



**BEHAVIORAL**

**SKILLS**

Beyond  
Academics



ACT 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, **the ACT 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

## Table of Contents

<b>What are the behavioral skills?</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Acting honestly</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Getting along with others</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Keeping an open mind</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Maintaining composure</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Social Connection</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Sustaining effort</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Takeaways</b> .....	<b>15</b>

# 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 ACT 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.