

# WorkKeys®



## Secondary Education Guide



***“WorkKeys has helped us overcome the communication gap that exists between education and business. It has allowed businesses to communicate what kind of skills they need from our students.”***

Melanie Gray, Perkins and School-to-Career Coordinator, Delta-Montrose Area Vocational-Technical Center and Delta County School District, Colorado

## What Employers Want

As jobs in the United States continue to become more complex, employers are asking their employees to have command of increasingly higher skills. Employers provide specific on-the-job training to nearly 80 percent of the workforce, according to the American Society for Training and Development. That’s why employers are looking for job candidates who possess the foundational skills that make them easier to train on the job.

Educators teach students foundational skills through daily classroom instruction. The challenge for educators is to teach the application of these foundational skills. Students who have abilities in Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information are the type of highly trainable candidates that employers seek. These candidates have more success on the job and are able to learn job-specific skills faster.

The best way for students to achieve higher skills on the job is to have strong foundational workplace skills. WorkKeys® helps ensure that individuals are ready for work—and for life.

## Work and College Readiness

If students are going to be adequately prepared for the workforce, they need to understand the requirements for jobs they are considering. WorkKeys helps students determine the skill levels and education required for various jobs. The chart below shows information for three of the more than 13,000 job profiles in the WorkKeys database. To see more jobs and skill levels go to [www.act.org/workkeys/education/index.html](http://www.act.org/workkeys/education/index.html).

	Receptionist	Machine Operator	Accountant
<b>Education</b>	High school	High school and training or AA degree	4-year degree
<b>Salary</b>	\$22,090	\$30,430	\$57,310
<b>WorkKeys Skill Levels</b>			
Math	3 4 5 6 7	3 4 5 6 7	3 4 5 6 7
Reading	3 4 5 6 7	3 4 5 6 7	3 4 5 6 7
Locating Information	3 4 5 6	3 4 5 6	3 4 5 6

## Benefits for Educators

### Educators use WorkKeys to:

- Identify gaps between student skills and employment needs
- Develop more rigorous coursework to improve workforce readiness
- Align curricula to address the job skills employers need
- Develop more efficient teaching strategies
- Analyze and report their institution's success in preparing students
- Build a foundation for counseling students about courses and employment interests

Teachers play a vital role in helping students understand the importance of acquiring solid workplace skills. They also can guide students in selecting rigorous courses based on the students' interests and career goals. WorkKeys helps educators ensure that students enter the work world with the foundational skills needed in any field they choose.



## Benefits for Students

- Enables students to realize the importance of their studies
- Increases chances that graduates will be hired
- Improves students' success in entry-level and subsequent jobs
- Builds students' confidence that skills meet the needs of local employers
- Determines skill improvement and training needs
- Enables students to rank above other job applicants who do not have needed skills
- Improves chances of better entry-level salaries through increased skills
- Shows prospective employers concrete proof of skills achieved

## Benefits for Guidance Counselors

### Guidance counselors use WorkKeys to:

- Tailor counseling to individuals by focusing on their skills and realistic employment opportunities
- Compare students' skill levels with those required for occupations
- Connect information about the requirements of local jobs with education and training services available in the community
- Establish business/education partnerships that enable students to gain practical experience and training in the workplace

# How Educators Implement the WorkKeys System

## Pre/Post Testing

WorkKeys scores are a useful tool to help educators demonstrate their students' ability to benefit from education and training. Students can take WorkKeys assessments when they begin high school, typically in 9th grade. Teachers and counselors can identify the

appropriate coursework and training for the students based on their pre-testing scores.

WorkKeys post-testing can be done with students in 11th or 12th grade. The same assessments

should be used in pre- and post-testing to show the direct relationship of curriculum impact and learning. The WorkKeys Scale Scores are sensitive to subtle score changes and can be used to show growth over time and to provide group comparisons in outcomes measurement.

## WorkKeys in the United States

Many states and school districts throughout the United States use the WorkKeys system. In Illinois and Michigan, every high school junior is required to take two WorkKeys tests as part of a statewide assessment program. In Kentucky, WorkKeys is an optional, state-paid assessment for students in grades 10, 11, and 12. Virginia accepts WorkKeys Reading for Information as one of the assessments required to receive a high school diploma. Other states are considering statewide testing programs that incorporate WorkKeys into their testing. And many high schools have aligned curricula in

their programs to meet the WorkKeys skill levels needed for immediate job placement upon graduation.

## National Career Readiness System

WorkKeys also is the foundation for the nationwide Career Readiness System that links qualified individuals with employers who recognize the value of skilled job applicants. This comprehensive employment tool—available via the Internet—offers four components.

**Certification:** The National Career Readiness Certificate verifies that an individual has the foundational skills necessary to be successful entering employment or a training program.

**Certificate Registry:** This Internet-based system at [www.MyWorkKeys.com](http://www.MyWorkKeys.com) allows an individual to view WorkKeys scores, apply for a certificate, and order paper copies, as well as enabling employers to verify that an individual has a certificate.

**Talent Bank:** Individuals who qualify for a National Career Readiness Certificate can use the Talent Bank to post credentials for employers and search job postings in a national job database.

**Job Bank:** Employers who use the National Career Readiness Certificate can post job opportunities and search for qualified candidates.

For more information, go to [www.NationalCareerReadiness.org](http://www.NationalCareerReadiness.org).



NATIONAL  
CAREER READINESS  
SYSTEM

***“In West Michigan, students in 64 high schools take WorkKeys Applied Math and Reading for Information to demonstrate their ability to apply what they’ve learned in a work setting. If they scored well on these tests but are unable to apply their knowledge in the workplace, Kent ISD provides remedial education free of charge to fulfill our commitment to ‘guarantee’ the basic math and reading skills of graduates. Now, with ACT’s National Career Readiness Certificate, our schools are committed to creating a career-ready workforce to improve the earnings potential of graduates and the economic vitality of our region.”***

Ronald Koehler, APR  
Assistant Superintendent,  
Organizational and  
Community Initiatives,  
Kent Intermediate School  
District

## What is WorkKeys?

WorkKeys is a job skills assessment system measuring “real world” skills that employers believe are critical to job success. These skills are valuable for any occupation—skilled or professional—and at any level of education.

Students who use WorkKeys to document their readiness for work have an edge with the growing number of employers nationwide who accept or require that job applicants have WorkKeys scores. Several states also have adopted WorkKeys to ensure that students have needed skills.

## WorkKeys Assessments

### Foundational Skills

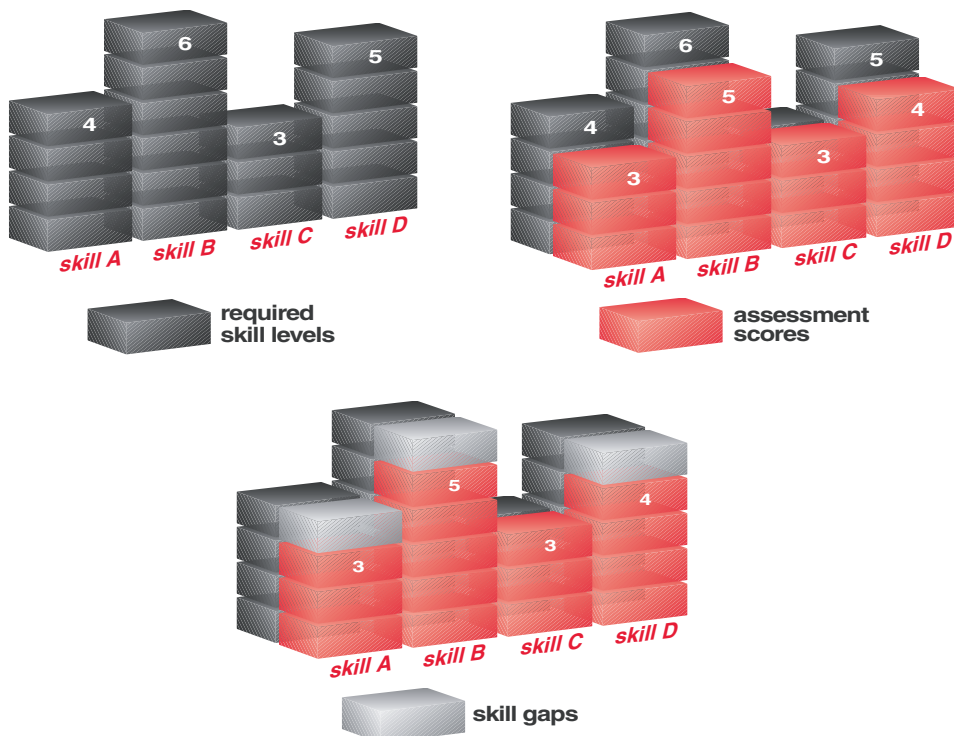
- Applied Mathematics
- Applied Technology
- Business Writing
- Listening
- Locating Information
- Reading for Information
- Observation
- Teamwork
- Writing

### Personal Skills

- Performance
- Talent
- Fit

## How WorkKeys Works

Students can use their WorkKeys scores to determine how their skills measure up to those required in the workforce. And, educators can use the scores to see how well they are preparing graduates for different occupations. The example below identifies where an individual’s skills do not match those needed for a particular job.



## Test Administration and Scoring

Millions of WorkKeys assessments are administered through high schools and other educational institutions each year. The criterion-referenced assessments can be used singly or in combination, and each takes about one hour to complete. Standard scoring is included in the price of the tests. Results for paper-and-pencil tests are usually available from ACT within ten working days and instant score reports are available for computer-based tests.

Schools receive both individual and group WorkKeys reports following each test administration. The individual report indicates a student's skill level for each assessment administered, along with a description of the tasks associated with the skill level and strategies to improve performance in that skill. Group reports help the school track performance for all students who took the assessments.

## WorkKeys and ACT

WorkKeys has been developed by ACT, an international leader in educational assessment and workforce development services for more than forty years, best known for the ACT® college entrance exam. WorkKeys is used by thousands of companies and schools across the United States and internationally.

For more information about WorkKeys, call 1-800/WORKKEY (967-5539) or visit our website at **[www.workkeys.com](http://www.workkeys.com)**.

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