

# **21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Through Micro-Credentialing: The Polk County Partnership**

February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

# Welcome!



**Adam Lindberg**

Director of Research and Policy  
Florida College Access Network

[alindberg@floridacollegeaccess.org](mailto:alindberg@floridacollegeaccess.org)

# Questions & Conversation

- Submit your questions in the box
- Share on social media

Twitter: @FLCollegeAccess

#FCAN

#TalentStrongFL

*This webinar is being recorded; all materials will be available within a week of recording.*



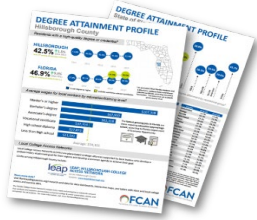
## **Our mission:**

We lead the collaborative movement to ensure every Floridian achieves an education beyond high school and a rewarding career.

## **Our vision:**

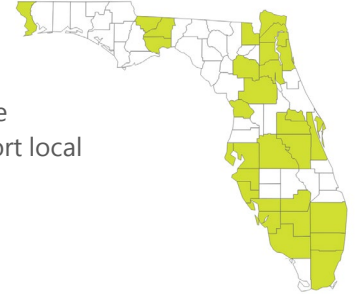
A Florida working together, where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all.

# FCAN's Work



**Research and Data** FCAN publishes research and data on evidence-based practices and policy opportunities to strengthen Florida's talent pool.

**Local college access networks (LCANs)** LCANs support 82% of the state's population. These organizations are made up of community leaders who come together to create solutions and partnerships to support local talent development.



**Statewide Initiatives** FCAN coordinates 4 College Ready Florida initiatives that provides schools and community organizations resources to help students continue their education after high school.

## 7 Conditions for Success

**Opportunity for everyone:** To build a talent-strong economy, all Floridians need access to a postsecondary education and the supports to complete it.

**Clear information and guidance:** Students and families need exposure and counseling early and often to make informed decisions about their futures.

**Affordability:** Postsecondary education needs to be within everyone's financial reach, regardless of household income or life circumstances.

**Multiple pathways to success:** Floridians benefit from multiple learning opportunities for academic achievement and career advancement.

**Lifelong learning:** No degree or credential is "one and done;" Floridians need to prepare for career changes through continuous learning.

**Effective use of data:** Transparent access to data on education and economic outcomes, especially for Florida's diverse populations, helps achieve our goals.

**Community collaboration:** When community partners work together toward a shared vision, they remove barriers, build a robust workforce, and improve the quality of life for their regions.

# Today's Presenters

## **Dr. Naomi Boyer**

*Executive Director, Digital Transformation*  
Education Design Lab

## **Matthew Aranda**

*Associate Education Designer, Micro-Credentialing*  
Education Design Lab

## **Steve Cochran**

*Senior Director, Workforce*  
*Education and Multiple Pathways*  
Polk County Schools

## **Kim Long**

*Executive Director*  
Polk Vision

## **Kandis Buford**

*Equity and Human Resource Director*  
Polk County Board of County Commissioners

**Education** Design Lab

# **21st Century Skills Through Micro- Credentialing: The Polk County Partnership**

February 2023





# Panelists

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*Feel free to ask the panelists questions at any time!*



**Naomi Boyer**  
Education Design Lab  
Executive Director, Digital  
Transformation



**Matthew Aranda**  
Education Design Lab  
Associate Education Designer



**Steve Cochran**  
Polk County  
Public Schools  
Senior Director, Workforce  
Education and Multiple  
Pathways



**Kim Long**  
Polk Vision  
Executive Director



**Kandis Buford**  
Polk County  
Board of County  
Commissioners  
Equity and Human Resource  
Director


# Today's Agenda

Speaker	Topic
Adam Lindberg & Naomi Boyer	Welcome + Overview + Introductions
Matthew Aranda	Propel Polk! Foundational Info About the Project
Steve Cochran	Implementing 21st Century Skill Digital Micro-credentials in Polk County Public Schools
Kim Long	Responding to the Local Needs
Kandis Buford	Connecting to Employers The Needs of Polk County Board of County Commissioners
Naomi Boyer	Panel Q&A



# Education Design Lab 21st Century Skills Micro-credentials + Propel Polk project

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We co-design, test, and build new models and approaches to better address program **affordability, relevance, portability, and visibility** in a rapidly changing knowledge economy.

**140**

**Colleges +  
Universities**

Majority of them serve  
New Majority Learners

**100**

**Employers**

**12**

**Ecosystems**

States, systems, cities



# Designing Postsecondary Education *with* Learners

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**Who are the learners  
we primarily work with?**

Frontline Workers

Transfer Students

Single Parents

Non-degreed Adults

First-generation Students

Underinvested Communities

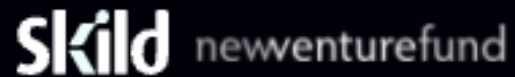


# Catalyze Challenge: A Consortium of Partners

## SPONSORING PARTNERS



## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS



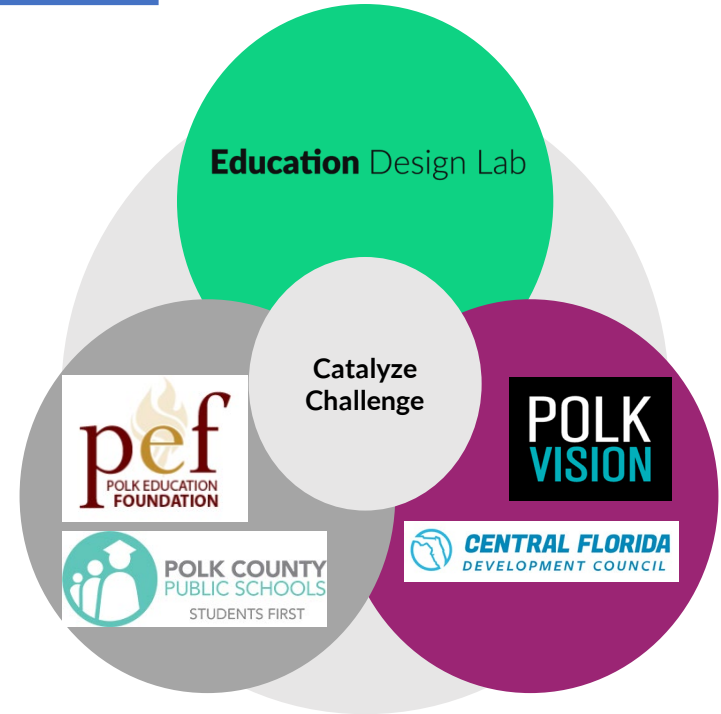
## AFFILIATE PARTNERS



# Propel Polk! Goals

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1. Deliver 21st century skill micro-credentials to 450 Junior and Senior HS students
2. Engage Polk County employers in identification of the highest priority + needed 21st century and technical skills
3. Engage Polk County employers in a campaign to educate + hire badge-earners
4. Expand use of micro-credentials to secure jobs and post-secondary learning.

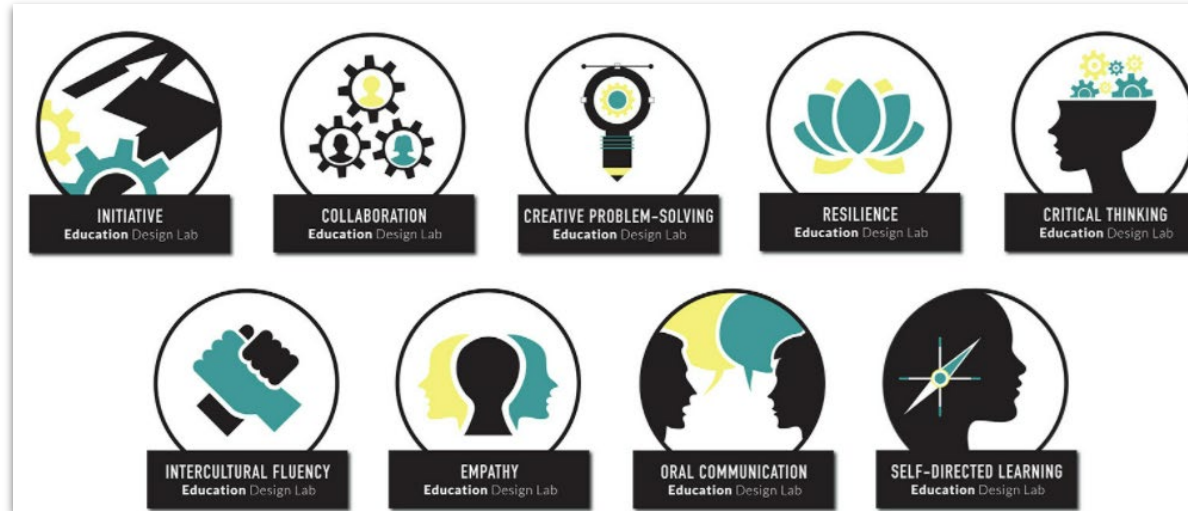


# 21st century skills, defined

Employability  
skills

Power  
skills

Essential  
skills



Durable  
skills

Soft  
skills

Human  
skills



# Micro-credentials and Digital Badges



**Digital micro-credential:** A narrowly focused learning and/or assessment experience, done online, typically in under a year, which verifies that a specific set of competencies have been achieved



**Digital badge:** the physical asset learners earn upon successfully completing a micro-credential, which includes the below features

Recognition of  
Achievement

Links to  
Competencies

Contains  
Meta Data

Open Standards

Shareable

Verifiable

Stackable

Discoverable





## Critical Thinking - Polk County Public Schools

Issued by [Polk County Public Schools](#).

Critical thinking in the 21st century includes the capacity to reason logically and rigorously. Effective critical thinkers exhibit four core sub-competencies: gather and assess relevant information; identify patterns; question assumptions; and draw well-reasoned conclusions.

[Learn more](#)

 Validation

 Foundational

### Skills

Critical Thinking




Drawing Conclusions

Gather And Assess Relevant Information

Identify Patterns

Question Assumptions

### Earning Criteria

-  The recipient of this badge has a strong understanding of critical thinking and its applications in the workplace.
-  The recipient of this badge has successfully applied their critical thinking skills, and the associated sub-competencies in a professional environment.
-  The recipient of this badge has demonstrated the ability to gather & assess relevant information, identify patterns, question assumptions and draw conclusions.

### Ways to Use a Digital Badge

- Find jobs that seek the validated skill
- Share on LinkedIn
- Share on social media
- Hyperlink on resumes
- Embed + link image in email signatures
- Discuss gained skills during interviews



## Polk County Public Schools.

The mission of Polk County Public Schools is to provide a high-quality education for all students. 21st century skills are essential for young people entering the workforce. Key skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving are in high demand by employers. The awarding of digital micro-credentials as “badges” will allow students to make the achievement of these skills visible to both colleges and employers.



### Badges

3 badges

Sort by: Most Popular ▼



#### Critical Thinking - Polk County Public Schools

Polk County Public Schools.



#### Initiative - Polk County Public Schools

Polk County Public Schools.



#### Oral Communication - Polk County Public Schools

Polk County Public Schools.

# 21st Century Skill Micro-credentials

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## CRITICAL THINKING

**Education Design Lab**  
issued by  
**Polk County Public Schools**



## INITIATIVE

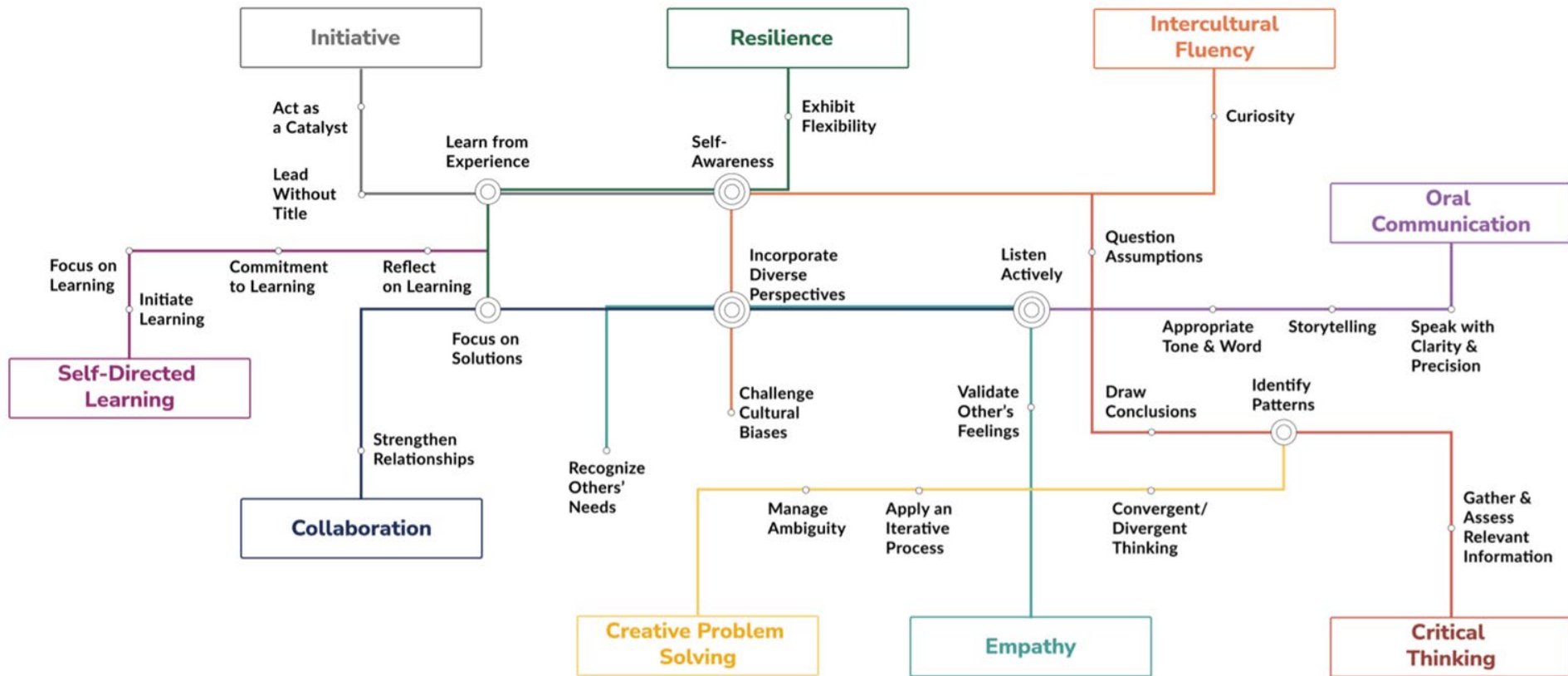
**Education Design Lab**  
issued by  
**Polk County Public Schools**



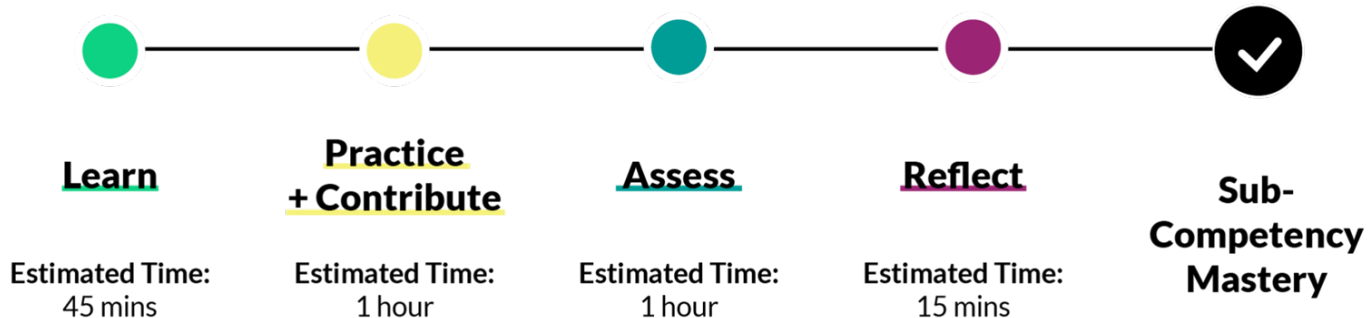
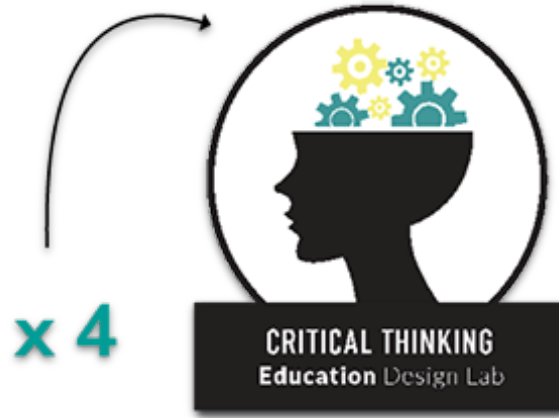
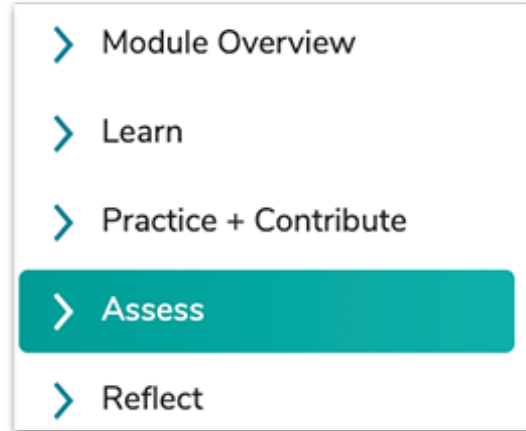
## ORAL COMMUNICATION

**Education Design Lab**  
issued by  
**Polk County Public Schools**

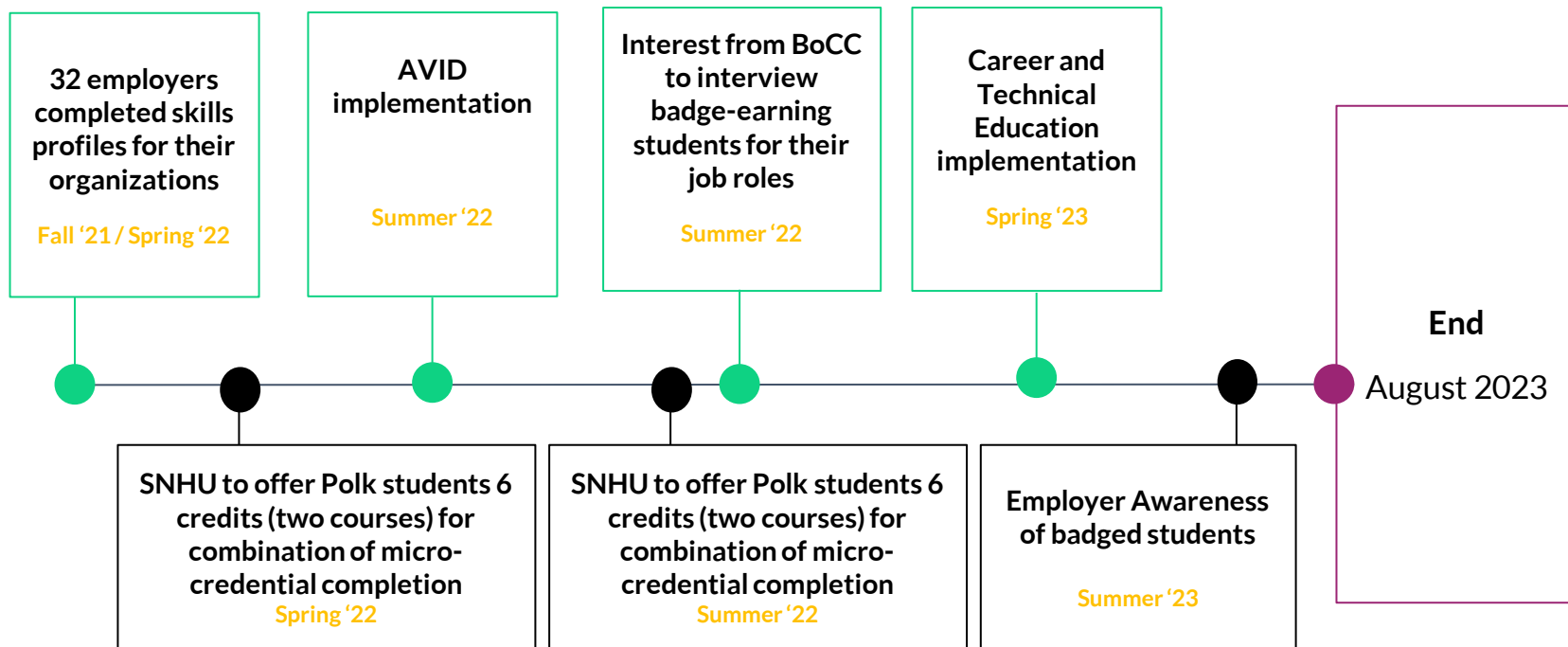
# 21st Century Skill Sub-Competency Map



# 21st Century Skill Learning Philosophy



# Project Progress so far



# Description of T-Profile

The T-Profile is a **visual construct** representing the optimal combination of 21st century and technical skills for a specified job.

- Allows employers to be honest and precise about the **ideal combination of skills** for their specific job roles
- Institutions can understand what employers need for specific job roles and **prepare their learners** with targeted, in-demand skills

21ST CENTURY SKILLS				
<b>INITIATIVE</b> LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE 1 ⬇ ACT AS CATALYST 2 ⬇ LEAD WITHOUT TITLE 3 ⬇ SELF AWARENESS 4 ⬇	<b>COLLABORATION</b> STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS 1 ⬇ LISTEN ACTIVELY 2 ⬇ DIVERSE PERSPECTIVE 3 ⬇ FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS 4 ⬇	<b>CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING</b> ITERATION 1 ⬇ CONVERGENT/DIVERGENT THINKING 2 ⬇ IDENTIFY PATTERNS 3 ⬇ MANAGE AMBIGUITY 4 ⬇	<b>CRITICAL THINKING</b> IDENTIFY PATTERNS 1 ⬇ DRAW CONCLUSIONS 2 ⬇ GATHER RELEVANT INFORMATION 3 ⬇ QUESTION ASSUMPTIONS 4 ⬇	<b>INTERCULTURAL FLUENCY</b> DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES 1 ⬇ CHALLENGE BIASES 2 ⬇ CURIOSITY 3 ⬇ SELF-AWARENESS 4 ⬇
<b>EMPATHY</b> VALIDATE OTHERS' FEELINGS 1 ⬇ LISTEN ACTIVELY 2 ⬇ DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES 3 ⬇ RECOGNIZE NEEDS 4 ⬇	<b>RESILIENCE</b> FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS 1 ⬇ LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE 2 ⬇ SELF-AWARENESS 3 ⬇ EXHIBIT FLEXIBILITY 4 ⬇	<b>ORAL COMMUNICATION</b> STORYTELLING 1 ⬇ ADOPT TONE/WORD CHOICE 2 ⬇ LISTEN ACTIVELY 3 ⬇ CLARITY/PRECISION 4 ⬇	<b>SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING</b> INITIATE LEARNING 1 ⬇ FOCUS ON LEARNING 2 ⬇ COMMIT TO LEARNING 3 ⬇ REFLECT ON LEARNING 4 ⬇	<b>OTHER</b> OTHER-4 1 ⬇ OTHER-1 2 ⬇ OTHER-2 3 ⬇ OTHER-3 4 ⬇

CREDENTIALS	TECHNICAL SKILLS
creds 1 Required, Upon Entry	Skill 1 Required, Upon Entry
creds 2 Preferred, Upon Entry	Skill 2 Preferred, Upon Entry
creds 3 Required, Willing To Train	Skill 3 Required, Willing To Train
creds 4 Preferred, Willing To Train	Skill 4 Preferred, Willing To Train



# Implementing 21st Century Skill Micro-credentials in Polk County Public Schools

# What are Micro-credentials?

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Micro-credentials are an assessment-based record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands, or can do. Being delivered as “bite-sized” chunks, they have stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials.

## **The digital badges awarded to students:**

- Recognize mastery of job skills, such as critical thinking and oral communication
- Include specific information about how, when, and where they were awarded
- Can be linked in resumes and professional profiles, as well as discussed in job interviews

# Micro-credential Student Learner Data

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## 2021 - 2022 AVID Model

- 10 Teachers: AVID programs through the district.
- 10 students completed Critical Thinking micro-credential and earned a badge.
- AVID's new curriculum has add micro-credentials through the program which students can earn.
- AVID only reaches a small portion of students within a school, therefore, we sought to find another way to reach more students.

## 2022 - 2023 CTE Model

- 9 Teachers: Bartow, Fort-Meade and Kathleen High.
- Currently 147 Students enrolled in Critical Thinking, Initiative, and Oral Communication.
- 25 students completed Critical Thinking micro-credential and earned a badge so far .
- Students will continue working until the end of the school year to complete the other two micro-credentials.
- The goal is for 50 students to earn at least two micro-credentials by May 31st, 2023.

# 21st Century Skill Micro-credentials

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**Critical thinking in the 21st Century includes the capacity to reason logically and rigorously**



**Initiative in the 21st Century includes self-efficacy and the capacity to identify needs and respond proactively**



**Oral communication in the 21st Century includes the capacity to speak with clarity and precision and understand and recognize nonverbal cues**

# How do micro-credentials support district and workforce education strategic goals?

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- Micro-credentials provide our students with alternate ways to earn certification for skills used at the postsecondary level or in the workforce.
- Workforce Education's goal is to increase student retention in our valuable programs.
- Micro-Credentials prepare students to meet industry needs in Polk County's increasingly complex, ever-growing 21st Century workforce
- Micro-credentials promote collaboration across the district to equitably leverage the opportunities available to students in the fastest-growing county in Florida

# Current School / Academy Programs

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## Bartow High School

- Academy of Future Educators
- Digital Design and Media

**7 Completers**

*CTE Head of School:  
Kerry Brown*

## Fort Meade Middle / High School

- Construction Academy
- Culinary Arts
- Digital Design and Media

**3 Completers**

*CTE Head of School:  
Summer Fisher*

## Kathleen High School

- Culinary Arts
- Digital Design and Media
- Entrepreneurship

**16 Completers**

*CTE Head of School:  
Ladreda Akins*

# Benefits of Micro-credentials

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## Learners

- Learners can develop a specific skill and articulate their knowledge in post-secondary institutions and the workforce

## Business Partners

- Build a pipeline of qualified students ready for employment
- Meet emerging industry needs of local businesses

## Polk County Public Schools

- Micro-credentials serve the needs of preparing learners for college and career goals upon graduating from high school
- Direct engagement with local businesses and employers to increase relevant partnerships with the Polk County Public Schools



## Recommendations for Program Growth

- + Offer micro-credentials through all “On the Job Training” (OJT) classes
- + Students seeking internships to complete professionalism and ready-to-work credentials
- + Traviss and Ridge Technical Colleges to assist new graduates with employability skills to enter in the workforce



# Responding to the Local Needs



# POLK VISION

LEAD

LEARN ENGAGE ALIGN DEVELOP



# What is Polk Vision?



LEARN



ENGAGE



ALIGN



DEVELOP

## OUR LEADIng WORK

As facilitators of a countywide collaboration among schools, non-profits, businesses, and the public sector, Polk Vision offers a framework for achieving sustained improvement. The work is dynamic and requires continuous learning and adaptive solutions in addressing a range of complex issues.

Polk Vision refers to this as our LEADS process:

**Learn** all we can about a problem facing our community;

**Engage** partners knowledgeable and passionate about the issue;

**Align** resources to reduce the impact of the problem;

**Develop** plans that will result in long-term systemic solutions;

# FOUNDATIONAL AREAS OF FOCUS

In order to achieve the overarching priority of improved community prosperity before 2030, Polk County will have:



## EDUCATION

A world-class, fully integrated education system that supports the needs of a vibrant, progressive community.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An economic development environment that attracts quality businesses with higher paying jobs, improves productivity and retains educated young people.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

Growth management and infrastructure that protects the environment, enhances quality of life, supports education and economic development and is economically sustainable.



## GOVERNMENT

A comprehensive system of government that is effective, efficient, diverse and responsive to the basic needs of its citizens.



## QUALITY OF LIFE

A quality of life that encourages diverse backgrounds to live in harmony while developing physically, spiritually, mentally and culturally within a healthy and safe environment



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Private sector leadership that drives the partnership with government and citizens to ensure that Polk County is a premiere place to live, learn, work and play.



IMPROVE  
HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATION

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES



IMPROVE  
COMMUNITY  
HEALTH

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES



IMPROVE  
COLLEGE & CAREER  
READINESS

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES



IMPROVE  
PEDESTRIAN &  
BICYCLE SAFETY

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

# Talent Pipeline Team - Aligning Industry with Education

Convened in partnership with the Central Florida Development Council is focused on filling the skills gap to meet current and emerging industry workforce needs.





# Local College Access Network - Aligning Career Pathways

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**Beyond the traditional FAFSA completion support to high school students expanding career exploration with middle school students.**



*In June of 2019, Polk Vision together with Polk County Career Academies hosted a professional development training for Polk County Public Schools' Middle School Counselors at the Bartow History Center.*

# Find Your Future Workforce - Industry Roundtables

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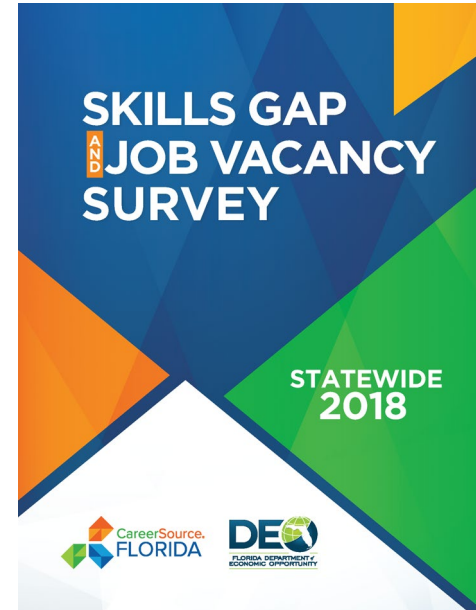




# Find Your Future Workforce - Industry Roundtables

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Local business leaders were asked to identify and rank the jobs and skills needed in their workplace. Employability (Soft) Skills ranked #1 most needed and #1 deficit in applicants and recent hires.



# Overlapping Results with PoG

Competency	Percent of Responses	Number of Responses
Communication	75.6%	2,119
Critical Thinking	67.5%	1,892
Self/Goal-Directed	33.4%	937



## CRITICAL THINKING

Education Design Lab  
issued by  
Polk County Public Schools



## INITIATIVE


Education Design Lab  
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Polk County Public Schools



## ORAL COMMUNICATION

Education Design Lab  
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Polk County Public Schools

# Find Your Future Workforce - Industry Roundtables



The screenshot shows the top section of the FLORIDA ready to work website. At the top is a navigation bar with the logo on the left and links for Home, About, Employability Skills, Soft Skills, Employers, and More on the right. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image featuring a group of diverse, smiling people. Overlaid on this image is the text 'NEW essential soft skills solution now getting Florida ready to work!' in a bold, white font. A green 'Learn More' button is positioned below the text. At the bottom of the banner, there are two columns of text: 'Answering Florida Employers' Demands' on the left and '92% of Florida employers plan to hire, yet 81% say lack of key employability' on the right.

**FLORIDA** ready to work

[Home](#) [About](#) [Employability Skills](#) [Soft Skills](#) [Employers](#) [More](#) ▾

**NEW essential soft skills  
solution now getting Florida  
ready to work!**

[Learn More](#)

**Answering Florida Employers' Demands**

**92% of Florida employers plan to hire,  
yet 81% say lack of key employability**

# Polk County Public Schools - Portrait of a Graduate

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# Propel Polk!

Polk Vision promotes opportunities with Education Design Lab for business leaders and HR professionals to partake in the T-Profile Sessions

## Education Design Lab | T-Profile

Occupation/Job Role Teams Coordinator

Employer/Organization Polk Vision

Initiative		Creative Problem Solving		Collaboration		Intercultural Fluency		Competency: Other	
lead without title - 1	act as catalyst - 3	identify patterns -	manage ambiguity -	focus on solutions -	listen actively -	curiosity -	challenge biases -	TBD -	TBD -
self-awareness - 4	learn from experience - 2	iteration -	convergent/divergent thinking -	diverse perspective -	strengthen relationships -	self-awareness -	diverse perspectives -	TBD -	TBD -
Resilience		Critical Thinking		Oral Communications		Empathy		Competency: Other	
exhibit flexibility -	focus on solutions -	identify patterns - 3	draw conclusions - 2	listen actively - 2	clarity/precision - 1	listen actively -	recognize needs -	TBD -	TBD -
self-awareness -	learn from experience -	question assumptions - 4	gather relevant info - 1	storytelling - 4	adopt tone/word choice - 3	validate others' feelings -	diverse perspectives -	TBD -	TBD -
Technical Skills									
What are the things (tasks, activities, skills) the employee needs to be able to do on the job? What evidence will you need from potential employees?					Are there certifications or licenses required or preferred for hire? (If yes, please specify below. Include link and whether it is required or preferred)				
ability to schedule and run zoom meetings - 1					-				
ability to use Google Calendar and Gmail - 1					-				

# Resources

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- Career Source Florida Study - <https://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Skills-Gap-Report.pdf>
- Florida Chamber Foundation - Identifies employability skills as a barrier to economic growth  
<https://www.flchamber.com/research/research-programs/employability-skills-framework/>
- Florida Ready to Work begins offering credentialing in employability skills -  
<https://www.floridareadytowork.com/employability-skills>
- Portrait of a Graduate Results -  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GPCnJUaZVtDsOkofvzcl\\_hCRf9ESph6I/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GPCnJUaZVtDsOkofvzcl_hCRf9ESph6I/view?usp=sharing)

# Connecting to Employers



# POLK COUNTY

Florida's Crossroads of Opportunity

**Propel Polk**  
**The Needs of Polk County Board of County Commissioners**

Kandis Baker-Buford, JD, CPM  
Equity and Human Resources Director



# The Needs of Polk County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC)

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## Current Situation

- Tight Labor Market
  - COVID Exodus of Employees
  - Baby Boomers Exiting the Workforce
  - Finding qualified candidates who fit company culture

## New Recruitment Opportunities

- Non-Traditional Recruitment
- Propel Polk
- Home Grown Employees

# Sample Career Opportunity

## Polk County BoCC

Occupational / Job Role

Trades Helper

Employer / Organization

Polk County BoCC – Utilities Division

Initiative		Creative Problem Solving		Collaboration		Intercultural Fluency		Self-directed Learning	
lead without title - 2	act as catalyst - 3	identify patterns -	manage ambiguity -	focus on solutions - 2	listen actively - 1	curiosity -	challenge biases -	initiate on learning	commit to learning
self awareness - 4	learn from experience - 1	iteration -	convergent / divergent thinking -	diverse perspective - 4	strengthen relationships - 3	self-awareness -	diverse perspectives -	focus on learning	reflect on learning

# Sample Career Opportunity

## Polk County BoCC (continued)

Occupational / Job Role

Trades Helper

Employer / Organization

Polk County BoCC – Utilities Division

Resilience		Critical Thinking		Oral Communications		Empathy		Competency: Other	
exhibit flexibility -	focus on solutions -	identify patterns -	draw conclusions -	listen actively - 1	clarity / precision - 2	listen actively -	recognize needs -	TBD -	TBD -
self-awareness -	learn from experience -	question assumptions -	gather relevant info -	storytelling - 3	adopt tone / word choice - 4	validate others' feelings -	diverse perspectives -	TBD -	TBD -

# Sample Career Opportunity

## Polk County BoCC (continued)

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Technical Skills	
What are the things (tasks, activities, skills) the employee needs to be able to do on the job? What evidence will you need from potential employees?	Are there certifications or licensures required or preferred for hire? (If yes, please specify below. Include link and whether it is required or preferred)
Ability to listen and follow written and oral instructions. - 1	N/A -
All other training will be taught. -	-

Q & A

# Conclusion

