



BEHAVIORAL

SKILLS

Beyond
Academics



Holistic Framework

Four Keys to College and Career Readiness

Current gauges of college and career readiness tend to focus on academic preparation and achievement, but evidence shows that success in school and the workplace is dependent on multiple aspects in addition to academic ability.

Using ACT research, **ACT's Holistic Framework** provides four domains (core academic skills, cross-cutting capabilities, behavioral skills, and education and career navigation) that most effectively predict and prepare someone's college and career readiness.

Students and employees can use this framework as a map to track themselves along their journey to becoming college and career ready. Teachers and employers can use this framework to identify times for intervention or manage additional support for their students or employees.

Beneficial for all

K-12 Educators and Administrators

The behavioral skills found in this book are essential for academic achievement and college readiness. In-school and/or after-school activities can help students develop these skills.

Higher Education Professionals

The behavioral skills found in this book are what research and workforce professionals have identified as the skills needed for workforce readiness. A high level of behavioral skills also ensures persistence and academic success in your institution. Incorporating collaboration, persistence, and extracurricular activities can help improve these behavioral skills, creating a well-rounded, work-ready individual.

Workforce Development Professionals

There may be a common perception among employers that their employees or potential job candidates might be missing the behavioral skills (i.e., soft skills) needed to perform effectively in their organization. This discrepancy might be due to a lack of consensus of what constitutes behavioral skills. The components and subcomponents found in this book can create a common language for employers, improving how they define and measure the presence of behavioral skills in their potential and current employees.

Behavioral Skills

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WHAT ARE THE BEHAVIORAL SKILLS?



“Soft skills” or non-cognitive factors



Acting honestly:

Valuing and adhering to ethical and moral standards of behavior, as well as their personal level of humility



Keeping an open mind:

Curiosity about a variety of ideas, beliefs, people, and experiences



Maintaining composure:

Working on staying calm, serene, and able to manage emotions effectively



Social Connection:

Preferred level of social interaction, behavior in interpersonal situations, and optimism



Getting along with others:

Interacting positively and cooperating with others; is kind, friendly, and tactful



Sustaining effort:

Developing diligence, effort, organization, self-control, and compliance

ACTING HONESTLY



The components of acting honestly

Genuineness:

- Being sincere and truthful in interactions, appropriately giving others credit, and acknowledging his or her mistakes

Fairness:

- Acting in ways that are intended to be unbiased and fair to everyone

Modesty:

- Being humble about achievements, presenting a realistic view of himself or herself and avoiding boasting or acting superior to others

KEEPING AN OPEN MIND



The components of keeping an open mind

Creativity:

- Generating original ideas, using existing ideas or things in new ways, and having an active imagination

Curiosity:

- Seeking out information to better understand a wide range of topic areas and/or obtaining a depth of understanding in one topic area that goes beyond what is required

Flexibility:

- Adapting to new environments and making adjustments to accommodate changes

Accepting differences:

- Being open-minded and accepting of ideas, cultures, and ways of doing things that are different from his or her own

MAINTAINING COMPOSURE



The components of maintaining composure

Stress tolerance:

- The degree to which a person can control feelings of anxiety and other negative emotions in order to function effectively in a range of situations

Self-confidence:

- A tendency to be self-assured and to make decisions without needing a lot of input from others

SOCIAL CONNECTION



The components of social connection

Assertiveness:

- Influencing others and preferring to be in charge in social interactions and group activities

Optimism:

- The degree to which a person expresses a positive mood and a positive outlook

Sociability:

- Seeking out and enjoying situations involving interpersonal interaction and building relationships with others

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS



The components of getting along with others

Cooperation:

- Being Respectful, polite, collaborative, and skilled at working through conflict with other people

Perspective taking:

- Identifying, acknowledging, and understanding the emotions of others, showing concern for others, and considering the audience when providing information

Goodwill:

- Assuming others have good intentions to forgive and not holding grudges with others

Helpfulness:

- Helping others and being generous with his or her time and/or resources despite personal cost

Patience:

- Tolerating frustrations presented by others or by situations without expressing irritation or hostility

SUSTAINING EFFORT



The components of sustaining effort

Dependability:

- Reliability fulfilling responsibilities, meeting deadlines, and producing quality work

Order:

- Planning and organizing tasks and materials, creating schedules, monitoring progress, and paying close attention to details

Persistence:

- Working hard, making progress on relevant tasks, and maintaining focus despite setbacks or difficulties

Rule consciousness:

- Following rules and procedures and complying with authority

Goal striving:

- Setting challenging goals, doing tasks without being told, and working to improve or learn new skills

Self-control:

- Managing impulses and weighing the consequences of one's behavior before acting

TAKEAWAYS



Applying this to college and career readiness

A student's college and career readiness is strongly dependent on the behavioral skills described in this book. These skills predict important academic outcomes like GPA and retention independent of, and in addition to, traditional predictors such as demographics and achievement test scores.

The relevance of these skills does not disappear upon high school graduation. In college, they remain critical predictors of grades and especially persistence and on-time graduation. For example, developing a sense of social belonging in college is a strong predictor of retention. Part of a successful college experience is becoming ready to enter the workforce, and students must continue to develop these behavioral skills while in college to achieve career readiness by graduation.

Once in the workforce, these skills predict a wide range of outcomes, such as job performance, engaging in ethical work conduct, teamwork, job satisfaction, and perceived work stress. They are particularly important over the long term, as these skills become more predictive of job performance over time.

Tracking & Evaluating Skills

When do you start? How do you measure and integrate Behavioral Skills into your school or organization?

ACT is dedicated to helping develop and evaluate students and employees using the core academic aspect of the Holistic Framework.



Mosaic™ ACT® SEL Assessment measures behavioral skills that contribute to student well-being and academic achievement.



ACT WorkKeys® How can you ensure your employees will be satisfied and committed to the job? In ACT WorkKeys, the Fit assessment measures how an individual's interests and values fit with particular occupations.