JAG
JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES

JAG WORKFORCE READINESS FRAMEWORK & CREDENTIAL

https://jag.org

Introduction

For more than four decades, Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) has implemented a specialist-led, school-day model, across multiple years, designed to support young people—particularly those facing systemic barriers—in developing the habits, competencies, and relational capacities necessary to persist in education and transition successfully into employment. Through sustained classroom engagement, employer interaction, coaching, and structured reflection, JAG has cultivated a consistent framework of workforce readiness enacted across states and implementation contexts.

As workforce systems increasingly shift toward skills-based hiring and verifiable readiness signals, there is growing need to translate long-standing developmental practice into a structured, interpretable credential. Employers require transparent signals beyond seat time or course completion; states seek consistent language around readiness; and students benefit from portable recognition of demonstrated capability. The JAG Workforce Readiness Credential formalizes what has historically been embedded in practice—making visible and measurable the developmental progression cultivated through the JAG model.

This document presents the conceptual foundation, measurement model, and interpretive framework underlying the JAG Workforce Readiness Credential. It describes how workforce readiness is defined and operationalized within the JAG model, how competency-based performance is assessed and aggregated, and how resulting scores are translated into credential tiers. It also summarizes observed outcome patterns from JAG implementation and outlines the ongoing validation processes used to support appropriate interpretation and use of the credential over time.

Section 1: Construct and Development of Workforce Readiness

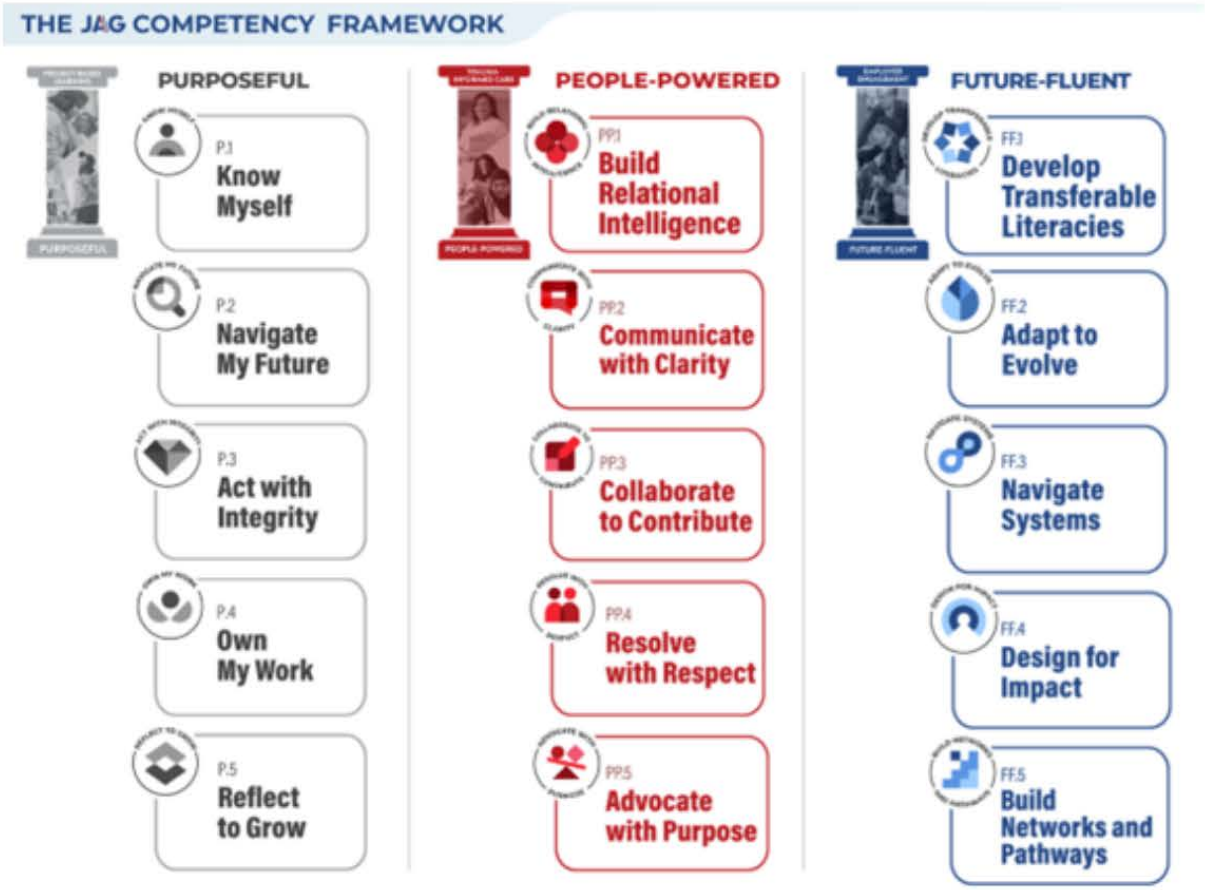
Workforce readiness within the JAG framework is defined as a multidimensional capacity that integrates intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic competencies. These competencies are grounded in established research on learning, motivation, collaboration, and career development, and are cultivated through a structured instructional model designed to support sustained practice and growth. Together, the framework and model establish both the conceptual foundation of the credential and the developmental processes through which readiness is demonstrated.

Conceptual Foundation: Workforce Readiness as a Multidimensional Construct

Workforce readiness, as defined within the JAG framework, represents the demonstrated capacity to act with purpose, collaborate effectively across diverse contexts, and adapt within complex and evolving systems. It integrates intrapersonal agency (self-awareness, goal navigation, integrity), interpersonal competence (relational intelligence, communication, conflict resolution), and systemic fluency (systems navigation, adaptability, design thinking, and network activation). Rather than conceptualizing readiness as a narrow set of employability skills, JAG defines it as the developmental progression toward independent, transferable performance across personal, relational, and structural domains of work.

The model integrates project-based learning, employer engagement, trauma-informed practice, and sustained mentorship within a school-day setting.

The fifteen-competency framework of the credential, situated under three domains—Purposeful (i.e., intrapersonal), People-Powered (i.e., interpersonal), and Future-Fluent (i.e., systemic)—does not introduce a new philosophy; rather, it codifies and makes measurable the developmental outcomes that have long characterized JAG implementation. Across classrooms, trained JAG specialists cultivate students' capacity to clarify personal identity and purpose, navigate postsecondary and career pathways, collaborate effectively across differences, resolve conflict constructively, engage employers, adapt to change, and activate networks. These observable behaviors, refined through decades of classroom practice, form the basis of the credential architecture.



Purposeful: (1) Know Myself, (2) Navigate My Future, (3) Act with Integrity, (4) Own My Work, (5) Reflect and Grow.

·**People-Powered**: (6) Build Relational Intelligence, (7) Communicate with Clarity, (8) Collaborate to Contribute, (9) Resolve with Respect, (10) Advocate with Purpose.

·**Future Fluent**: (11) Develop Transferable Literacies, (12) Adapt to Evolve, (13) Navigate Systems, (14) Design for Impact, (15) Build Networks and Pathways.

This multidimensional definition is operationalized through a structured competency framework that organizes workforce readiness into observable and assessable domains.

Research Foundations of the JAG Competency Framework

The JAG competency framework is grounded in established research on motivation, learning, collaboration, and career development. Research in educational psychology and workforce development consistently shows that readiness for education and employment depends not only on academic knowledge but also on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic competencies that enable individuals to set goals, collaborate effectively, and navigate complex environments.

The Purposeful domain reflects research showing that identity clarity, belonging, goal setting, and self-regulated learning support persistence, engagement, and long-term educational and career development (Locke & Latham, 2002; Oyserman, 2015; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005; Walton & Cohen, 2011; Zimmerman, 2002). The People-Powered domain reflects evidence that communication, collaboration, and psychological safety support stronger teamwork, problem solving, and collective performance (Edmonson, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The Future-Fluent domain reflects research showing that adaptability, systems navigation, and social capital influence opportunity access, decision making, and career advancement (Lin, 2001). Appendix A provides a detailed crosswalk linking each competency to its underlying theoretical constructs and representative empirical literature.

The competencies included in the JAG framework are also supported by research demonstrating associations between these domains and educational persistence, goal attainment, workplace performance, and career adaptability. Constructs such as self-efficacy, self-regulated learning, psychological safety, and social capital have been empirically linked to improved persistence, performance, and adaptation across academic and organizational contexts (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Edmondson, 1999; DeRue et al., 2012; Lin, 2001). The JAG framework operationalizes these constructs behaviorally within applied educational settings. While the credential does not claim direct predictive validity for specific employment outcomes, it is anchored in theoretical domains with documented relationships to successful education-to-employment transitions. These findings establish the theoretical foundation for the competencies represented in the credential; the JAG instructional model provides the structured context through which these competencies are developed, practiced, and demonstrated.

JAG Instructional Model: Research-Based Development of Competencies

The JAG instructional model translates this research-based competency framework into structured learning experiences through which competencies are developed, practiced, and demonstrated. It operationalizes this framework through empirically supported practices including competency-based learning, specialist-led instruction, project-based learning, employer engagement, and structured reflection.
Research indicates that competency-based learning and formative feedback can support the development of transferable skills when instruction is organized around clear competencies and applied performance expectations (Alt, Naamati-Schneider, & Weishut, 2023; Evans, Landl, & Thompson, 2021). Structured guidance and feedback from skilled educators improve learning outcomes and student engagement (Kyriakides, Christoforou, & Charalambous, 2013; Reddy, Shernoff, & Lewka, 2021; Seidel & Shavelson, 2007). Meta-analyses show that project-based and experiential learning strengthen academic achievement and applied problem solving (Burch et al., 2019; Chen & Yang, 2019; Zhang & Ma, 2023), while employer-connected educational experiences support employability skills and school-to-work transitions (Jackson, 2013; Kemple & Willner, 2008; Mann, Rehill, & Kashefpakdel, 2018). Research on self-regulated learning further indicates that structured reflection helps learners interpret experience, integrate feedback, and continue developing skills over time (Helyer, 2015; Panadero, 2017).

Together, these practices create sustained opportunities for students to develop, apply, and demonstrate the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic competencies represented in the JAG Student Index. These repeated opportunities for demonstration provide the evidentiary basis for assessing competency development, which is formalized through the credential's measurement architecture.

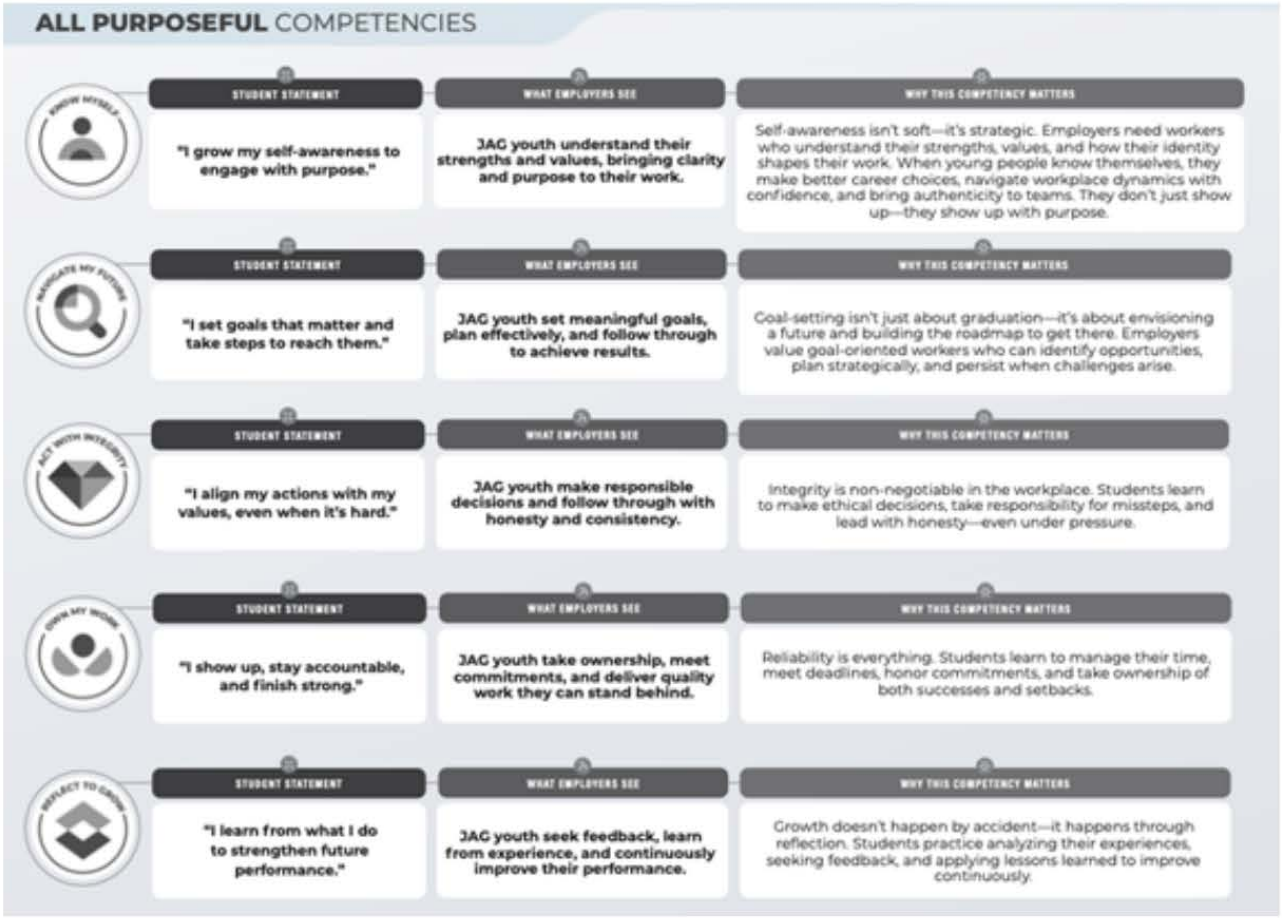
Section 2: Measurement and Interpretation of the Credential

The JAG competency framework is operationalized through a structured assessment system that captures observable, developmentally anchored performance over time. Competency ratings are aggregated into the JAG Student Index, which reflects the breadth and depth of demonstrated readiness across domains. Credential tiers provide a criterion-referenced interpretation of these scores, distinguishing levels of independence, consistency, and transferability in applied contexts and translating developmental performance into a clear and interpretable signal.

Measurement Architecture: Developmental Proficiency Model

The assessment system for the JAG program is anchored in a developmental proficiency model in which each competency is defined through five integrated elements:

1. A clear competency statement that defines the developmental construct.
2. A learner-facing “I can” articulation that frames the competency as an agentic and developable capacity.
3. An employer-facing interpretation that translates the competency into workplace-relevant performance.
4. A developmental progression describing increasing sophistication and independence over time.
5. Observable behaviors that provide evidence of growth.



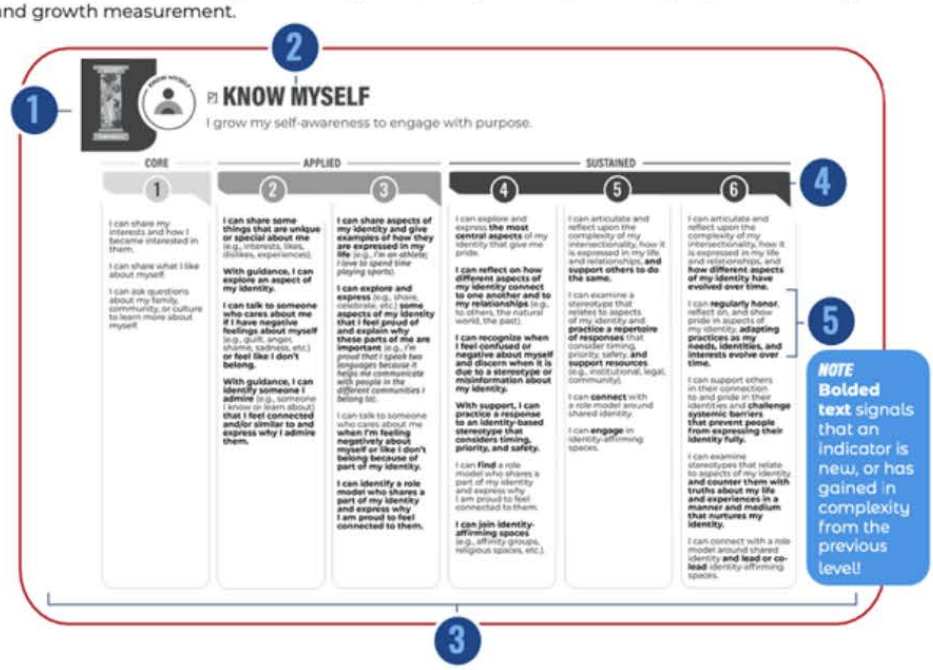
Each competency is evaluated by a practicing educator. Many, if not most, educators hold a state-issued teaching license, and ALL have completed JAG Specialist training as well as specific rubric-rating training to ensure consistent and reliable assessment. Competencies are evaluated using a six-level developmental rubric designed to capture increasing levels of independence, judgment, consistency, and transferability across authentic contexts.

Level 1 represents introductory or supported demonstration of the competency, while Level 6 reflects sustained, autonomous performance characterized by strategic judgment and cross-context transfer. The rubric is developmental rather than normative; it articulates qualitative differences in performance sophistication rather than comparative standing among students. Education and workforce readiness are commonly measured using composite indicators that combine multiple related competencies to represent a multidimensional construct of readiness (Panadero, 2017; Sadler, 1989).

- **Level 1** – Introductory demonstration
- **Level 2** – Emerging applied behavior
- **Level 3** – Developing independence
- **Level 4** – Consistent independent performance
- **Level 5** – Advanced transferable performance
- **Level 6** – Exceptional, highly transferable mastery

The Anatomy of a Competency

A JAG **pillar** (1) describes an essential skill set for future readiness. It consists of specific, research-informed **competencies** (2), each with its own developmental **progression** (3) that defines learning stages from novice to expert or professional. Each **performance level** (4) represents a milestone for skill development, and includes **indicators** (5)—observable, measurable descriptors of the skill in action—to support learning, assessment, feedback, reflection, progress monitoring, and growth measurement.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

PILLAR
A framework that describes an essential skill set for future readiness, directly aligned to the JAG Advantage and organized through related competencies.

COMPETENCY
A core capability that has importance in the global workforce. Competencies enable a person to achieve desired results with consistency, and to excel in particular roles or contexts.

PROGRESSION
A sequence of measurable developmental stages of specific, learned abilities that are essential to a competency. Each stage builds on the foundation laid in the previous stage, and toward incrementally higher levels of ability as learners advance.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS
A stage of skill development that represents a particular level of ability along a progression, used to approximate and measure growth and achievement.

INDICATORS
Observable, measurable descriptors of what a skill looks like in action, framed as positive, student-facing "I can" statements.

Aggregating Performance

Performance ratings across all fifteen competencies are summed to produce the JAG Student Index (possible range: 15–90). This index represents an aggregated indicator of demonstrated workforce readiness across intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic domains. The summative structure assumes that workforce readiness is multidimensional yet cumulative: sustained readiness requires integration across competencies rather than isolated strength in a single area. The index therefore reflects the breadth and depth of observable behavioral evidence demonstrated over time.

Observable evidence supporting ratings may include structured classroom performance, project-based demonstrations, applied simulations, employer-engagement activities, and documented behavioral indicators aligned to rubric criteria. Ratings reflect accumulated evidence over time rather than single-point observations. This longitudinal accumulation strengthens interpretive validity by reducing the influence of isolated performance fluctuations and emphasizing demonstrated consistency.

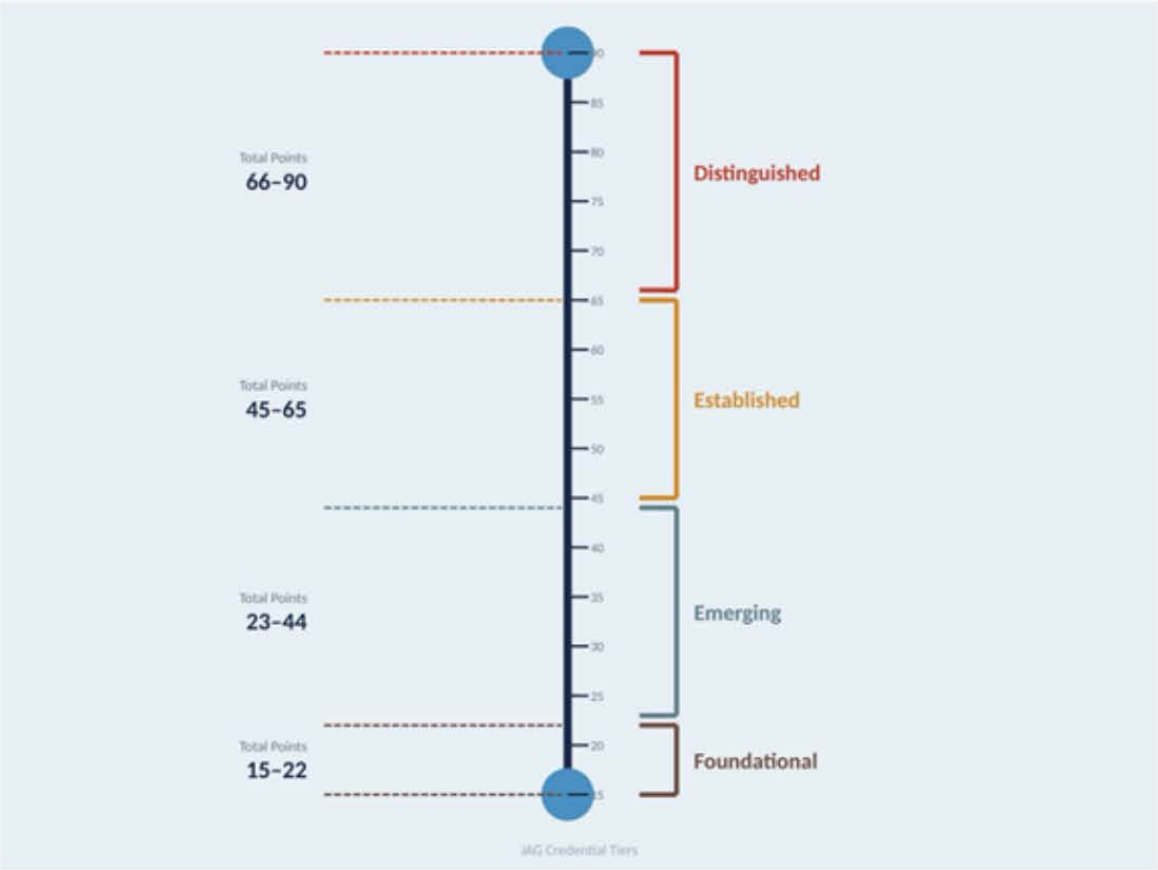
These levels represent increasing degrees of behavioral independence, contextual adaptability, and transferability across settings. Importantly, the rubric is criterion-referenced: performance is evaluated against skill development milestones rather than rank relative to peers.

The JAG Student Index is criterion-referenced. Scores are interpreted relative to defined developmental standards embedded within the rubric descriptors rather than relative to cohort performance. This design avoids norm-referenced ranking and instead emphasizes mastery progression. Importantly, the index is not intended to imply psychometric uni-dimensionality; rather, it functions as a composite developmental indicator derived from related but distinct competency domains. These aggregated scores are then translated into credential tiers that provide an interpretable signal of workforce readiness.

Credential Tier Overview

These levels represent increasing degrees of behavioral independence, contextual adaptability, and transferability across settings. Importantly, the rubric is criterion-referenced: performance is evaluated against skill development milestones rather than rank relative to peers.

The JAG Student Index is criterion-referenced. Scores are interpreted relative to defined developmental standards embedded within the rubric descriptors rather than relative to cohort performance. This design avoids norm-referenced ranking and instead emphasizes mastery progression. Importantly, the index is not intended to imply psychometric uni-dimensionality; rather, it functions as a composite developmental indicator derived from related but distinct competency domains. These aggregated scores are then translated into credential tiers that provide an interpretable signal of workforce readiness.



JAG WORKFORCE READINESS CREDENTIAL TIERS

TIER 01

FOUNDATIONAL

15 – 22 Points

Avg. Score: 1.0 – 1.49

Learners demonstrate introductory awareness of workplace expectations and participate in structured tasks designed to build early professional behaviors.

- Performance occurs in highly supported environments with clearly defined expectations and direct guidance.
- Beginning to recognize workplace systems, tools, and processes.

TIER 02

EMERGING

23 – 44 Points

Avg. Score: 1.5 – 2.99

Learners demonstrate developing understanding of workplace expectations and apply competencies within structured tasks with growing reliability and emerging autonomy.

- Performance reflects growing reliability and participation in workplace-style environments.
- Begins navigating familiar systems and tools with guidance.

TIER 03

ESTABLISHED

45 – 65 Points

Avg. Score: 3.0 – 4.33

Learners consistently apply workforce readiness competencies with moderate autonomy. This level represents the developmental threshold for entry-level workforce readiness.

- Reliably completes responsibilities, communicates clearly, and manages time and commitments.
- Carries out work independently within structured environments without constant prompting.

TIER 04

DISTINGUISHED

66 – 90 Points

Avg. Score: 4.4 – 6.0

Learners demonstrate advanced application of workforce readiness competencies and perform with a high degree of autonomy, initiative, and adaptability across varied situations.

- Communicates effectively, takes ownership, and approaches challenges with initiative.
- Independently adapts to new workplace systems, tools, and processes.

Performance Level Descriptors - Detail

Performance levels reflect demonstrated competency across the JAG Workforce Competency Framework and are determined through validated rubric-based assessment of observable behaviors and applied performance.

Foundations (Tier 1 of 4)

15–22 Points | Avg 1.0–1.49

Short Description

Learners demonstrate introductory awareness of workplace expectations and participate in structured tasks designed to build early professional behaviors. Performance occurs in highly supported environments with clearly defined expectations and direct guidance. At this level, learners are beginning to practice workforce readiness competencies and develop awareness of workplace systems, tools, and expectations but do not yet demonstrate consistent independent application.

Detailed Description

Competency Understanding

The learner has been introduced to the workforce readiness competencies required to participate in professional environments, including communication, collaboration, responsibility, and workplace conduct. The learner demonstrates early understanding of these expectations and begins recognizing how workplace structures, tools, and processes shape professional environments.

Observable Performance

The learner participates in structured tasks and team activities and begins practicing foundational workplace behaviors such as following directions, completing assigned responsibilities, communicating with peers and supervisors, and contributing to shared goals when expectations are clearly defined.

Autonomy and Systems Navigation

Execution occurs in highly structured environments. The learner demonstrates competencies with significant guidance and supervision. Autonomy is limited, and the learner relies on coaching and clearly defined expectations while beginning to develop awareness of workplace tools, systems, and processes.

Emerging (Tier 2)

23–44 Points | Avg 1.5–2.99

Short Description

Learners demonstrate developing understanding of workplace expectations and apply workforce readiness competencies within structured tasks and collaborative activities. Performance reflects growing reliability and participation in workplace-style environments with emerging autonomy. Learners begin navigating familiar workplace systems, tools, and expectations with guidance.

Detailed Description

Competency Understanding

The learner demonstrates developing understanding of workplace expectations and how competencies such as communication, collaboration, accountability, and problem-solving support successful performance in professional environments.

Observable Performance

The learner completes assigned tasks, contributes to team activities, communicates with peers and supervisors, and responds constructively to feedback. The learner demonstrates increasing reliability in meeting responsibilities and participates productively in workplace-style activities.

Autonomy and Systems Navigation

Performance reflects emerging autonomy. Responsibilities can be carried out with guidance and periodic prompting while demonstrating growing consistency and responsibility. The learner begins navigating familiar workplace systems, tools, and processes with support while developing transferable workplace literacies.

Established (Tier 3)

45–65 Points | Avg 3.0–4.33

Short Description

Learners demonstrate clear understanding of workplace expectations and consistently apply workforce readiness competencies such as communication, collaboration, responsibility, and problem solving. Performance reflects reliable execution of responsibilities with moderate autonomy. This level represents the developmental threshold associated with entry-level workforce readiness.

Detailed Description

Competency Understanding

The learner demonstrates clear understanding of the workforce readiness competencies required in professional environments and how these competencies support effective job performance.

Observable Performance

The learner reliably completes responsibilities, communicates clearly with supervisors and coworkers, contributes constructively to team goals, manages time and commitments, and responds appropriately to challenges or feedback.

Autonomy and Systems Navigation

Responsibilities can be carried out independently within structured environments without constant prompting. The learner demonstrates sound judgment in approaching tasks and works effectively within workplace systems and expectations, using relevant tools and literacies to complete work and contribute to team outcomes.

Distinguished (Tier 4, Highest Tier)

66–90 Points | Avg 4.4–6.0

Short Description

Learners demonstrate advanced application of workforce readiness competencies and perform responsibilities with a high degree of autonomy. Performance reflects initiative, accountability, adaptability, and the ability to apply competencies across varied situations while navigating new systems, tools, and workplace contexts.

Detailed Description

Competency Understanding

The learner demonstrates advanced understanding of workplace expectations and consistently applies competencies that support effective professional contribution.

Observable Performance

The learner communicates effectively, collaborates productively across teams, takes ownership of responsibilities, and approaches challenges with initiative and sound judgment. The learner anticipates needs and responds constructively to feedback.

Autonomy and Systems Navigation

Performance reflects a high level of autonomy and self-directed execution. The learner independently carries out responsibilities and adapts to new workplace systems, tools, and processes. Competencies are applied across unfamiliar contexts, demonstrating the ability to transfer workplace literacies and contribute effectively in evolving professional environments.

Tier Structure Rationale

The tier structure serves a central role in preserving both interpretive integrity and implementation flexibility within the credential framework. Because JAG operates across diverse delivery contexts—including traditional school-day models, community-based programs, and settings serving out-of-school youth—students may experience differing levels of program duration, intensity, and exposure. A tiered structure allows the credential to acknowledge authentic developmental progress across these varied contexts without requiring uniform program dosage. Lower-tier recognition affirms demonstrated introductory or emerging competence, ensuring that students with limited exposure, students with disabilities, or students newly entering the JAG model receive meaningful recognition for observable growth. At the same time, upper-tier distinctions preserve differentiation by recognizing sustained independence and highly transferable performance for students demonstrating exceptional capability across domains. In this way, tiers function not only as a measurement safeguard but also as an equity mechanism, accommodating variation in implementation context while protecting the meaning of advanced performance. By preventing both construct inflation and artificial compression of outcomes into a binary award, the tier structure aligns with the developmental scoring architecture and supports responsible, context-sensitive interpretation.

Foundations Tier – Lower Bound Differentiation

The Foundations tier is intentionally designed to recognize valid introductory demonstration of workforce readiness competencies. Level 1 (Foundations) reflects observable engagement with competency behaviors and represents an important developmental stage. For learners with developmental disabilities, very limited prior exposure, or significant contextual barriers, this level may reflect meaningful growth and emerging participation in workforce-relevant behaviors.

At the same time, the Foundations tier is carefully bounded (15–22 points). Movement beyond this tier begins at an average proficiency of 1.5, marking the transition from exposure to applied demonstration. This boundary ensures that learners demonstrating consistent Level 2 behaviors (Emerging) are formally distinguished from those at baseline (Foundations).

This lower-bound design serves a dual purpose: it provides equitable access to credential recognition for learners at early stages of development, while preserving differentiation between introductory engagement and emerging proficiency.

Upper-Bound Differentiation and Mastery Preservation

At the upper end of the scale (Established and Distinguished Levels), differentiation is equally critical. In rubric-based systems, score compression frequently occurs when high-performing learners cluster within a single top tier, reducing the ability to distinguish between levels of advanced performance. The JAG tier structure is designed to preserve this differentiation by distinguishing between Established and Distinguished levels of performance.

By anchoring the highest tier (Distinguished) at an average of 4.0 or above, the system maintains a high threshold for advanced performance and avoids incentivizing inflationary scoring practices. This design ensures that the highest tier reflects sustained, transferable capability rather than generalized high performance, preserving meaningful distinction at the upper end of the scale.

If the highest tier were to become disproportionately common, this could indicate score compression at the upper bound rather than a change in underlying performance. In such cases, the framework allows for the introduction of an additional "Exceptional" tier to preserve differentiation among the highest-performing learners. Exceptional performance across all fifteen competencies is demanding by definition and is expected to occur infrequently, ensuring that any additional upper-bound distinction maintains the integrity and rigor of the credential.

Credential Summary

The JAG Workforce Readiness Credential integrates a research-grounded competency framework with a developmental measurement model to produce a criterion-referenced signal of workforce readiness. The three-pillar structure organizes readiness as a multidimensional construct, while the fifteen competencies define readiness through observable, behaviorally-anchored performance. A developmental rubric captures increasing independence, consistency, and transfer across contexts, and aggregated performance is translated into credential tiers that preserve meaningful differentiation across levels of readiness. Together, the credential elements produce a clear and interpretable signal of workforce readiness grounded in sustained, observable performance over time. The following section presents the evidence and validation processes supporting the interpretation and use of this credential.

Section 3: Evidence and Validity of Credential Use

Evidence from JAG implementation, combined with a structured validation framework, supports the interpretation of the credential as a meaningful indicator of demonstrated workforce readiness. Observed outcome patterns provide contextual evidence of successful transitions, while ongoing monitoring across multiple validation domains ensures that scores remain consistent, differentiated, and aligned with their intended use. Together, these elements establish a foundation for responsible, transparent, and continuously refined use of the credential.

Observed Outcomes from JAG Implementation

In addition to research supporting the instructional practices incorporated in the model, decades of JAG implementation provide descriptive evidence of program impact on educational completion and workforce transition outcomes. Nationally, JAG programs consistently produce high rates of high school completion and successful post-graduation transitions. During the 2024-2025 program year, 98% of eligible students in traditional high school JAG programs graduated, compared with a national graduation rate of approximately 87% reported by the National Center for Education Statistics. Across all JAG program models—including alternative education and out-of-school programs—the combined graduation rate was 97%.

Post-graduation outcomes show similarly strong engagement in education and the workforce. Within twelve months of program completion, 84% of JAG graduates achieved a positive outcome defined as employment, postsecondary education or training, or military service. Approximately 71% of graduates entered the workforce, and 85% of employed graduates were working full time. These outcomes provide contextual evidence that the competencies cultivated through the JAG instructional model are associated with successful transition into education and employment pathways, while ongoing validation processes ensure that these relationships remain consistent and interpretable over time.

Validity Framework

The JAG Career Readiness Credential is supported by an ongoing validation framework to ensure that JAG Student Index scores remaining meaningful, consistent, and appropriate for their intended use over time. JAG treats validity as a continuous process of monitoring, evidence-building, and refinement. This ensures that the credential continues to accurately represent students demonstrated workforce readiness as the JAG program is implemented across sites and cohorts.
To implement this approach, JAG organizes its validation efforts into six core domains: construct integrity, scoring quality, score distributions, outcome relationships, implementation fidelity, and continuous improvement. Each domain focuses on a different aspect of maintaining the credibility of the credential and is supported through a set of ongoing monitoring activities.

Construct Integrity
Construct integrity focuses on ensuring that the JAG Student Index continues to represent the intended multidimensional construct of workforce readiness across the Purposeful, People-Powered, and Future-Fluent domains. Ongoing validation in this domain will include periodic review of the relationships among competencies and domains, as well as examination of whether competencies demonstrate meaningful differentiation across score levels. These analyses help confirm that the 15 competencies function as a coherent but non-redundant framework, preserving both conceptual coverage and distinctiveness.

Over time, JAG will monitor whether competencies maintain appropriate variation and structural balance within the composite index. If competencies become overly correlated (suggesting redundancy) or fail to differentiate across developmental levels, this may indicate a need to clarify competency definitions, refine rubric descriptors, or revisit the underlying framework. These periodic structural reviews will ensure that the credential continues to measure the intended construct rather than drifting toward a narrower or distorted representation.

Scoring Quality
Scoring quality addresses the consistency and accuracy with which observed student performance is translated into rubric ratings. Because the JAG model relies on trained specialists making professional judgments based on behavioral evidence, maintaining scoring consistency across raters and sites is essential to preserving validity.

Score Distributions

Score distribution analysis evaluates whether the scoring system is functioning as intended at the aggregate level. Even when individual ratings appear reasonable, system-level issues such as score inflation, compression, or drift can undermine the interpretive meaning of the credential.

JAG will conduct annual reviews of JAG Student Index score distributions, credential tier attainment rates, and site-level score patterns. These analyses will examine whether scores are appropriately spread across the scale, whether tier attainment reflects expected developmental progression, and whether certain sites exhibit atypical patterns that may indicate scoring inconsistencies.

Monitoring distributional patterns will help preserve meaningful differentiation among performance levels, particularly at the upper and lower bounds of the scale. If scores cluster excessively at high levels or show limited variation, this may signal inflation or compression, prompting recalibration, clarification of scoring guidance, or review of tier thresholds. These safeguards ensure that the credential continues to distinguish between levels of demonstrated readiness in a meaningful and interpretable way.

Outcome Relationships

Outcome relationship analysis examines whether higher levels of demonstrated competency are associated with stronger education and workforce outcomes. While the credential does not claim to predict specific outcomes deterministically, it is expected that higher levels of demonstrated readiness will correspond, on average, to more successful transitions (Edmonson, 1999; Lin, 2001; Locke & Latham, 2002; Oyserman, 2015; Zimmerman, 2002).

JAG will conduct annual comparisons of credential tiers with available outcome data, including graduation, postsecondary enrollment, employment, and related indicators. Over time, more advanced analyses (e.g., regression or longitudinal tracking) may be used as data systems mature. These analyses will provide evidence regarding whether the credential functions as an informative signal of readiness in practice.

If outcome relationships weaken or become inconsistent across cohorts, this may indicate a need to revisit competency definitions, scoring practices, or interpretive guidance. By grounding interpretation in observed outcome patterns, this domain helps ensure that the credential remains connected to meaningful real-world indicators without overstating causal claims.

Implementation Fidelity

Implementation fidelity focuses on whether the conditions under which competency ratings are generated are consistent with the intended JAG instructional model. Because ratings are based on accumulated behavioral evidence from classroom, project-based, and employer-engaged contexts, validity depends on the integrity of those learning environments.

JAG will monitor specialist training completion and verify that student artifacts are used as evidence for competency ratings. These activities will help ensure that ratings are grounded in documented performance rather than impressionistic judgment. Additional indicators, such as program participation, employer engagement, and instructional practices, may be reviewed to confirm that students have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate competencies.

Where variability in implementation is identified, targeted supports such as additional training or guidance may be provided. By maintaining fidelity to the instructional model, JAG ensures that competency ratings are based on authentic opportunities for demonstration, thereby strengthening the evidentiary basis of the credential.

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement integrates findings across all validation domains to support ongoing refinement of the credential system. Validation is not treated as a compliance exercise but as a feedback loop that informs improvements to competencies, rubrics, scoring practices, and implementation supports.

JAG will conduct an annual review of validation findings across domains to identify patterns, emerging risks, and opportunities for strengthening the system. This may include synthesizing insights from score distributions, scoring quality analyses, outcome relationships, and implementation fidelity monitoring. Where needed, updates may be made to rubric descriptors, training materials, calibration processes, or interpretive guidance.

This domain ensures that the credential remains responsive to new evidence while preserving its core structure and intent. By embedding continuous improvement into the validation framework, JAG maintains the long-term integrity and credibility of the credential across cohorts, sites, and evolving workforce contexts.

Section 4: Conclusion

The JAG Career Readiness Credential provides a criterion-referenced representation of demonstrated workforce readiness based on sustained, observable performance across intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic competencies. It reflects developmental progression within a structured instructional and assessment model and is grounded in research linking these competencies to successful education-to-employment transitions.

The credential is not intended to function as a predictive guarantee of employment outcomes or as a high-stakes screening tool. Rather, it is designed to inform decision-making by providing a transparent, behaviorally anchored signal of readiness that complements other sources of information, including interviews, work-based learning experiences, and academic or technical credentials.

Its interpretation is supported by multiple safeguards embedded in the system, including trained specialist raters, behaviorally anchored rubrics, calibration processes, and ongoing monitoring of scoring patterns, distributions, and outcome relationships. These mechanisms are designed to preserve consistency, maintain differentiation across performance levels, and ensure alignment between observed performance and score interpretation over time.

For employers and workforce partners, the credential provides a structured and interpretable signal derived from repeated observation of performance in applied contexts. For state and education partners, it offers a consistent framework for recognizing developmental progress while preserving equity across varied implementation settings.

Taken together, the conceptual framework, measurement design, and ongoing validation processes support the use of the credential as a credible and bounded indicator of demonstrated workforce readiness.

Appendix A

Competency–Construct Crosswalk (Full 15 Competencies)

This crosswalk documents the conceptual alignment between each JAG competency and established theoretical constructs in developmental psychology, learning science, organizational behavior, communication research, and workforce development literature.

The purpose of this appendix is not to claim that each competency directly measures a single latent trait. Rather, it demonstrates that the behavioral capacities operationalized within the JAG framework are consistent with well-established research traditions relevant to education-to-employment transitions.

JAG Competency	Primary Theoretical Constructs	Construct Description (Operationalized Dimension)	Empirical Relevance to Workforce Outcomes	Representative Citations
PURPOSEFUL (intrapersonal)				
Know Myself	Identity development; identity-based motivation; belonging; self-concept clarity	Development of coherent self-concept guiding goal-directed behavior and value alignment across contexts.	Identity clarity and belonging predict persistence, motivation, and career-direction stability during educational and early workforce transitions.	Eccles & Roeser (2011); Goodenow (1993); Oyserman (2015); Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett (2005); Walton & Cohen (2011)
Navigate My Future	Goal-setting theory; self-regulated learning; implementation intentions; social cognitive career theory	Ability to set valued goals, plan strategically, monitor progress, and adjust pathways toward attainment.	Goal specificity, strategic planning, and self-regulation are associated with higher academic achievement, persistence, and career attainment.	Gollwitzer & Sheeran (2006); Lent, Brown, & Hackett (1994); Locke & Latham (2002); Zimmerman (2002)
Act with Integrity	Moral identity; ethical reasoning; values clarification	Alignment between internalized values and behavioral decision-making under constraint.	Moral identity and ethical reasoning are associated with greater prosocial behavior, trustworthiness, and ethical decision-making in professional contexts.	Darley & Pittman (2003); Hardy et al. (2014); Kidder (2009); Narvaez & Bock (2014); Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma (2000)
Own My Work	Self-regulated learning; psychological ownership; self-determination theory	Sustained accountability, autonomous task engagement, and internalization of performance standards.	Self-regulation, autonomy, and psychological ownership predict task persistence, performance quality, and workplace engagement.	Deci & Ryan (2000); Dignath & Büttner (2008); Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks (2003); Reeve (2013); Zimmerman (2002)
Reflect to Grow	Metacognition; growth mindset; calibration accuracy	Structured self-evaluation, feedback integration, and adaptive revision of strategies.	Metacognitive reflection and growth-oriented beliefs improve learning transfer, problem solving, and continuous skill improvement.	Burnette et al. (2013); Flavell (1979); Panadero et al. (2017); Schraw & Dennison (1994); Yeager & Dweck (2012)

JAG Competency	Primary Theoretical Constructs	Construct Description (Operationalized Dimension)	Empirical Relevance to Workforce Outcomes	Representative Citations
PEOPLE-POWERED (interpersonal)				
Build Relational Intelligence	Perspective-taking; cultural humility; trust theory; bias interruption	Ability to interpret diverse perspectives and sustain trust-based interactions across contexts.	Perspective-taking, cultural humility, and trust development predict stronger collaboration, reduced bias, and improved workplace relationships.	Devine et al. (2012); Dirks & Ferrin (2001); Galinsky & Moskowitz (2000); Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995); Tervalon & Murray-García (1998); Todd & Galinsky (2014)
Communicate with Clarity	Message planning; active listening; multimodal literacy	Clear, audience-aware communication across oral, written, and digital modalities.	Communication competence predicts collaboration effectiveness, job performance ratings, and professional advancement.	Hayes & Flower (1980); Jewitt (2008); Kellogg (2008); Mercer & Littleton (2007); Rogers & Farson (1957)
Collaborate to Contribute	Social interdependence theory; psychological safety; distributed leadership	Effective participation in shared problem-solving and coordinated group performance.	Positive interdependence and psychological safety predict stronger team performance, innovation, and decision quality.	Barron (2003); Edmondson (1999); Johnson & Johnson (2009); Mercer & Littleton (2007); Spillane (2005)
Resolve with Respect	Conflict style flexibility; emotion regulation; restorative practice	Constructive engagement in conflict using regulated and interest-based approaches.	Emotion regulation and constructive conflict management predict stronger team cohesion, better decisions, and improved organizational climate.	Gross (2014); Morrison (2007); Thomas & Kilmann (1974); Ury, Brett, & Goldberg (1988)
Advocate with Purpose	Adaptive help-seeking; civic agency; collective action	Strategic articulation of needs and engagement in systems-level improvement efforts.	Adaptive help-seeking and self-advocacy are associated with persistence, leadership development, and successful educational and career navigation.	Karabenick (2004); Kirshner (2007); Ryan & Pintrich (1997); Test et al. (2005)

JAG Competency	Primary Theoretical Constructs	Construct Description (Operationalized Dimension)	Empirical Relevance to Workforce Outcomes	Representative Citations
FUTURE-FLUENT (systemic)				
Develop Transferable Literacies	Skill acquisition; transfer of learning; digital literacy	Progressive development and strategic application of foundational and modern literacies.	Transferable literacies and digital competence predict employability, productivity, and adaptability to technological change.	Barnett & Ceci (2002); Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1986); Leu et al. (2017); Mishra & Koehler (2006); Perkins & Salomon (1992)
Adapt to Evolve	Executive function; learning agility; ambiguity tolerance	Flexible adjustment of strategies under uncertainty and dynamic conditions.	Cognitive flexibility and learning agility predict adaptability, resilience, and performance in changing work environments.	DeRue, Ashford, & Myers (2012); Diamond (2013); Furnham & Marks (2013); Ionescu (2012); Snowden & Boone (2007)
Navigate Systems	Systems thinking; institutional navigation; social capital	Understanding organizational structures, power flows, and institutional norms to achieve goals.	Systems thinking and social capital access predict opportunity navigation, strategic decision-making, and career advancement.	Ben-Zvi Assaraf & Orion (2005); Lareau (2011); Lin (2001); Yosso (2005)
Design for Impact	Design thinking; experimentation; theory of change	Human-centered problem framing, prototyping, and impact-oriented iteration.	Iterative problem solving and design thinking predict innovation capacity and effective solution development in organizations.	Brown (2009); Ebrahim & Rangan (2014); Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan (2010); Ries (2011); Thomke (2003)
Build Networks and Pathways	Developmental networks; brokerage theory; professional relationship management	Strategic cultivation and activation of relationships to expand opportunity access.	Developmental networks and brokerage predict career mobility, mentorship benefits, and access to professional opportunities.	Burt (2005); Casciaro, Gino, & Kouchaki (2014); Eby et al. (2013); Granovetter (1973); Higgins & Kram (2001); Kram (1985)

Bibliography

Alt, D. , Naamati-Schneider, L., & Weishut, D. J. N. (2023). Competency-based learning and formative assessment feedback as precursors of college students' soft skills acquisition. Studies in Higher Education, 48(12), 1901-1917. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2217203

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W. H. Freeman.

Barnett, S. M., & Ceci, S. J. (2002). When and where do we apply what we learn? Psychological Bulletin, 128(4), 612–637.

Barron, B. (2003). When smart groups fail. The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 12(3), 307–359.

Benner, P. (2004). Using the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society, 24(3), 188–199.

Ben-Zvi Assaraf, O., & Orion, N. (2005). Development of system thinking skills in the context of earth system education. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 42(5), 518–560.

Brown, T. (2009). Change by design. Harper Business.

Burch, G. F., Giambatista, R., Batchelor, J. H., Burch, J. J., Hoover, J. D., & Heller, N. A. (2019). A meta-analysis of the relationship between experiential learning and learning outcomes. Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education, 17(3), 239-273. https://doi.org/10.1111/dsji.12188

Burnette, J. L., O'Boyle, E. H., VanEpps, E. M., Pollack, J. M., & Finkel, E. J. (2013). Mind-sets matter: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 139(3), 655–701.

Burt, R. S. (2005). Brokerage and closure. Oxford University Press.

Casciaro, T., Gino, F., & Kouchaki, M. (2014). The contaminating effects of building instrumental ties. Administrative Science Quarterly, 59(4), 705–735.

Chen, C. H., & Yang, Y. C. (2019). Revisiting the effects of project-based learning on students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis investigating moderators. Educational Research Review, 26, 71-81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2018.11.001

Darley, J. M., & Pittman, T. S. (2003). The psychology of compensatory and retributive justice. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 7(4), 324–336.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits. Psychological Inquiry, 11(4), 227–268.

DeRue, D. S., Ashford, S. J., & Myers, C. G. (2012). Learning agility. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 11(2), 258–279.

Devine, P. G., Forscher, P. S., Austin, A. J., & Cox, W. T. L. (2012). Long-term reduction in implicit race bias. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48(6), 1267–1278.

Diamond, A. (2013). Executive functions. Annual Review of Psychology, 64, 135–168.

Dignath, C., & Büttner, G. (2008). Components of fostering self-regulated learning among students: A meta-analysis on intervention studies at primary and secondary school level. Metacognition and Learning, 3(3), 231–264.

Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. (2001). The role of trust in organizational settings. Organization Science, 12(4), 450–467.

Dreyfus, H. L., & Dreyfus, S. E. (1986). Mind over machine. Free Press.

DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs? Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 12(2), 57–91.

Ebrahim, A., & Rangan, V. K. (2014). What impact? Stanford Social Innovation Review, 12(1), 28–35.

Eby, L. T., Allen, T. D., Evans, S. C., Ng, T., & DuBois, D. L. (2013). Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 83(3), 106–122.

Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. (2011). Schools as developmental contexts during adolescence. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 21(1), 225–241.

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350–383.

Evans, C. M., Landl, E., & Thompson, J. (2021). Making sense of K-12 competency-based education: A systematic literature review of implementation and outcomes research from 2000 to 2019. Journal of Competency-Based Education, 5(4), e01228. https://doi.org/10.1002/cbe2.1228

Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring. American Psychologist, 34(10), 906–911.

Furnham, A., & Marks, J. (2013). Tolerance of ambiguity: A review of the concept, its measurement and applications. Personality and Individual Differences, 54(6), 717–728.

Galinsky, A. D., & Moskowitz, G. B. (2000). Perspective-taking: Decreasing stereotype expression, stereotype accessibility, and in-group favoritism. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78(4), 708–724.

Gollwitzer, P. M., & Sheeran, P. (2006). Implementation intentions and goal achievement. Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 38, 69–119.

Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership. Psychology in the Schools, 30(1), 79–90.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. American Journal of Sociology, 78(6), 1360–1380.

Gross, J. J. (2014). Emotion regulation. Handbook of Emotion Regulation (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Hardy, S. A., Walker, L. J., Olsen, J. A., Woodbury, R. D., & Hickman, J. R. (2014). Moral identity as moral ideal self: links to adolescent outcomes. Developmental psychology, 50(1), 45.

Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. S. (1980). Identifying the organization of writing processes. In L. W. Gregg & E. R. Steinberg (Eds.), Cognitive processes in writing. Erlbaum.

Helyer, R. (2015). Learning through reflection: The critical role of reflection in work-based learning (WBL). Journal of Work-Applied Management, 7(1), 15-27. https://doi.org/10.1108/JWAM-10-2015-003

Higgins, M. C., & Kram, K. E. (2001). Reconceptualizing mentoring at work. Academy of Management Review, 26(2), 264–288.

Ionescu, T. (2012). Exploring the nature of cognitive flexibility. New Ideas in Psychology, 30(2), 190–200.

Jackson, D. (2013). The contribution of work-integrated learning to undergraduate employability skill outcomes. Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 14(2), 99-115.

Jewitt, C. (2008). Multimodality and literacy in school classrooms. Review of Research in Education, 32(1), 241–267.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). An educational psychology success story. Educational Researcher, 38(5), 365–379.

Kane, M. T. (2006). Validation. Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 25(1), 17–26.

Karabenick, S. A. (2004). Perceived achievement goal structure and help seeking. Journal of Educational Psychology, 96(3), 569–581.

Kellogg, R. T. (2008). Training writing skills: A cognitive developmental perspective. Journal of Writing Research, 1(1), 1–26.

Kemple, J. J. & Willner, C. J. (2008)Career Academies: Long-Term Impacts on Labor MarketOutcomes,Educational Attainment, and Transitions to Adulthood. MDRC.

Kidder, R. M. (2009). How good people make tough choices. Harper.

Kirshner, B. (2007). Youth activism. Journal of Community Psychology, 35(3), 367–383.

Kram, K. E. (1985). Mentoring at work. Scott, Foresman.

Kyriakides, L., Christoforou, C., & Charalambous, C. Y. (2013). What matters for student learning outcomes: A meta-analysis of studies exploring factors of effective teaching. Teaching and Teacher Education, 36, 143–152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.07.010

Lareau, A. (2011). Unequal childhoods (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45(1), 79–122.

Leu, D. J., Kinzer, C. K., Coiro, J., Castek, J., & Henry, L. A. (2017). New literacies: A dual-level theory of the changing nature of literacy, instruction, and assessment. Journal of Education, 197(2), 1-18.

Lin, N. (2001). Social capital. Cambridge University Press.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting. American Psychologist, 57(9), 705–717.

Mann, A., Rehill, J., & Kashefpakdel, E. T. (2018). Employer Engagement in Education: Insights from International Evidence for Effective Practice and Future Research. Education and Employers Research.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. Academy of Management Review, 20(3), 709–734.

Mercer, N., & Littleton, K. (2007). Dialogue and the development of children's thinking. Routledge.

Morrison, B. (2007). Restoring safe school communities. Federation Press.

Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., & Mulgan, G. (2010). The open book of social innovation. NESTA.

Narvaez, D., & Bock, T. (2014). Developing ethical expertise. In D. Narvaez & D. K. Lapsley (Eds.), Personality, identity, and character. Cambridge University Press.

Naseer, F., Tariq, R., Ashahrani, H. M., Alruwais, N., & Al-Wesabi, F. N. (2025). Project based learning framework integrating industry collaboration to enhance student future readiness in higher education. Scientific Reports, 15, 24985. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-10385-4

Oyserman, D. (2015). Identity-based motivation. Oxford University Press.

Panadero, E. (2017). A review of self-regulated learning. Educational Research Review, 21, 1–18.

Perkins, D. N., & Salomon, G. (1992). Transfer of learning. International Encyclopedia of Education.

Pierce, J. L., Kostova, T., & Dirks, K. T. (2003). The state of psychological ownership. Review of General Psychology, 7(1), 84–107.

Reddy, L. A., Shernoff, E., & Lewka, A. (2021). A randomized controlled trial of instructional coaching in high-poverty urban schools: Examining teacher practices and student outcomes. Journal of School Psychology, 86, 151–168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2021.04.001

Rest, J. R., Narvaez, D., Thoma, S. J., & Bebeau, M. J. (2000). A neo-Kohlbergian approach to morality research. Journal of moral education, 29(4), 381-395.

Reeve, J. (2013). How students create motivationally supportive learning environments for themselves. Journal of Educational Psychology, 105(3), 579–595.

Ries, E. (2011). The lean startup. Crown Business.

Rogers, C. R., & Farson, R. E. (1957). Active listening. Industrial Relations Center, University of Chicago.

Ryan, A. M., & Pintrich, P. R. (1997). Should I ask for help? Journal of Educational Psychology, 89(2), 329–341.

Sadler, D. R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. Instructional Science, 18(2), 119–144.

Schraw, G., & Dennison, R. S. (1994). Assessing metacognitive awareness. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 19(4), 460–475.

Schwartz, S. J., Côté, J. E., & Arnett, J. J. (2005). Identity and agency in emerging adulthood. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34(3), 201–217.

Seidel, T., & Shavelson, R. J. (2007). Teaching effectiveness research in the past decade: The role of theory and research design in disentangling meta-analysis results. Review of Educational Research, 77(4), 454–499. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654307310317

Snowden, D. J., & Boone, M. E. (2007). A leader's framework for decision making. Harvard Business Review, 85(11), 68–76.

Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed leadership. The Educational Forum, 69(2), 143–150.

Tervalon, M., & Murray-García, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence. Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, 9(2), 117–125.

Test, D. W., Fowler, C. H., Wood, W. M., Brewer, D. M., & Eddy, S. (2005). A conceptual framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities. Remedial and Special Education, 26(1), 43–54.

Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974). Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument. CPP.

Thomke, S. (2003). Experimentation matters. Harvard Business School Press.

Todd, A. R., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Perspective-taking as a strategy for improving intergroup relations. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 106(6), 941–960.

Ury, W. L., Brett, J. M., & Goldberg, S. B. (1988). Getting disputes resolved: Designing systems to cut the costs of conflict. Jossey-Bass.

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves outcomes. Science, 331(6023), 1447–1451.

Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. S. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience. Educational Psychologist, 47(4), 302–314.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. Race Ethnicity and Education, 8 (1), 69–91.

Zhang, L. & Ma, Y. (2023). A study of the impact of project-based learning on student learning effects:Ameta-analysisstudy . Frontiers in Psychology, 14: 1202728. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1202728

Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. Theory into Practice, 41(2), 64-70.