

A Duval County Public Schools survey of local businesses reveals soft skills are the most valued and in-demand employability skills among local employers across industry sectors. Responding to community need, Duval County Public Schools chose the Florida Ready to Work program as their solution.

## the **PLAN**

In April 2021, the Duval County Public School Board adopted Achieve '26, a five-year strategic plan centered on four high-level academic goals. Shaped by the voices of business and community stakeholders, the now nationally recognized plan is the framework guiding instructional programming and performance measurement for leadership, faculty, staff, and students districtwide through 2026. Goal Number 3 specifically focuses on validating student mastery of the foundational soft skills that employers locally and nationwide commonly recognize as essential for employee hiring, retention, and advancement, business growth, and whole community economic development.

### Duval County School Stats

- 1 of Florida's 7 major metropolitan school districts
- 26 High Schools
- 87.2% Average Graduation Rate (as of 2022-23)

### Duval County Strategic Plan Goal #3

Improve the post-secondary readiness of graduates by increasing the percentage of students earning soft skills credentials from the baseline in August 2023 to August 2026.

## the **SKILLS**

Duval County Public Schools defined the foundational work readiness soft skills required of all students based on local business and community feedback and nationally validated research.



### PROFESSIONALISM

Dependable/Trustworthy | Detail Oriented/Attentive  
Ability to Accept Constructive Criticism



### COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal Skills | Customer Service  
Verbal & Written Communication



### TEAMWORK

Emotional Maturity & Team Player  
Self Motivated/Self Leadership



### SOLVING PROBLEMS

Organization  
Adaptability/Flexibility/Fast-Paced

## the HOW

With the goal set to improve student soft skills, Duval County Public Schools began to identify proven solutions and partners to achieve the goal. The district identified the need for a high-quality, work readiness focused curriculum to develop student skills and tools to track student progress, measure learning gains, and certify skills mastery. The district also sought a solution that would be:

- Intuitive and accessible for students
- Easy for teachers to implement
- Valued and validated by employers
- Low-or-no cost to the district

One program rose above all others evaluated by the district: **Florida Ready to Work**

Florida Ready to Work is a research-based career readiness program focused on developing and credentialing foundational employability skills. The program features a highly interactive, online career contextualized curriculum aligned with the in-demand soft skills prioritized by the district. The culminating online proctored assessment validates student mastery of skills and results in the state-sponsored and nationally recognized Florida Ready to Work Soft Skills Credential. Already funded by the State of Florida, Florida Ready to Work provided the district with a fiscally responsible and scalable solution.

We found that Florida Ready to Work was directly aligned to what our local community stakeholders and employers define as essential soft skills. Professionalism, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving are life skills. By prioritizing development of these skills, we are better preparing our students for whatever path they choose in the future. The real-life relevancy of Florida Ready to Work is resonating with our students, and our business partners are already seeing the work ready difference in our graduates.

**Corey Wright, Assistant Superintendent, Accountability and Assessment Duval County Schools**

## the RESULTS

The graduating class of 2022 piloted the Florida Ready to Work soft skills curriculum with nearly 200 students earning the Florida Ready to Work Soft Skills Credential in the first three months. In 2022-23 and 2023-24, implementation expanded to include sophomore and junior students. In 2024-25, students will start working through the curriculum as freshman, completing one module each year until graduation. Teacher feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the rigor and relevance of the curriculum and the ease of implementation. And students are echoing the benefits of being better prepared for college, career, and life beyond high school.

Class of 2022	Class of 2023	Class of 2024
Credentials Earned <b>195</b>	Credentials Earned <b>1,767</b>	Credentials Earned <b>1,979</b>
Students Passing <b>61%</b>	Students Passing <b>83%</b>	Students Passing <b>85%</b>