Essential Knowledge and Skills

In addition to a general framework for collaboration and coordination, the Career Clusters framework provides educators with a set of essential knowledge and skills common to all occupational areas.

After business and educator groups met to develop the foundational knowledge and skills for each Career Cluster and subset Career Pathways, several common knowledge and skills were identified across all of the 16 clusters. These common knowledge and skills were later organized under ten key topic areas as the essential knowledge and skills.

The purpose of the essential knowledge and skills is to identify for educators and students the most important competencies needed across all occupations and career fields. These standards provide a second layer of expectations for all students, after individual state and local school district academic standards.

The essential knowledge and skill topics are academic foundations; technical skills; problem solving and critical thinking; communications; information technology applications; ethics and legal responsibilities; leadership and teamwork; safety, health and environment; employability and career development; and systems.

The Career Cluster framework is one among a number of national efforts spearheaded by the states to identify the skills and knowledge needed of high school graduates for college and career readiness. Another such effort is the Common Core State Standards Initiative to align math and language arts standards with college and career readiness goals among many of the states. Missouri’s Show-Me Standards align closely with the Common Core standards.

Because the essential knowledge and skills statements were developed to layer on top of existing state academic standards, they mesh well with the implementation of Missouri’s existing Show-Me Standards.

The individual Career Cluster knowledge and skill statements provide an additional, more focused layer on top of the essential skills and state and local standards.

Following this, the Career Pathway knowledge and skills statements represent an additional higher, more specific layer of standards for education based on workplace needs.

Many of the essential skills represent problem solving, critical thinking, listening, presentation, teamwork and information technology knowledge and skills widely valued by employers.

These knowledge and skills statements represent a solid benchmark for educators who plan and develop curriculum, to guarantee that college and career readiness goes beyond the raw academics of mathematics and communication arts to encompass skills routinely cited by employers as essential.

Connections should be enhanced among secondary education, postsecondary education, businesses and economic development.

Rigorous and relevant academics are needed by all students, whatever their educational and career plans.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE. You need to think about what you expect your life to be like in 10 to 15 years. Does your chosen career path and potential job prospects match those expectations? Many young people expect to get married and raise their own family. When you think about your future career, think about the life that you want to go along with it and whether your career plans will match your expected financial needs and desires. Dig into the data. What do you expect as a starting job when you finish your education, and where do you hope to wind up in your career?

The data for the needs of a family of four comes from MERIC’s Self-Sufficiency data for Moniteau County, a median county for the state of Missouri in 2009. Weekly income data is based on annual income divided into 12 four-week months.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2009) and Missouri Department of Economic Development (2009)