

Springfield Technical Community College

Profile of an Early Adopter of Career
Ready 101

Overview

Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) has administered the WorkKeys™ Assessment through its testing center. The following is a summary from an interview and presentation given by George Kohout, Director, ABE/ESOL Services in December, 2014.

Describe the setting, participants, programs, and tools used. What was your goal in using the tools?

We used the WorkKeys™ Assessment, administered by our testing center, as an eligibility screening assessment in some of our noncredit workforce training programs, such as Manufacturing Production Technician and Advanced Customer Services.

To be eligible for these programs, applicants had to score at least 3 on all three of the tests: Reading for Information; Applied Math; Locating Information. Essentially, applicants entered the program with scores that qualified them for a National Career Readiness Certificate, typically at the Bronze or Silver levels, but we didn't issue the certificate until the end of the program.

We were able to use the credential and scored components to inform employers of

participant's abilities. In addition, instructors were able to use some scoring data to inform lesson planning and instructional activities.

What outcomes have you observed?

Students appreciated leaving the program with an additional credential. We help students promote their certificate and the skills it represents in their resumes and in mock interviews.

Area employers are becoming more aware of the value of the National Career Readiness Certificate. A number of employers are also considering the use of WorkKeys and Career Ready 101 to assess and upskill their incumbent workers.

During mock interview sessions with our employers and staffing agencies the National Career Readiness Certificate prompted useful interview questions and responses. Reference to the certificate was a healthy addition to our students' resumes.

Do you have any thoughts about how you might expand the use of the tools?

We aren't familiar yet with all that Career Ready 101 has to offer, but these are some of our initial thoughts.

We'd like to continue to use WorkKeys as a pre-test and again as a post-test at the end of the program so that students have the opportunity to boost their National Career Readiness Certificate level.

We intend to use Career Ready 101 as a supplement to classroom instruction in our certificate, HiSET prep, and ABE classes. Our instructors understand the need to contextualize instruction around career



WORLD EDUCATION

exploration and planning. Career Ready 101 provides career-contextualized lessons and tools teachers can integrate into their classroom instruction.

Career Ready 101 will also give staff and students the ability to link assessment scores to the Job Profile information. This will be helpful as a career exploration and advising tool. As we prepare more students for college-level studies, the tools can provide an opportunity for students to gain experience working independently; a valuable college transition skill.

We also want to work on educating employers about the National Career Readiness Certificate and the skills it reflects so that more will recognize and value job applicants who have earned it.

Finally, we anticipate using the Soft Skills Suite component to compliment instruction on students' workforce readiness or essential skills that many employers have identified for us. These essential skills would include teamwork, communication, initiative, etc.

What sort of training or other assistance would you recommend for staff incorporating the tools into coaching and/or instruction?

Staff will need to be prepared to give students a thorough orientation to the system. We want to get a better understanding from our testing center about the types of technology skills and challenges they encounter with pre-enrollment assessment, so we can incorporate strategies to support those with limited technology skills.

Staff will need guidance around coaching versus direct instruction, and when to leave a

student to work through a problem independently versus when it's time to guide them through or teach a lesson.

While faculty have become accustomed to using a variety of technology and web-based tools, they will need to learn more about the language and process of career exploration to best incorporate these tools into the curriculum.

We will find time for teachers to play around with the tools first, maybe in a group setting in a computer lab.

Staff will also need time and training to link individual's assessment results to career advisement