business.

School/District: Discovery High School, Gwinnett County Schools

Contact: Carla Youmans, Teacher

Email: carla_youmans@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Georgia Employability Skills Task Force Recommendations

1. Integrate employability skills into curriculum and learning experiences from prekindergarten through postsecondary education.
2. Support educators and other stakeholders in developing employability skills instruction.
3. Develop deeper and stronger relationships between industry and education to enhance teacher and mentor roles in quality work-based learning and career development opportunities.

To learn more about college- and career-readiness work in the southeast states, please contact Beth Howard-Brown (bhoward-brown@air.org), Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) director, or visit the SECC website (southeast-cc.org).

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