Background Reading on the Connection between SEAD and Skills for the Workforce

The articles presented below provide a snapshot of the literature linking workforce research into “soft skills” and “employability skills” with social, emotional, and academic development in K-12 education. Where appropriate, articles have been edited to include only those sections that are most relevant for the Commission. The core reading will give Commissioners an overview of the research connecting SEAD to acquisition of the skills necessary to be career-ready and to succeed in the workforce. Two very short frameworks are provided also, which will be especially relevant for discussion during the February 15th meeting. An additional two articles serve as “further reading” for those who wish to delve deeper into the social science and economic evidence base, and an extended reading list is included as well.

Core Reading

Overview

This article provides a review of the literature on the links between SEAD and workforce success as well as an organizing framework to better comprehend those links. The authors review research from education and psychology finding that SEAD reinforces well-being, learning, and academic success; economic analyses finding improved rates of employment and higher incomes; and business research finding that SEAD skills foster higher performance in the workplace, and that employees that have them are highly desired and rewarded by employers. At the same time, the authors note that employees with well-developed SEAD skills are especially hard to find.


This brief article succinctly describes the increasing demand for “soft skills,” the scarcity of them in the labor force, and a description of how SEAD can meet that demand and close the soft skills gap by promoting SEAD competencies that overlap with soft skills. The authors point out that SEAD curricula lead to outcomes including higher high school graduation rates, college attendance, employment, wages, and well-being. The article closes with a call to action promoting SEAD as a solution to the growing soft skills gap.

Frameworks

The U.S. Department of Education developed the Employability Skills Framework after conducting a comprehensive review of academic and workforce skills frameworks and assessments. It includes as its core skills “applied knowledge,” “effective relationships,” and “workplace skills.” The framework has multiple areas of overlap with SEAD and soft skills, especially “interpersonal skills,” “resource
management,” “systems thinking,” and “communication skills.” The framework offers one model for identifying high value connections between SEAD and workforce development.


The Business Roundtable developed a framework for employability skills that is applicable across the many different work settings found in the 21st century economy. The four key skill sets are “personal skills,” “people skills,” workplace skills,” and “applied knowledge.” The emphasis on soft skills is readily apparent, and includes multiple areas of overlap with SEAD skills.

**Further Reading (optional)**


This brief article describes how the 21st century economy is increasingly demanding that workers have social and emotional skills. It provides a crosswalk of the U.S. Department of Education’s Employability Skills Framework with CASEL’s Social and Emotional Core Competencies framework, noting the many areas of overlap between the two skills frameworks. It concludes by offering examples of how social and emotional learning can foster employability skills, with special attention paid to the afterschool context.


The World Bank conducted an international review of surveys of employers to explore what skills are in highest demand, and which are most lacking. They find that employers across the world report socio-emotional skills to be the most sought after and at the same time one of the hardest skillsets to find. The authors conclude by discussing how education systems across the world are missing out on this high value area when preparing youth for careers and recommend that the promotion of socio-emotional skills be increasingly prioritized.

**Extended Reading List**


**Fostering and Measuring Skills: Improving Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills to Promote Lifetime Success** – Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Bas ter Weel, & Borghans (2014)


Emotional intelligence: Implications for personal, social, academic, and workplace success – Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey (2011)


Interpersonal Styles and Labor Market Outcomes – Borghans, ter Weel, & Weinberg (2007)
