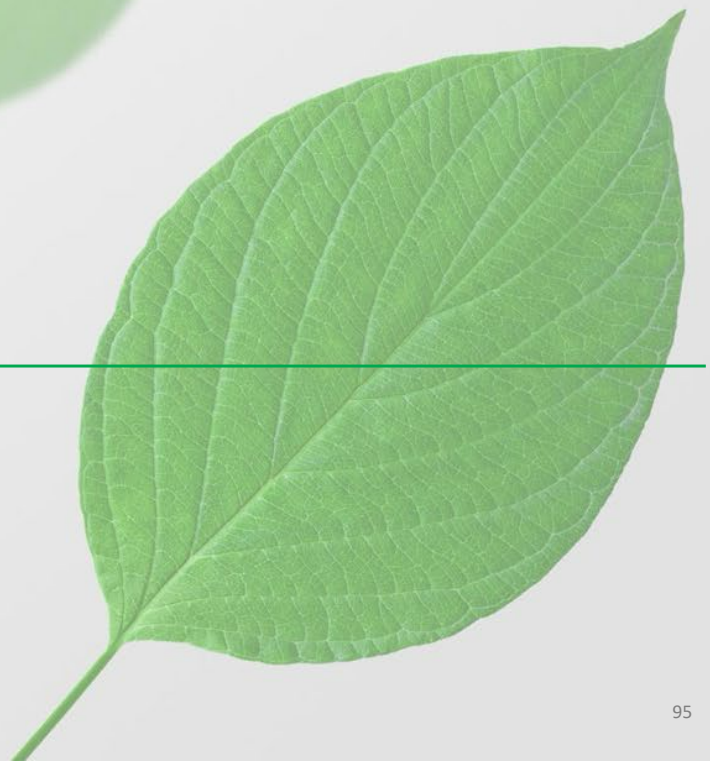
Session 5: Critical Issues Introductions



Session 5
Critical Issues Introduction

Measuring Durable Skills



Chris Brandt



Carla Evans

Connecting Civic & Career Readiness



Laura Hamilton



Scott Marion

Career Readiness for All



Molly Faulkner-Bond



Cara Laitusis

Career Readiness Indicators in Accountability



Laura Pinsonneault



Juan D'Brot

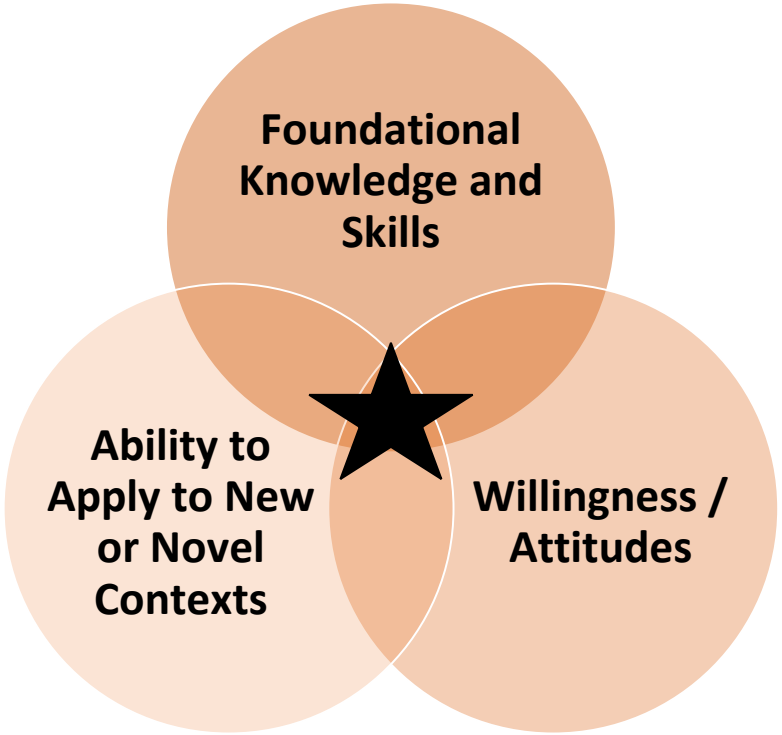
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Measuring Durable Skills

Carla Evans & Chris Brandt

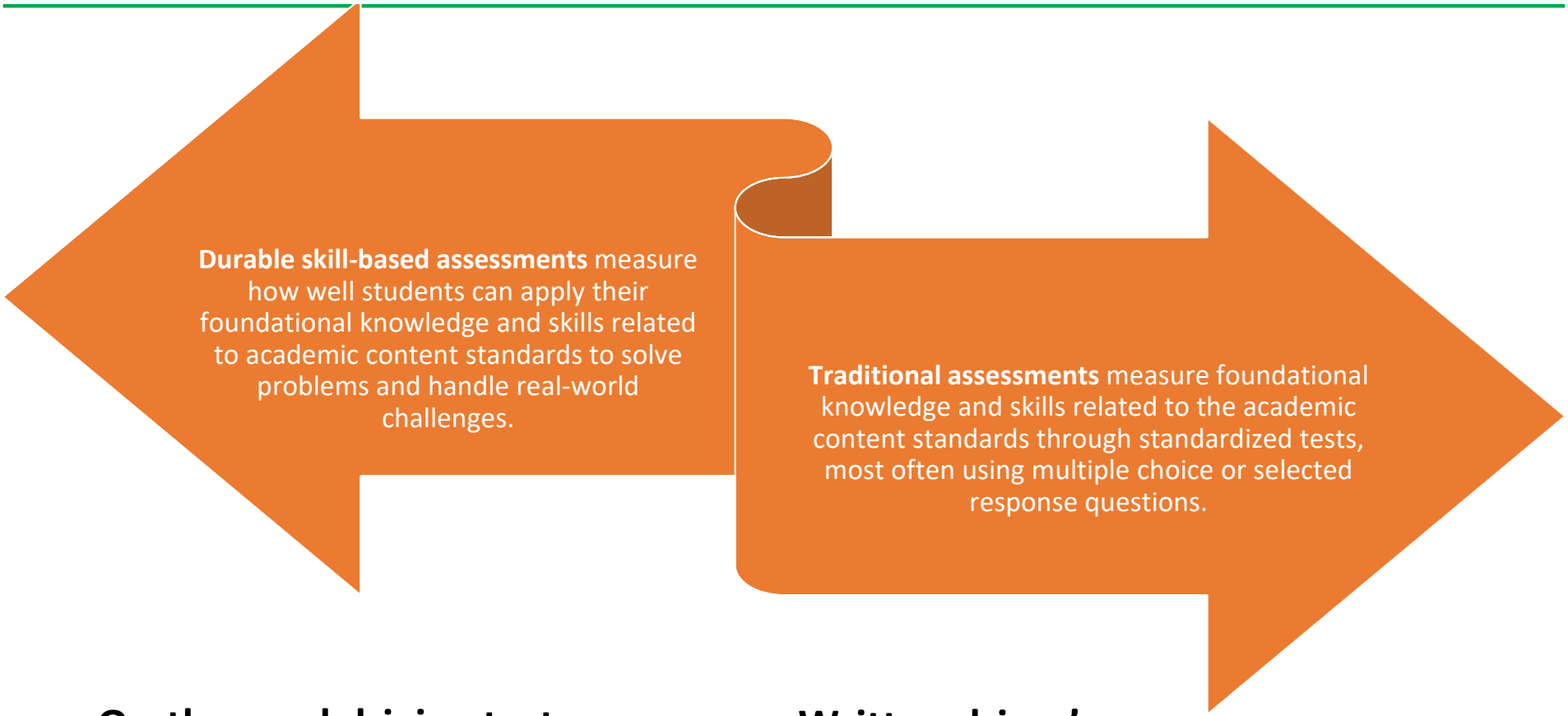
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Work and life require the integration of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes to specific situations and contexts.

Durable skills-based assessments lie at the nexus of these overlapping areas.



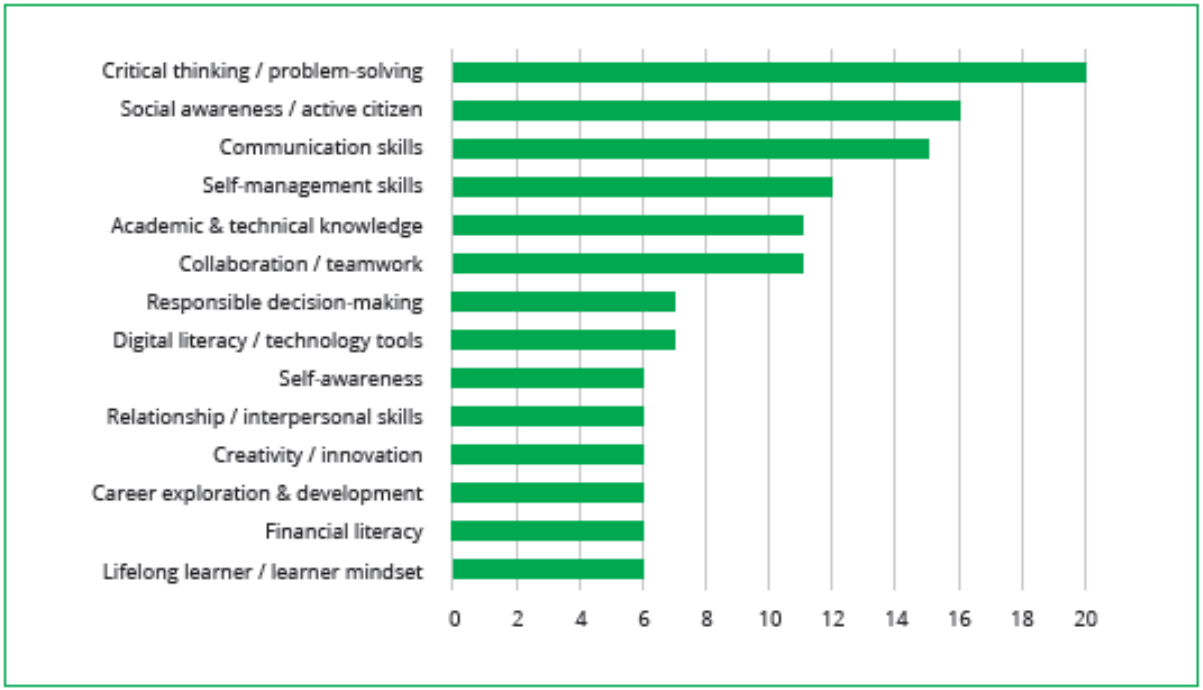
- **On-the-road driving test**

(foundational knowledge and skills + ability to apply to new or novel context + willingness / volition)

- **Written driver's exam**

(foundational knowledge and skills + willingness / volition)

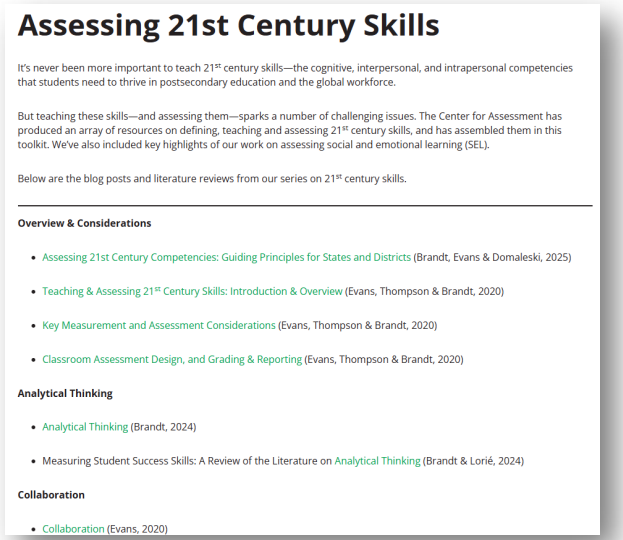
Figure 2: Most Commonly Cited Skills & Competencies in States' Portraits of a Graduate[3]



[3] Figure adapted from CASEL. (2024). *Portraits of a Graduate: Strengthening career and college readiness through social and emotional skill development.* CASEL. casel.org/portraits-of-a-graduate-2024/?view=19

Assessing 21CCs Toolkit

Toolkit



Assessing 21st Century Skills

It's never been more important to teach 21st century skills—the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies that students need to thrive in postsecondary education and the global workforce.

But teaching these skills—and assessing them—sparks a number of challenging issues. The Center for Assessment has produced an array of resources on defining, teaching and assessing 21st century skills, and has assembled them in this toolkit. We've also included key highlights of our work on assessing social and emotional learning (SEL).

Below are the blog posts and literature reviews from our series on 21st century skills.

Overview & Considerations

- Assessing 21st Century Competencies: Guiding Principles for States and Districts (Brandt, Evans & Domaleski, 2025)
- Teaching & Assessing 21st Century Skills: Introduction & Overview (Evans, Thompson & Brandt, 2020)
- Key Measurement and Assessment Considerations (Evans, Thompson & Brandt, 2020)
- Classroom Assessment Design, and Grading & Reporting (Evans, Thompson & Brandt, 2020)

Analytical Thinking

- Analytical Thinking (Brandt, 2024)
- Measuring Student Success Skills: A Review of the Literature on Analytical Thinking (Brandt & Lorié, 2024)

Collaboration

- Collaboration (Evans, 2020)

In the toolkit you will find:

- Short blog posts
- State and District Guidance Paper
- Literature reviews on 21CCs

https://www.nciea.org/library/assessing-21st-century-skills/

Small Group Activity

1. Read over the three blog summaries (see handout).
2. Select one of the blogs to discuss as a table.
3. Take about 5 minutes of ‘heads down’ time to read it independently (on your phone or computer).
4. Then come together and use the small group questions to discuss the blog at your table.

Blog Title and Citation	Summary
Measuring Durable Competencies: Right-Sizing Expectations Hamilton, L. (2026, April 29). *Measuring durable competencies: Right-sizing expectations* [Blog post]. National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. https://www.nciea.org/blog/measuring-durable-competencies-right-sizing-expectations/	Growing pressure to measure durable competencies such as collaboration and self-management has outpaced what current measurement approaches can credibly support. Hamilton points to self-report bias, variation across contexts, and the absence of validated learning progressions as reasons for caution. She urges matching measurement purpose to use case and treating results as invitations for inquiry rather than as evidence for high-stakes decisions.
The Challenges of Assessing 21st Century Competencies Brandt, C., Evans, C., & Domaleski, C. (2025, January 22). *The challenges of assessing 21st century competencies* [Blog post]. National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. https://www.nciea.org/blog/the-challenges-of-assessing-21st-century-competencies/	Introducing a Cer competencies su difficult to measu for high-stakes a at the classroom recommend that matter most befo
Don't Start With Assessment: Navigating State Involvement in 21st Century Competencies Evans, C. (2025, October 22). *Don't start with assessment: Navigating state involvement in 21st century competencies* [Blog post]. National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. https://www.nciea.org/blog/navigating-21st-century-competencies/	States should res competencies such as critical thinking and collaboration, because assessment is not the place to start. Evans argues for first building clear definitions, teaching infrastructure, and intentional policy. The post lays out a continuum of state involvement, from providing resources and guidance through mandating statewide tests, and a set of foundational questions about goals, constraints, and success measures.

Small Group Discussion Questions:

- What stood out to you when reading the blog? Or what did you notice and wonder about as you read the blog?
- What other assessment and/or measurement challenges exist related to durable skills that you have found in your work? How have you attempted to address them? How did it work?
- What are the implications of the blog for your work?



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Connecting Civic and Career Readiness

Laura Hamilton & Scott Marion

RILS 2026

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Connecting Civic and Career Readiness

"Civic learning is a process through which young people develop the knowledge, skills, and commitments to interact effectively with others, improve their communities and the broader society, and participate in democracy." (Civic Education Research Group)



Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

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Why Civics at a Conference on Career Readiness?

- Schools' civic purpose is mentioned in every U.S. state's constitution.
- Career and civic readiness overlap; for example, civic skills include social perspective taking, collaborative problem solving, & digital information literacy.
- Civic-related competencies appear frequently in portraits of a learner/graduate.
- Effective civic & community engagement can enhance economic mobility.
- National data suggest strong interest in civic learning among educators, families, and students



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Measuring Civic Readiness

- Civic readiness can be measured through a variety of methods.
  - Self-report questionnaires
  - Brief knowledge & reasoning items
  - Ratings by teachers or observers
  - Projects & performance tasks
  - Administrative & process data
- Civic diploma seals offer a mechanism for both recognition and measurement.



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Starter Questions for Discussion

- How should educators and policymakers address the relationship between career readiness and civic readiness? For example, are the most critical aspects of civic readiness subsumed by broad measures of career readiness?
- How, if at all, have you or your organization tried to measure civic readiness, and what technical, practical, or political challenges did you encounter?
- What are some potential benefits and risks related to measuring civic readiness alongside career readiness?
- How can education leaders leverage the connection between civic and career readiness to create coalitions with business groups and others to advance measurement?
- What kinds of learning opportunities could promote both civic and career readiness, either in or out of school?



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Career Readiness for ALL

Molly Faulkner-Bond & Cara Laitusis

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Critical Issues: Career Readiness for ALL

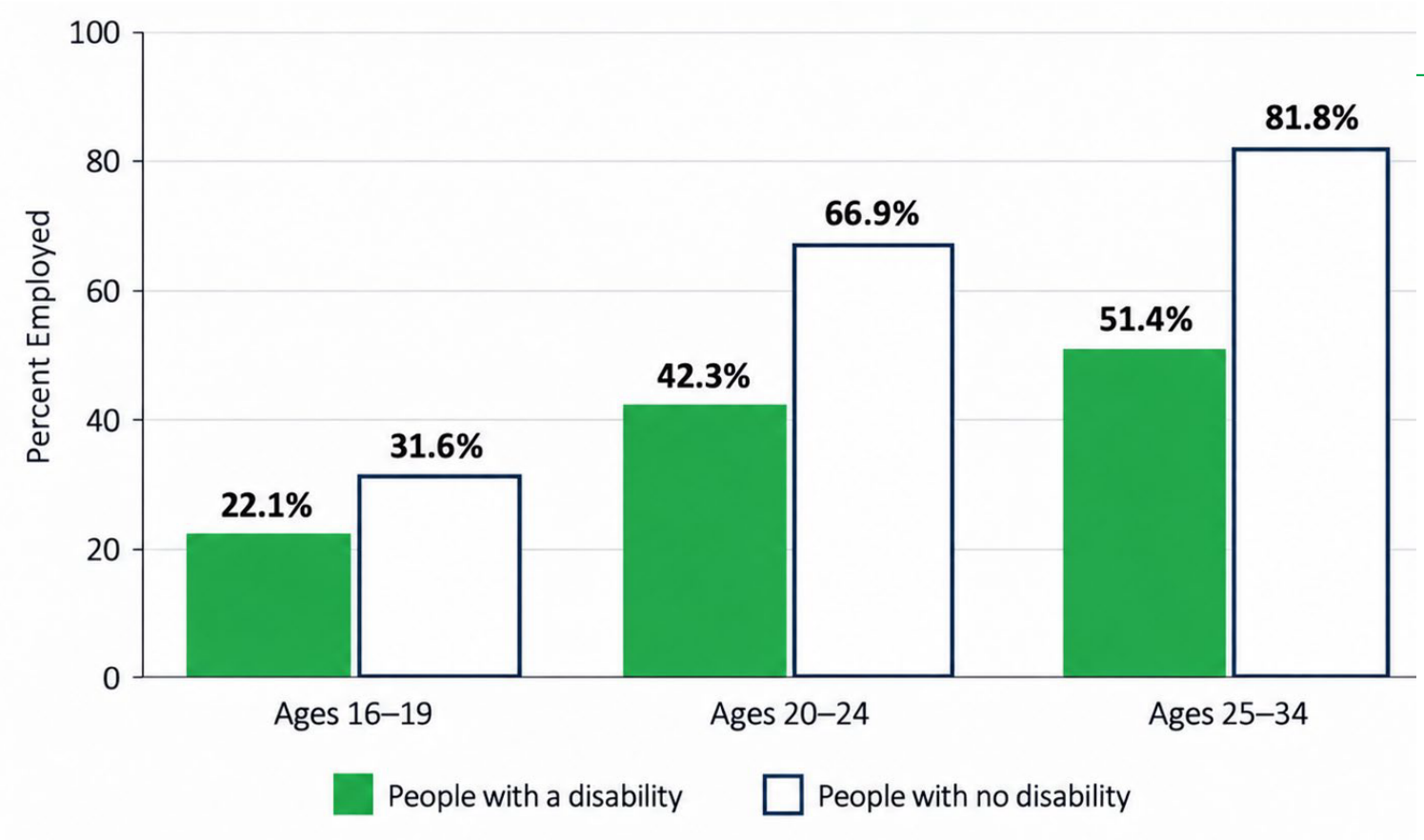
Nationwide, in the United States, did you know that:

- 1 in 6 high school students have a disability
- 1 in 6 high school students spent time in EL status at some point in their educational career
- 1 in 16 high school students are currently classified as English learners
- 1 in 25 high school graduates in 2022-23 earned the State Seal of Biliteracy

These students want and need to be career ready as well!

Gaps in the workforce exist at age 16 and grow over time

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Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026

Requirements and Resources for Students with Disabilities

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IDEA + ADA/Section 504: Students with disabilities must have **meaningful access to career-readiness programs and assessments**, including appropriate accommodations and supports when needed.

WIOA / Rehabilitation Act: States must reserve **at least 15% of federal VR funds** for Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities.

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences
- Postsecondary education counseling
- Workplace-readiness training
- Self-advocacy instruction

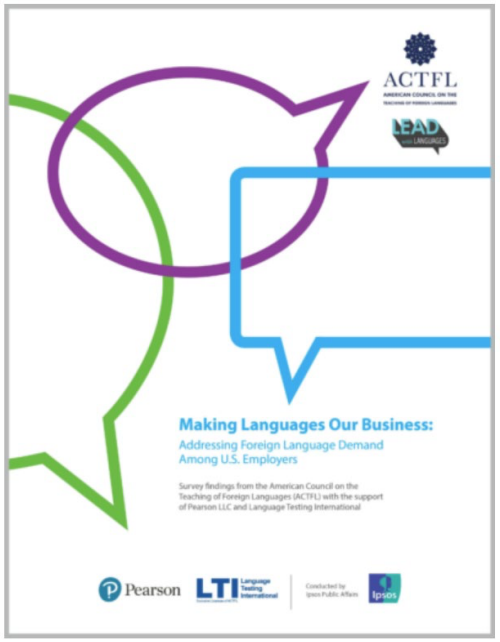


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Multilingual Learners are Workforce Assets

- 9 out of 10 U.S. employers rely on employees with language skills other than English.
- 56% of employers say their language demand will increase in the next 5 years.
- 1 in 3 language-dependent U.S. employers report a language skills gap.



Initial Considerations for Including These Students in Measures of Career Readiness

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- **Construct definition and scoring considerations.** Think about the extent to which language or ability is part of the readiness construct so that demonstrating readiness appropriately accounts for student capabilities in these areas.

- **Accommodations and supports.** Careers are not subject to the same constraints as a standardized test. Think about how to incorporate real-world accommodations or supports to help students show what they can do.



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Questions for Discussion

- What are some **specific challenges or barriers** that students with disabilities and/or multilingual students face to demonstrate their career readiness in your current system?
- What **strengths** do multilingual learners and students with disabilities bring to the workplace that traditional career-readiness measures may overlook?
- How can a **universal-design approach** to career-readiness measurement account for learner variability while ensuring that results reflect readiness—not language or disability-related access needs—and are used in ways that expand opportunity?
- What can broader career-readiness systems learn from **decades of research on accessible assessments**, transition planning and vocational services for students with disabilities?
    - How do we measure the skills obtained from WIOA-funded initiatives (e.g. Pre-ETS, work-based learning, and self-advocacy instruction?





Career Readiness Indicators in Accountability

Laura Pinsonneault & Juan D'Brot

RILS 2026

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Critical Issue: Career Readiness Indicators in Accountability

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Career Readiness Metrics Framework - a way to classify and examine potential indicators for understanding the extent to which students are progressing through career pathways successfully.

1. Access and equity	Degree to which career pathways programs are accessible and serve learners equitably.
2. Education accumulation	Course completion, learning and credit accumulation along the career pathway.
3. Skill development	Assessment of academic, technical and employability skills.
4. Work-based learning	Participation in and completion of activities that deepen classroom learning through the exploration of career fields and demonstration of skills in an authentic, real-world setting.
5. Transition readiness	Preparation for the next step along learners' career pathways.
6. Learner agency and belonging	Learner development of self-concept, including occupational identity, self-efficacy, and the perceived inclusivity of the learning environment.
7. Post-program outcomes	Immediate and long-term outcomes for learners who complete career development programs.

Except…



What About…Considerations for Career Readiness in Accountability

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- Data collection and quality can be a challenge.
- Accountability identifications have real and perceived implications that impact adult decisions and behaviors.
- There are unresolved questions about rigor and comparability across career readiness measures.



Starter Questions for Discussion

The big one:

- What is the case for including career readiness in school accountability and what is the case for keeping some measures outside of formal accountability?

Some other options:

- What evidence is sufficient (meaningful, rigorous) to support accountability decisions about career readiness?
- How can accountability systems recognize career readiness without creating undesirable incentives and/or exacerbating inequities?



Indicate Your Top 2 Choices

https://tinyurl.com/37f8byku

Day 1 Wrap-Up

Reception 5:00-6:15pm

Dinner Groups: Meet at the restaurant you signed up for at 6:30pm

Tomorrow morning:

- Breakfast available at 8:15am
- Start at 9:00am

