SHOP TALK # 44: WORKPLACE BASICS:
Skills for Baseline Job Preparation

The Texas Workforce Commission has compiled a list of 30 Workplace Basics, many of which are already familiar to Adult Education practitioners. These are skills employers are seeking in their workforce. While industries as diverse as manufacturing, health care, energy, and personal services have unique concentrations of occupational specialties that require highly skilled and educated workers, all of these industries have a common need for workers with a basic set of skills. These skills can make the difference between a workforce that might be educated but dysfunctional, skilled but unproductive, or knowledgeable but lacking synergy.

There is no way for a teacher to know what knowledge will be salient 20 years after someone graduates with a high school diploma or postsecondary degree. The premise behind the importance of lifelong learning is this: learning critical thinking skills is what allows individuals to excel in the labor market years after they have left school. “A person who thinks critically can ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information, sort the information, reason logically about the information, and come to reliable conclusions about the world that enables one to live and act successfully in it.” (Schafersman, Steven 2009).

The list of workplace basics is included in a November 2009 publication of *Beyond the Numbers: Labor Market Information Research and Writings*. For a copy, which includes descriptions of each skill as well as an excellent article on critical thinking skills, contact the toll free Career Information Hotline at 1-800-822-7526, Texas Workforce Solutions, Labor Market and Career Information.

**Workplace Basics: Skills for Baseline Job Preparation**

1. Oral communication
2. Written communication
3. Numerical and arithmetic application
4. Leadership
5. Teamwork
6. Appreciation of diversity
7. Conflict management
8. Customer service
9. Work ethic
10. Professionalism
11. Integrity
12. Attention to detail
13. Adaptability
14. Organization
15. Stress management
16. Multi-tasking
17. Problem solving
18. Decision making
19. Intellectual risk-taking
20. Thoughtful reflection
21. Initiative
22. Creativity
23. Dedication
24. Perseverance
25. Pride in work
26. Following directions
27. Information gathering
28. Resource allocation
29. Time management
30. Technology and tool usage
In a Corporate Voices for Working Families survey, employers ranked professionalism, teamwork, communication, and critical thinking at the top of their list. Another study of skills needed by entry-level workers in small businesses rated seven skills the highest: integrity/honesty, listening, serving clients/ customers, responsibility, participating as a member of a team, esteem, and sociability.

Deficiencies in these skills are barriers to entry level employees, experienced employees, and dislocated workers attempting to adapt to economic and technological change in the workplace. Employers are acutely aware that deficient workplace basics contribute to low productivity, workplace accidents, poor product quality, costly errors, and lost management and supervisory time.

If adult learners have mastered these workplace basics, they should be encouraged to include them in their resumes. These employability skills are so important to employers, job seekers benefit from letting employers know that they possess these qualities and skills. Beyond the Numbers provides examples of how learners can cite these skills in their resumes.

Whether we call them workplace fundamentals, foundation skills, or work readiness skills, workplace basics are an essential part of every individual’s education.

Beyond the Numbers is one of several publications included in the Counselor’s Packet, which contains a variety of materials about careers and the Texas labor market. A packet can be requested from the Career Information Hotline (1-800-822-7526). Several of the publications are also available online at www.lmci.state.tx.us.