OFFICE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

F.   Approval of Miss. Admin. Code 7-269: *Bridge-to-Career Course Standards* that provide standards and resources for the portfolio and exhibit option for meeting End-of-Course (EOC) Assessment Requirements
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with public comments)

Background Information: On April 17, 2025, the State Board of Education approved the revision to the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024*, Appendix A-5 – Additional Assessment Options for Meeting EOC Assessment Requirements. This revision approved the creation of a portfolio and exhibit option for students who do not obtain a passing score on one or more EOC assessments. This option, the *Bridge-to-Career Course*, is designed to foster real-world skills and promote personal growth and supports students in building credentials and experiences that prepare them for success in the workforce, post-secondary education, and life beyond high school. The curriculum includes four specific units including career exploration and workplace readiness, career documents and interview preparation, portfolio development and exhibit creation and presentation, along with credential programs and scoring rubrics to ensure consistency of course implementation throughout the state.

On July 17, 2025, the State Board of Education approved the *Bridge-to-Career Course Standards* and to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process. The public comment period was open from July 17, 2025, through 5:00 p.m. on August 23, 2025. The MDE received two public comments. No changes were made to the Standards.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

PUBLIC COMMENT
Bridge-to-Career Course

Comment	MDE Response

Dear Ms. Clemons,
 	
The purpose of this letter is to request an amendment of language in the proposed rules of the Mississippi Department of Education ("Department ").
 	
I. **Proposed Rule Language**
    a. "Instructors should guide students toward earning at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved credential aligned with their career interest. Some credentials, such as CPR (American Heart Association or American Red Cross Certification) and OSHA General Industry (Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification……• American Heart Association Certification • American Red Cross Certification…"
 	
II. **Requested Amendment**
    a. "Instructors should guide students toward earning at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved credential aligned with their career interest. Some credentials, such as CPR (American Heart Association or, American Red Cross Certification <u>or Health and Safety Institute certification</u>) and OSHA General Industry (Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification……• American Heart Association Certification • American Red Cross Certification • <u>Health and Safety Institute certification</u>) …"
 	
Conclusion
The AHA, ARC, and HSI are the largest providers of CPR and first aid training in the United States. The requested amendments will encourage full and free competition while achieving the goal of maintaining the quality measures necessary to support students in building credentials that prepare them for success in the workforce.
 	
Respectfully,
 	
Ralph Shenefelt
	The listed certifications do not represent an exhaustive list. Schools may apply on behalf of students for additional certifications that meet the post-secondary transitional needs of students.

Comment	MDE Response
Dear Ms. Adams, Teach Plus Mississippi strongly supports the proposed Bridge-to-Career Course. The proposed course addresses gaps in current graduation structures by combining academic learning with workforce credentialing, career readiness, and community partnerships. This course can be especially beneficial for students with disabilities, who have experienced difficulties in earning a traditional high school diploma due to end-of-year testing requirements. We also recommend changes that will remove barriers and improve support for students with disabilities. To ensure that the Bridge-to-Career Course fully meets the needs of students, particularly those with disabilities, we recommend the following changes to the policy: • Require students to have an updated Individual Success Plan or Special Education Transition Plan to participate in the course. Each student in our public schools is supposed to receive guidance as they plan their next steps after high school, either through an Individual Success Plan (ISP) or a transition plan for special education students. Requiring students to have an updated ISP or transition plan will assist Bridge-to-Career Course instructors in meeting the needs of participating students. • Allow students with disabilities to participate in the course by meeting their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals in lieu of the Grade Point Average (GPA) requirement. Some students with disabilities need additional support to reach their academic goals. While these students are more than capable of completing their portfolios and being successful in the workforce, they may face difficulty earning the 2.0 GPA required to enter the program. Allowing students to participate in the course by meeting their IEP goals, while also meeting other eligibility requirements, will ensure that promising students are unnecessarily barred from the program. • Require collaboration with special education teachers in the implementation of the Bridge-to-Career Course. As districts move toward implementation of the Bridge-to-Career Course, administrators must ensure that special education teachers are closely involved in the instruction and support these students receive. Special education teachers should be strongly considered when selecting instructors and should, at the very least, be closely involved in planning lessons and activities, as well as reviewing portfolios. Sincerely, Sanford Johnson, Executive Director Teach Plus Mississippi	• Respondent agrees that planning tools and ISPs are essential in guiding students toward their next steps after high school. In MS, the students eligible for an IEP must have a transition plan at age 14. The MDE is scheduled to review existing policies and implement any changes by Spring 2026 to ensure that updates to ISPs occur yearly, which would in turn ensure updates to any courses and programs impacted by ISPs. • The 2.0 GPA requirement is a consistent eligibility standard across programs and serves as a minimum benchmark of academic readiness. Allowing IEP goals to replace the GPA requirements could potentially create inconsistent entry criteria and undermine the desired consistency of the Bridge-to-Career course statewide. • The respondent fully agrees that collaboration between teachers and special education teachers is critical. Since this is already an existing expectation, the addition of the Bridge-to-Career course would be no exception to this collaboration. Districts are best positioned to determine how to allocate resources and staff to support their students. Local schools have structures in place to ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate supports and services in compliance with federal law (IDEA).

![Outlook] Outlook

Proposed Rule Comment, 2025 Mississippi Bridge-to-Career Course Standards

---

From Ralph Shenefelt <rshenefelt@hsi.com>
Date Thu 7/24/2025 12:28 PM
To Wendy Clemons <WClemons@mdek12.org>
Cc SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>; Nicole Printup <nprintup@hsi.com>

📎 2 attachments (2 MB)
Proposed Rule Comment, Title 7 Education K-12. Part 269.pdf; EXHIBIT A.pdf;

<u>**VIA EMAIL DELIVERY & READ RECEIPT REQUESTED**</u>

-
July 24, 2025

Wendy Clemons
Chief Academic Officer
Mississippi Department of Education
359 N W St.
Jackson, MS 39205

RE: Proposed Rule Comment, Title 7: Education K-12. Part 269: 2025 Mississippi Bridge-to-Career Course Standards, Appendix A: Industry-Recognized Credential Programs.

Dear Ms. Clemons,

The purpose of this letter is to request an amendment of language in the proposed rules of the Mississippi Department of Education ("Department ").

    I. **Proposed Rule Language**
        a. "Instructors should guide students toward earning at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved credential aligned with their career interest. Some credentials, such as CPR (American Heart Association or American Red Cross Certification) and OSHA General Industry (Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification…
        …• American Heart Association Certification • American Red Cross Certification…"

    II. **Requested Amendment**
        a. "Instructors should guide students toward earning at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved credential aligned with their career interest. Some credentials, such as CPR (American Heart Association ~~or~~ American Red Cross Certification <u>or Health and Safety Institute certification</u>) and OSHA General Industry (Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification…....• American

Heart Association Certification • American Red Cross Certification • Health and Safety Institute certification) ..."

III. Reasons for Requesting Amendment

a. The American Heart Association®, Inc. ("AHA"), the American National Red Cross ("ARC") and the Health and Safety Institute ("HSI") are the largest providers of CPR training in the United States (**EXHIBIT A**).

b. Like the AHA and ARC, HSI is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Pre-Hospital Continuing Education ("CAPCE"). CAPCE is the national accrediting body for Emergency Medical Services continuing education courses and course providers.

c. HSI's CPR training programs are currently accepted, approved, or recognized as an industry credential meeting the requirements of thousands of state regulatory agencies, occupational licensing boards, national associations, commissions, and councils in hundreds of occupations and professions.

d. The training business units of the HSI, AHA, and ARC are similar.

   i. Each corporation develops and markets commercially available, proprietary training programs, products, and services to their approved Training Centers, either directly or via distributors.

   ii. The business structures of the approved Training Centers include sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, LLCs, non-profits, as well as both large and small government agencies.

   iii. Instructors are authorized to certify course participants. Certification requires instructor evaluation of hands-on skills to verify skill competency.

e. As proposed, the rule language:

   i. Unfairly fixes a bias for the proprietary CPR training programs, products, and services of the AHA, its Approved Training Centers and for-profit CPR training company,[3] and the ARC and its Licensed Training Providers. All of whom have a vested economic interest in CPR training - particularly where it is required for occupational licensing or regulatory compliance; and

   ii. Will have an inequitable cost impact on institutions by denying them the use of a substantially equivalent means of compliance and potentially lower cost CPR training alternative, and by preventing greater choice in CPR training vendor selection, quality, and service; and

   iii. Harms HSI's reputation as an equivalent, bona fide, nationally recognized, and accredited training organization.

IV. Additional Facts

a. HSI publishes and administers a set of quality assurance standards designed to monitor and improve the performance of HSI, its approved Training Centers, and Authorized Instructors so that the products and services provided meet or exceed the requirements of regulatory authorities and other approvers.

b. HSI is a member of the Council on Licensure, Enforcement, and Regulation (CLEAR), the international resource for professional regulation stakeholders. HSI quality assurance staff are NCIT trained and certified.

c. HSI is a member of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and ASTM International (ASTM) – both globally recognized leaders in the development and delivery of international voluntary consensus standards.

Conclusion

The AHA, ARC, and HSI are the largest providers of CPR and first aid training in the United States. The requested amendments will encourage full and free competition while achieving the goal of

maintaining the quality measures necessary to support students in building credentials that prepare them for success in the workforce. We support administrative rules that do not harm employment, competition, or innovation. We value, believe in, and promote successful completion of a valid CPR program as an important component in protecting public safety, health, and welfare. We look forward to helping the Department protect the health and safety of the citizens of Mississippi.

Respectfully,

Ralph Shenefelt
SVP Regulatory, Accreditation, & Quality Assurance
Emergency Care
E rshenefelt@hsi.com | **P** 1-800-447-3177
hsi.com | Making Workplaces Safer and Smarter

---

[3] Dallas-based American Heart Association to spin off a CPR training company, July 5, 2018. Available: https://www.dallasnews.com/business/health-care/2018/06/29/dallas-based-american-heart-association-spin-off-cpr-training-company. [Retrieved July 24, 2025]

hsi

July 24, 2025

Wendy Clemons
Chief Academic Officer
Mississippi Department of Education
359 N W St.
Jackson, MS 39205

RE: Proposed Rule Comment, Title 7: Education K-12. Part 269: 2025 Mississippi Bridge-to-Career Course Standards, Appendix A: Industry-Recognized Credential Programs.

Dear Ms. Clemons,

The purpose of this letter is to request an amendment of language in the proposed rules of the Mississippi Department of Education ("Department ").

I. **Proposed Rule Language**
   a. "Instructors should guide students toward earning at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved credential aligned with their career interest. Some credentials, such as CPR (American Heart Association or American Red Cross Certification) and OSHA General Industry (Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification... ...• American Heart Association Certification • American Red Cross Certification..."

II. **Requested Amendment**
   a. "Instructors should guide students toward earning at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved credential aligned with their career interest. Some credentials, such as CPR (American Heart Association ~~or~~ American Red Cross Certification <u>or Health and Safety Institute certification</u>) and OSHA General Industry (Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification......• American Heart Association Certification • American Red Cross Certification • <u>Health and Safety Institute certification</u>) ..."

III. Reasons for Requesting Amendment

a. The American Heart Association®, Inc. ("AHA"), the American National Red Cross ("ARC") and the Health and Safety Institute ("HSI") are the largest providers of CPR training in the United States (**EXHIBIT A**).

b. Like the AHA and ARC, HSI is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Pre-Hospital Continuing Education ("CAPCE"). CAPCE is the national accrediting body for Emergency Medical Services continuing education courses and course providers.

c. HSI's CPR training programs are currently accepted, approved, or recognized as an industry credential meeting the requirements of thousands of state regulatory agencies, occupational licensing boards, national associations, commissions, and councils in hundreds of occupations and professions.

d. The training business units of the HSI, AHA, and ARC are similar.

    i. Each corporation develops and markets commercially available, proprietary training programs, products, and services to their approved Training Centers, either directly or via distributors.

    ii. The business structures of the approved Training Centers include sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, LLCs, non-profits, as well as both large and small government agencies.

    iii. Instructors are authorized to certify course participants. Certification requires **instructor evaluation of hands-on skills to verify skill competency.**

e. As proposed, the rule language:

    i. Unfairly fixes a bias for the proprietary CPR training programs, products, and services of the AHA, its Approved Training Centers and for-profit CPR training company,[3] and the ARC and its Licensed Training Providers. All of whom have a vested economic interest in CPR training - particularly where it is required for occupational licensing or regulatory compliance; and

    ii. Will have an inequitable cost impact on institutions by denying them the use of a substantially equivalent means of compliance and potentially lower cost CPR training alternative, and by preventing greater choice in CPR training vendor selection, quality, and service; and

    iii. Harms HSI's reputation as an equivalent, bona fide, nationally recognized, and accredited training organization.

---

[3]Dallas-based American Heart Association to spin off a CPR training company, July 5, 2018. Available: https://www.dallasnews.com/business/health-care/2018/06/29/dallas-based-american-heart-association-spin-off-cpr-training-company. [Retrieved July 24, 2025]

hsi

IV. Additional Facts

    a. HSI publishes and administers a set of <u>quality assurance standards</u> designed to monitor and improve the performance of HSI, its approved Training Centers, and Authorized Instructors so that the products and services provided meet or exceed the requirements of regulatory authorities and other approvers.

    b. HSI is a member of the Council on Licensure, Enforcement, and Regulation (<u>CLEAR</u>), the international resource for professional regulation stakeholders. HSI quality assurance staff are <u>NCIT</u> trained and certified.

    c. HSI is a member of the American National Standards Institute (<u>ANSI</u>) and ASTM International (<u>ASTM</u>) – both globally recognized leaders in the development and delivery of international voluntary consensus standards.

Conclusion

The AHA, ARC, and HSI are the largest providers of CPR and first aid training in the United States. The requested amendments will encourage full and free competition while achieving the goal of maintaining the quality measures necessary to support students in building credentials that prepare them for success in the workforce. We support administrative rules that do not harm employment, competition, or innovation. We value, believe in, and promote successful completion of a valid CPR program as an important component in protecting public safety, health, and welfare. We look forward to helping the Department protect the health and safety of the citizens of Mississippi.

Respectfully,

Ralph Shenefelt
Senior Vice President
Regulatory & Quality Assurance

- In an analysis of 347 705 SCDs in the United States between 1999 and 2019 from CDC WONDER, age-adjusted mortality rates were higher in rural than in urban counties.[30] In urban counties, rates of SCD declined from 1999 through 2013 (−0.05 [95% CI, −0.09 to −0.01]) but then increased through the end of the study period (0.08 [95% CI, 0.03–0.12]). In rural counties, age-adjusted mortality rates attributable to SCD declined throughout the study period, but the rate of decline slowed after 2013 (−0.29 versus −0.14). Age-adjusted mortality rates for urban-dwelling males increased from 2013 onward from 4.8 to 5.7 per 100 000 population. Age-adjusted mortality rates for rural-dwelling males were unchanged from 2013 onward: 9.3 versus 9.3 per 100 000 population. Age-adjusted mortality rates for urban-dwelling females were unchanged from 2013 onward: 4.2 versus 4.8 per 100 000 population. In contrast, age-adjusted mortality for rural-dwelling females declined from 8.9 to 7.7 per 100 000 population.
- In a national database of 120 365 adult medical OHCAs in the Republic of Korea from 2006 to 2015, there were differences from the lowest to highest socioeconomic quintiles for layperson CPR (5.5%–11.4%), survival to hospital discharge (3.8%–6.1%), and good functional recovery (1.9%–2.9%).[13]

Awareness and Treatment

- The median annual CPR training rate for US counties was 2.39% (25th–75th percentiles, 0.88%–5.31%) according to training data from the AHA, the American Red Cross, and the Health & Safety Institute, the largest providers of CPR training in the United States.[31] Training rates were lower in rural areas, counties with high proportions of Black or Hispanic residents, and counties with lower median household income.
- Prevalence of reported current training in CPR was 18% and prevalence of having CPR training at some point was 65% in a survey of 9022 people in the United States in 2015.[32] The prevalence of CPR training was lower in Hispanic/Latino people, older people, people with less formal education, and lower-income groups.
- Those with prior CPR training include 90% of citizens in Norway[33]; 68% of citizens in Victoria, Australia[34]; 61.1% of laypeople in the United Kingdom[35]; and 49% of people in the Republic of Korea,[36] according to surveys.
- Prevalence of prior CPR training among 1076 adults in all states and territories in Australia was 540 (55.7%). The majority of respondents replied "unsure" (n=404, 37.6%) or "no" (n=316, 29.4%) when asked if they knew the difference between a cardiac arrest and a heart attack. Of respondents with CPR training, 227 (42%) received training >5 years ago.[37]
- Laypeople with knowledge of automated external defibrillators include 69.3% of people in the United Kingdom; 66% in Philadelphia, PA; and 32.6% in the Republic of Korea.[35,36,38] A total of 58% of Philadelphia respondents,[38] but only 2.1% of UK respondents,[35] reported that they would actually use an automated external defibrillator during a cardiac arrest.
- A survey of 5456 households in Beijing, China, Shanghai, China, and Bangalore, India, found that 26%, 15%, and 3% of respondents, respectively, were trained in CPR.[39]
- A survey of 501 inhabitants of Vienna, Austria, found that 52% would recognize cardiac arrest, 50% were willing to use an automated external defibrillator, and 33% were willing to do CPR.[40]
- Laypeople in the United States initiated CPR in 40% of OHCAs in CARES 2022 data.[3]
- Layperson CPR rates in Asian countries range from 10.5% to 40.9%.[41]
- Layperson CPR among 4525 witnessed pediatric OHCAs was 831 of 1669 (36.9%) for female patients versus 1336 of 2856 (46.8%) for male patients.[42]
- Laypeople in the United States were less likely to initiate CPR for people with OHCA in low-income Black neighborhoods (OR, 0.49 [95% CI, 0.41–0.58])[43] or in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods (OR, 0.62 [95% CI, 0.44–0.89]) than in high-income White neighborhoods.[44]
- Examining 2013 to 2019 CARES data shows that 32.2% of arrests occurred in Black or Hispanic individuals. Black and Hispanic individuals were less likely to receive layperson CPR at home (aOR, 0.74 [95% CI, 0.72–0.76]) and in public (aOR, 0.63 [95% CI, 0.60–0.66]) compared with White individuals with OHCA.[45] This disparity persisted despite the racial makeup of the community in which they arrested and the economic strata.
- Layperson CPR rates varied from 1.3% to 72% in an international study including 35 communities across 25 countries.[46] Rates of layperson CPR correlated with gross domestic product per capita (0.772; $P<0.01$; $r^2=0.596$). Socioeconomically advantaged communities most likely have more resources to provide CPR education.

Mortality
(See Tables 19-2 through 19-4)

- Survival to hospital discharge after EMS-treated adult OHCA was 9.3% in the 2022 CARES registry on the basis of 143 507 adult cases, with variation between states reporting data (range, 5.5%–15.4%; Tables 19-2 and 19-3). Survival to

EXHIBIT A

Teach Plus MS: Public Comment on Bridge-To-Career Course

From Sanford Johnson <sjohnson@teachplus.org>
Date Fri 8/22/2025 1:32 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

📎 1 attachment (273 KB)
Teach Plus MS_ Public Comment on Bridge to Careers Pathway.pdf;

Good Afternoon Ms. Adams!

On behalf of our teacher leaders, I'm submitting public comments in support for the Bridge-To-Career Course. We're happy to share our strong support for this new diploma pathway! Our Policy Fellows are also sharing recommendations that will increase access to the course for students with disabilities.

Thank you for considering our recommendations, and we look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Sanford

--

Sanford Johnson (he/him) |
Mississippi Executive Director
662.402.8268 | Clarksdale, MS

Click here to give to Teach Plus MS

Teach Plus Mississippi strongly supports the proposed Bridge-to-Career Course. The proposed course addresses gaps in current graduation structures by combining academic learning with workforce credentialing, career readiness, and community partnerships. This course can be especially beneficial for students with disabilities, who have experienced difficulties in earning a traditional high school diploma due to end-of-year testing requirements. We also recommend changes that will remove barriers and improve support for students with disabilities. Through the Bridge-to-Careers Course, Mississippi will improve graduation rates, support workforce development goals, and reduce long-term unemployment among underserved populations.

"John had long struggled with dyslexia and read on a third-grade level even in 12th grade. Knowing he would never pass the English II exam, John faced the reality of leaving high school without a diploma. But with the test requirements waived during COVID, John finally walked across the stage. He earned a career scholarship, completed a welding degree, and today thrives as a successful adult. Students with disabilities should not have to depend on a pandemic to be given that chance. The Bridge-to-Career Course would provide that opportunity consistently and equitably.." **Brandy Richardson, Scott County School District**

OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Bridge-to-Career Course will be especially beneficial for a specific group of students with disabilities. These students fall between those who will earn certificates of completion and those who are able to meet exam requirements without intensive support. Considering that 92 percent of students with disabilities scored below proficient on the English II assessment in 2022, 32 percent are chronically absent from school, and 13 percent drop out, these students face disproportionate barriers to earning their high school diploma.

In the recent past, these students would have been eligible for the Occupational Diploma, which was discontinued in 2019. In the years since, teachers who have observed the challenges these students face in completing high schools have prompted discussions about re-establishing the Occupational Diploma. However the Bridge-to-Career Course is a far better alternative for these students because it:

+ **Establishes a Pathway to a Traditional High School Diploma** - Students with disabilities would have access to a traditional high school diploma, as opposed to alternative diplomas and certificates that may be accepted by employers or other postsecondary opportunities.

+ **Focuses on Workforce Development** - Ensuring that the course aligns with local and

state labor market demands and career readiness benchmarks ensures that students who complete the course requirements are better prepared for success in the workforce.

+ **Promotes Long-Term Economic Impact for At-Risk Students** - Ensuring that more students are graduating from high school career-ready will produce greater participation in the state economy through reduced unemployment and reliance on public assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the Bridge-to-Career Course fully meets the needs of students, particularly those with disabilities, we recommend the following changes to the policy:

1. Require students to have an updated Individual Success Plan or Special Education Transition Plan to participate in the course.

Each student in our public schools is supposed to receive guidance as they plan their next steps after high school, either through an Individual Success Plan (ISP) or a transition plan for special education students. Requiring students to have an updated ISP or transition plan will assist Bridge-to-Career Course instructors in meeting the needs of participating students.

2. Allow students with disabilities to participate in the course by meeting their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals in lieu of the Grade Point Average (GPA) requirement.

Some students with disabilities need additional support to reach their academic goals. While these students are more than capable of completing their portfolios and being successful in the workforce, they may face difficulty earning the 2.0 GPA required to enter the program. Allowing students to participate in the course by meeting their IEP goals, while also meeting other eligibility requirements, will ensure that promising students are unnecessarily barred from the program.

3. Require collaboration with special education teachers in the implementation of the Bridge-to-Career Course.

As districts move toward implementation of the Bridge-to-Career Course, administrators must ensure that special education teachers are closely involved in the instruction and support these students receive. Special education teachers should be strongly considered when selecting instructors and should, at the very least, be closely involved in planning lessons and activities, as well as reviewing portfolios.

CONCLUSION

The Bridge-to-Career Course would transform how Mississippi supports students with disabilities, ensuring they are not left behind because of a single test. Every student who demonstrates persistence, effort, and growth deserves the dignity of a diploma and the opportunities it unlocks. We respectfully recommend that the State Board of Education adopt the Bridge-to-Career Course for this academic year.

"Kirby, a senior with orthopedic and visual impairments, faced recurring anxiety every year with state testing. Despite passing English II and U.S. History, she learned in her senior year she had failed Biology I, another barrier to graduation. Kirby dreams of cosmetology school, and a career as a beautician would be cut short without a diploma. The Bridge-to-Career Course would give her a realistic path to achieve her career goals." **Lillian Scott, Sunflower Co. Consolidated School District**

TEACH PLUS MISSISSIPPI POLICY FELLOWS

Armena Gamblin, Humphreys County School District
Elizabeth Maxcey, Biloxi Public School District
Gloria McDuffy, Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and Blind
Lillian Scott, Sunflower County Consolidated
Jessica Williams, Humphreys County School District
Brandy Richardson (Senior Fellow), Scott County School District

Sanford Johnson, Executive Director of Teach Plus Mississippi

About Teach Plus

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success. Since 2009, Teach Plus has developed thousands of teacher leaders across the country to exercise their leadership in shaping education policy and improving teaching and learning for students.

For more information, contact sjohnson@teachplus.org | teachplus.org/MS | @TeachPlusMS |

TEACH +PLUS

2025 Mississippi Bridge-to-Career Course Standards

MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Lance Evans, Ed.D. | State Superintendent of Education

Wendy Clemons | Chief Academic Officer

Mississippi State Board of Education

Matt Miller | Chair

Matt Mayo | Vice-Chair

Wendi Barrett

Glen V. East

Bill Jacobs

Ronnie L. McGehee

Mike Pruitt

Billye Jean Stroud

Mary Werner

Crosby Parker | Student Representative

Michelle Xie | Student Representative

In Collaboration With:

**Ma'Kesha Adams | Executive Director of Secondary Education,
Mississippi Department of Education**

Theresa Conner | College & Career Readiness Teacher, Rankin County School District

**Heather Morrison | Director of P20 Partnerships, Office of Academic and Student Affairs,
Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning**

Introduction

Mission Statement

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is committed to providing all students with equitable access to graduation pathways that support their future goals. The Bridge-to-Career Course was developed to provide eligible second-semester seniors with an alternative means to demonstrate readiness for graduation. Designed to foster real-world skills and promote personal growth, this course supports students in building credentials and experiences that prepare them for success in the workforce, postsecondary education, and life beyond high school.

Purpose

The Bridge-to-Career Course supports the MDE's mission of preparing all students for success beyond high school. This course offers an alternative graduation pathway for second-semester seniors who have not passed one or more End-of-Course (EOC) assessments and do not meet the criteria for other options. Through focused career exploration and professional portfolio development, the course equips students with the essential skills, credentials, and experiences needed to transition into postsecondary education, training, or the workforce.

Implementation

The Bridge-to-Career Course is an option for students graduating during the 2025-2026 school year and beyond.

Unit 1: Career Exploration and Workplace Readiness

Students will conduct structured career exploration that aligns with their aptitudes, interests, and postsecondary goals. They will engage in authentic hands-on career experiences, develop transferable employability skills, and earn at least one industry-recognized certification to demonstrate career readiness. (See Appendix A.)

To ensure rigor and authenticity, all career experience placements must be pre-approved by the course instructor. Experiences must not involve family members, the student's current or previous place of employment, or informal/unrelated work. Experiences must provide meaningful exposure to workplace expectations, tasks, and professional environments in a career field of interest.

Acceptable experiences include:
- Internships or job shadowing in a local business, organization, or government agency in a field aligned with the student's career interest (e.g., shadowing a nurse at a local clinic, assisting in an IT department, or working at a construction site under a licensed contractor).
- Part-time employment or volunteer roles that involve professional tasks and skill-building (e.g., working as a receptionist in a law office, volunteering with a nonprofit in event planning, or helping in a school technology department).
- Participation in workforce training programs, industry mentorships, or apprenticeships with clearly defined roles, expectations, and mentorship (e.g., completing an apprenticeship with a licensed contractor, participating in a local chamber of commerce youth mentorship program, working alongside a graphic designer to assist with real client projects)

Unacceptable experiences include:
- Working for a family business or being supervised by a family member, regardless of the industry.
- Continuing in a role where the student is already employed or has worked previously, even if the work is career-related.
- Informal jobs or tasks that do not provide structured, professional experiences (e.g., babysitting, yard work, house clearing, or running errands for neighbors).

Competencies and Suggested Objectives

a. Conduct targeted research on career paths aligned with personal aptitudes and interests. (See Appendix B – Rubric 1a)

1. Complete a recognized personal aptitude and interest inventory assessment (e.g., O*NET Interest Profiler, Holland Code, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, etc.) to identify strengths, interests, and potential career matches.
2. Analyze each of the national career clusters using The National Career Clusters Framework (careertech.org/career-clusters) by summarizing key characteristics, listing two example occupations per cluster, and

identifying one in-demand job in Mississippi for each using reliable sources such as CareerOneStop or the Mississippi Department of Employment Security.

3. Research and compare at least two distinct career paths using O*NET (onetonline.org) and Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov) data, examining required skills, education and training, typical job duties, average salaries, job outlook, and advancement opportunities.

4. Create a personalized timeline with at least five milestones (e.g., education, certifications, experience) to achieve selected career goals, specifying timelines and resources needed.

5. Prepare a 500–750-word report or a 3–5-minute presentation explaining how each researched career path aligns with personal strengths, interests, and long-term goals.

b. Engage in career and postsecondary exposure activities to support informed decision-making. (See Appendix B – Rubric 1b)

1. Participate in at least one guided postsecondary tour (e.g., community college, university, or technical training center) to explore academic programs, admissions processes, and campus life, documenting observations in a 250-word summary.

2. Attend at least one in-person workplace or job site tour aligned with the chosen career cluster to observe operations, environments, and employer expectations, documenting key takeaways in a 250-word summary. (Virtual or video-based tours should only be used as a last resort when in-person opportunities are not available.)

3. Engage with at least one guest speaker from a relevant career industry, military branch, or postsecondary institution to learn about education, training, job responsibilities, and career paths, summarizing insights in a 250-word reflection.

4. Produce a creative product (e.g., 2–3-minute video blog, digital photo journal with 100-word captions, 3–5-minute podcast, or interactive slideshow) reflecting on each exposure activity, explaining how it shaped or confirmed postsecondary plans, with clear evidence of critical analysis.

c. Explore postsecondary options that align educational pathways with career goals. (See Appendix B – Rubric 1c)

1. Research and compare at least three postsecondary options (e.g., associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, registered apprenticeships, or industry-recognized credentials) aligned with the chosen career path, using reliable sources such as college websites, to analyze time to completion, total cost, entry requirements, and course requirements for each option.

2. Create a comparison chart or infographic summarizing the pros, cons, and alignment of each postsecondary option with career goals and personal circumstances (e.g., lifestyle, financial constraints, geographical preferences).
3. Write a 300–500-word reflection or deliver a 2–3-minute oral/multimedia presentation (e.g., video, narrated slideshow) explaining the preferred postsecondary exit option, justifying the choice based on career aspirations, financial considerations, and personal strengths.

d. **Develop and demonstrate essential workplace skills and understand employer expectations. (See Appendix B – Rubric 1d)**
   1. Identify and practice five key employability skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, punctuality, problem-solving, adaptability, professional etiquette) through role-playing, simulations, or real-world scenarios to reinforce skill development.
   2. Research and compare industry-specific technical skills and certification requirements for at least two careers of interest.
   3. Participate in at least one structured workplace skill-building simulation or workshop to practice key competencies and workplace readiness and reflect on personal strengths and areas for growth.
   4. Develop a personal action plan to improve or acquire workplace skills and technical competencies, including measurable goals and a 6–12-month timeline.

e. **Successfully complete at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved certification or training program aligned with the identified career interests and careers explored within this course. (See Appendix B – Rubric 1e)**
   1. Research MDE-approved certifications or training programs aligned with the chosen career field. (See Appendix A.)
   2. Complete at least one MDE-approved certification or training program that aligns with career goals, demonstrating proficiency through successful completion.
   3. Document certification or training completion with a copy of the certificate and a 200-word explanation of its significance to career goals.

f. **Engage in authentic hands-on career experiences aligned with explored career fields. (See Appendix B – Rubric 1f)**
   1. Complete 8-12 hours of pre-approved hands-on career experiences such as job shadowing, internships, workplace tours, or other meaningful activities that offer direct exposure to daily job

responsibilities. (Experiences must be approved by the course instructor, exclude family members and current/former employers, and be separate from or in addition to the College & Career Readiness Course or Work-Based Learning hours.)

2. Maintain detailed documentation of hands-on career experience(s), including a supervisor-signed log of hours (listing dates, activities, and supervisor contact), photos or videos of active participation, and at least one other professional artifact (e.g., work sample, program agenda).

3. Reflect on the experience in a 500–750-word essay or 3–5-minute oral/audio presentation (e.g., video, narrated slideshow), analyzing how it influenced career interests, skills gained, and relevance to workplace readiness.

Unit 2: Career Documents and Interview Preparation

Students will develop professional documents and skills essential for the job application process. They will create tailored resumés, cover letters, and job applications, and prepare for interviews to present themselves as competitive candidates in their chosen career fields.

Competencies and Suggested Objectives

a. Create and refine a professional resumé tailored to targeted career goals. (See Appendix B – Rubric 2a)

1. Analyze three professional resumés across industries to identify effective formatting, action verbs, and quantifiable achievements.
2. Draft a professional resumé with a professional email address (e.g., firstname.lastname@email.com), highlighting relevant skills, education, work or volunteer experiences, and accomplishments tailored to a specific job posting in the chosen career field.
3. Revise the resumé based on course instructor or career counselor/coach feedback to ensure clarity, professionalism, and alignment with industry standards.
4. Produce a final polished resumé, adaptable for multiple career opportunities and meeting professional standards.

b. Write a targeted cover letter that complements the resumé and aligns with the chosen career path. (See Appendix B – Rubric 2b)

1. Analyze three sample cover letters to identify key components, such as structure, tone, and alignment with job requirements.
2. Draft a 250–400-word cover letter connecting qualifications, skills, and experiences to the specific job posting.
3. Revise the cover letter based on course instructor or career counselor/coach feedback to ensure clarity, professionalism, and relevance.
4. Produce a final polished cover letter, meeting professional standards and adaptable for future career opportunities within the chosen career path.

c. Compile a professional references list and obtain one reference letter for job applications. (See Appendix B – Rubric 2c)

1. Identify three credible professional or academic references (e.g., teachers, coaches, employers, volunteer supervisors) who can attest to work ethic, character, and qualifications.
2. Create a professional references list with name, title, organization, phone number, and email for each reference.
3. Request and collect one formal reference letter from a teacher, counselor, employer, or mentor.

d. Accurately complete job application forms with professionalism and attention to detail. (See Appendix B – Rubric 2d)

1. Practice completing two job application forms (e.g., online, paper, or industry), ensuring all sections are filled out accurately, legibly, and truthfully.
2. Verify consistency of information across applications, resumé, and cover letter to ensure professionalism.

e. Prepare for job interviews. (See Appendix B – Rubric 2e)

1. Prepare three meaningful questions to ask the interviewer based on research on the job or industry.
2. Research industry-specific dress codes and plan professional attire for the interview.
3. Participate in one mock interview (in-person, virtual, or panel) to practice answering common interview questions and demonstrate professional behavior and attire.
4. Reflect on interview performance in a 250–300-word written or 2–3-minute oral/video self-assessment, evaluating strengths, areas for improvement, and impact on career goals.

Unit 3: Portfolio Development

Students will create a professional portfolio showcasing career exploration, workplace readiness, and job application materials. Through organized compilation and strategic career planning, the portfolio will demonstrate academic growth, professional skills, and a clear path for postsecondary success, preparing students for the Unit 4 exhibit.

Competencies and Suggested Objectives

a. Develop a professional digital or physical portfolio aligned with the chosen career path. (See Appendix B – Rubric 3a)

1. Compile evidence of academic progress, including one project, essay, or assessment from the current or previous school year demonstrating proficiency in each core subject area (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies).
2. Organize portfolio contents to include career interest inventories, research summaries, career plan, resumé, cover letter, sample job application, MDE-approved certification, and career experience documentation (e.g., logs, photos, artifacts), all aligned with the chosen career path.
3. Include extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, sports, volunteer work) with 150–200-word reflections on transferable skills (e.g., leadership, teamwork, communication, time management) and their relevance to career goals.
4. Refine the portfolio's organization, professionalism, and visual appeal based on feedback from course instructor or career counselors/coaches.

b. Develop a personalized career plan with clearly defined postsecondary goals and action steps. (See Appendix B – Rubric 3b)

1. Research postsecondary options (e.g., college, vocational training, employment) aligned with the chosen career path using credible resources (e.g., O*NET, CareerOneStop) and guidance from course instructor and career counselors/coaches.
2. Develop a detailed career action plan with three short-term (1-2 years) and three long-term (5-10 years) goals for education, training, employment, and independent living, including specific timelines and tasks (e.g., applying to programs, earning certifications, etc.)
3. Create a 300–500-word or 2–3-minute reflection product (e.g., essay, video, letter to future self) connecting course experiences (e.g., certifications, hands-on career experience) to the career plan and personal growth.
4. Refine the career plan with input from course instructor and/or career counselors/coaches to ensure it is actionable, realistic, and aligned with evolving industry expectations.

c. Demonstrate career readiness through reflective self-assessment. (See Appendix – Rubric 3c)

1. Compose a 300–500-word or 2–3-minute final reflection (e.g., essay, video) evaluating overall growth and how course experiences contributed to postsecondary readiness.
2. Identify three specific skills (e.g., adaptability, technical proficiency, collaboration) developed through course activities, explaining their relevance to the chosen career path in 200–300-words or 1–2-minute reflections.
3. Organize reflections in the portfolio with clear, professional formatting, aligned with career goals.

Unit 4: Exhibit Creation and Presentation

Students will synthesize learning from Units 1–3 into a professional exhibit and formal presentation, showcasing academic development, career exploration, and postsecondary readiness to a panel of educators, counselors, and/or community stakeholders. The exhibit and presentation will highlight transferable skills, career insights, and a clear vision for future success.

Competencies and Suggested Objectives

a. Design and develop a professional exhibit that showcases academic and career readiness. (See Appendix B – Rubric 4a)

1. Select at least five high-quality artifacts demonstrating progress, achievement, and readiness in both academic and career-related areas (e.g., finalized resumé, MDE-approved certification, career research summary, job shadowing log, reference letter, personal essay, career action plan, or reflection product).
2. Choose an exhibit format (e.g., digital portfolio, tri-fold board, slideshow, display table, multimedia presentation) appropriate for the chosen career field and personal presentation strengths.
3. Organize artifacts cohesively with clear labels, 50–100-word captions, and thematic elements reflecting professionalism and career alignment.
4. Incorporate multimedia (e.g., 1–2-minute video clips, photo galleries, audio reflections) to enhance engagement and demonstrate technological proficiency.
5. Test the exhibit's functionality (e.g., digital links, physical setup) to ensure accessibility during presentation.

b. Deliver an 8–12-minute oral presentation to a panel of educators, counselors, and community stakeholders, summarizing the portfolio and career plan. (See Appendix B – Rubric 4b)

1. Develop a clear and engaging presentation outline introducing career interests, summarizing key artifacts, highlighting hands-on career experiences, and connecting the career plan to postsecondary goals.
2. Incorporate visual aids (e.g., slides, portfolio excerpts, exhibit elements) to reinforce key points.
3. Practice the presentation at least three times, refining delivery based on peer or instructor feedback for clarity, confidence, and time adherence.
4. Demonstrate professional communication skills during the presentation, including eye contact, clear enunciation, professional tone, and enthusiasm for the chosen career path.

5. Prepare to answer three follow-up questions from the panel about the portfolio, career goals, or experiences, demonstrating critical thinking and self-awareness.

c. Include reflections in the exhibit, explaining artifact significance. (See Appendix B – Rubric 4c)

1. Compose 150–250-word or 1–2-minute reflections for three artifacts, explaining their contribution to academic growth, career exploration, or workplace readiness.
2. Connect each reflection to one specific skill (e.g., communication, problem-solving) and its relevance to the chosen career path or postsecondary goals.
3. Integrate reflections into the exhibit (e.g., captions, a separate reflection section, or oral presentation) in a clear and professional manner.

d. Incorporate evidence of hands-on career experiences. (See Appendix B – Rubric 4d)

1. Include at least two artifacts from hands-on career experiences (e.g., supervisor-signed log, photos, work samples) demonstrating real-world exposure.
2. Provide a 100–150-word or 1-minute explanation of how each experience influenced career interests, affirmed goals, or developed workplace skills.
3. Highlight at least two transferable skills gained and connect them to the career plan or industry expectations.

Appendix A: Industry-Recognized Credential Programs

Instructors should guide students toward earning at least one Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-approved credential aligned with their career interest. Some credentials, such as CPR (American Heart Association or American Red Cross Certification) and OSHA General Industry (Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification), are universally applicable and valuable for any job in any field, enhancing employability across diverse career paths. Other credentials are specific to particular industries or roles, allowing students to target certifications that directly support their chosen career goals. Approved credentials include:

- Adobe Certification
- American Heart Association Certification
- American Red Cross Certification
- American Welding Society Certification
- Autodesk Certification
- Automotive Service Excellence Certification
- Child Development Associate Certification
- Certiport Certification
- Cisco Certification
- CompTIA Certification
- Council for Professional Recognition Certification
- Federal Aviation Administration Certification
- Google Certification
- HubSpot Certification
- IC3 Certification
- International Society for Technology in Education Certification
- Manufacturing Institute Certification
- Manufacturing Skill Standards Council Certification
- Microsoft Certification
- National Association of Home Builders Certification
- National Career Readiness Certification (earned through Silver+ on WorkKeys)
- National Center for Construction Education and Research Certification
- National Healthcareer Association Certification
- National Occupational Competency Testing Institute Certification
- National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians Certification
- National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation Certification
- National Retail Federation Certification
- North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners Certification
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration Certification
- Precision Exams Certification (YouScience)
- QuickBooks Certification
- ServSafe Certification
- SkillsUSA Certification
- SOLIDWORKS Certification
- Unity Technologies Certification
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection Certification

Appendix B: Rubrics

Unit 1: Career Exploration and Workplace Readiness

1a – Career Research Report/Presentation Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Alignment to Personal Interests	Clearly connects two career paths to personal aptitudes and interests, supported by specific results from an inventory assessment (e.g., O*NET, MBTI).	Connects career paths to interests with general reference to an assessment, but lacks specificity.	Vaguely connects career paths to interests; assessment reference is unclear or generic.	No clear connection to personal interests or assessment results.
Depth of Career Analysis	Thoroughly analyzes two career paths, covering skills, education, duties, salaries, outlook, and advancement opportunities using data from O*NET and BLS.	Analyzes most required elements for two career paths, with minor omissions or less depth.	Analysis is incomplete, missing key elements or relying on limited data.	Analysis lacks most required elements or is superficial.
Organization and Clarity	Content (500–750 words or 3–5 minutes) is logically organized, flows smoothly, and communicates ideas clearly; timeline is seamlessly integrated into the narrative or presentation.	Content is generally organized and clear; minor lapses in flow or timeline integration do not detract significantly.	Content is somewhat disorganized or unclear; timeline integration is weak, making it harder to follow.	Content is disorganized, confusing, or fails to meet length/time requirements; timeline is poorly integrated or absent.

Sources Quality and Use	Integrates at least three credible sources (e.g., O*NET, BLS, CareerOneStop) with proper citations and diverse perspectives.	Uses 2-3 credible sources with mostly accurate citations.	Uses 1-2 sources; citations are incomplete or sources lack credibility.	No sources cited or sources are unreliable.
Professionalism	Presentation or report is polished, error-free, and adheres to professional standards (e.g., formatting, tone, delivery).	Presentation or report is mostly polished, with 1-2 minor errors in formatting or delivery.	Presentation or report has noticeable errors that distract from professionalism.	Presentation or report has frequent errors, lacking professional quality.

1b – Career Exposure Activity Reflection Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Insight and Reflection	Summaries/ reflections (250 words each for tours and guest speaker) provide deep, specific insights into how each activity (postsecondary tour, workplace tour, guest speaker) shaped or confirmed career/ postsecondary goals, supported by detailed examples (e.g., specific program details, workplace observations).	Summaries/ reflections provide clear insights with general examples of how activities influenced goals; minor lack of specificity in some areas.	Summaries/ reflections are superficial, with vague or limited connections to career/postseco ndary goals; examples lack depth.	Summaries/ reflections are missing, generic, or lack any connection to career/postseco ndary goals.

Creativity and Engagement	Creative product (e.g., video, podcast, slideshow) is highly original, engaging, and effectively communicates insights to the audience.	Creative product shows some originality and engages the audience adequately.	Creative product lacks originality or has limited audience engagement.	Creative product is unclear, unengaging, or poorly executed.
Organization and Clarity	Summaries/ reflections and creative product are well-organized, polished, and error-free in grammar, spelling, and formatting, meeting length/time requirements.	Summaries/ reflections and creative product are mostly organized and clear, with minor errors in grammar, spelling, or formatting.	Summaries/ reflections and creative product have noticeable errors or disorganization, impacting clarity.	Summaries/reflections and creative product are disorganized, error-filled, or fails to meet length/time requirements.

1c – Evaluation of Postsecondary Options Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Research and Analysis Depth	Research includes 3+ distinct postsecondary options highly relevant to the chosen career path, with comprehensive analysis on time, cost, entry requirements, and course requirements.	Research includes 3 postsecondary options relevant to the career path, with mostly complete analysis on time, cost, entry requirements, and course requirements, minor omissions.	Research includes 2-3 postsecondary options with limited relevance or incomplete analysis on time, cost, entry requirements, or course requirements.	Research includes fewer than 2 postsecondary options or provides minimal, irrelevant, or inaccurate analysis.

Comparison Chart/ Infographic	Chart/ infographic is visually clear, well-organized, and thoroughly summarizes time, cost, entry requirements, course requirements, pros, cons, and alignment with career goals and personal circumstances.	Chart/ infographic is clear, organized, and summarizes most required elements with minor omissions.	Chart/ infographic is cluttered, missing 1-2 required elements, or lacks clarity in presenting pros, cons, or alignment with career goals.	Chart/ infographic is incomplete, disorganized, or missing multiple required elements.
Reflection and Justification	Reflection (300-500 words) or oral/ multimedia presentation (2-3 minutes) clearly justifies the preferred postsecondary option with strong, specific connections to career aspirations, financial considerations, and personal strengths.	Reflection/ presentation meets length/time requirements, justifies the preferred options with clear connections to career aspirations, financial considerations, and personal strengths, with only minor gaps in analysis.	Reflection/ presentation has weak justification or limited connections to career aspirations, financial considerations, or personal strengths.	Reflection/ presentation significantly lacks justification, or shows minimal analysis of the preferred option.
Professionalism and Clarity	Reflection/ presentation is polished, error-free, and adheres to professional standards (e.g., formatting, tone, delivery).	Reflection/ presentation is mostly polished, with 1-2 minor errors in formatting, grammar, or delivery.	Reflection/ presentation has noticeable errors or inconsistent clarity, impacting professionalism.	Reflection/ presentation has frequent errors, lacks clarity, or is unprofessional.

1d – Workplace Skills Action Plan Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Identification of Skills	Identifies 5 relevant employability or technical skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving, industry-specific skills) critical to career goals.	Identifies 4 relevant skills, including at least one technical skill.	Identifies 2-3 skills, with limited relevance or no technical skills.	Identifies fewer than 2 skills or skills are irrelevant.
Plan Specificity and Feasibility	Action plan includes specific, measurable goals and a realistic 6–12-month timeline, with clear resources and steps.	Plan includes mostly clear goals and timeline, with minor gaps in resources or steps.	Plan has vague goals, unrealistic timelines, or missing resources.	Plan lacks clear goals, timeline, or actionable steps.
Personal Insight	Demonstrates thoughtful understanding of personal strengths and areas for growth, with specific examples from simulations or activities.	Shows general insight into strengths and growth areas, with some examples.	Provides minimal insight, with vague or no examples.	Lacks insight or connection to personal growth.

1e – Certification Completion Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Certification Alignment	Certification is MDE-approved, highly relevant to career goals, and aligns with industry standards.	Certification is MDE-approved and generally relevant to career goals.	Certification has weak or unclear alignment to career goals.	Certification is not MDE-approved or irrelevant.

Reflection Quality	Reflection clearly articulates the certification's value, relevance to career goals, and impact on workplace readiness with specific examples.	Reflection explains general value and relevance, with some examples.	Reflection is vague or lacks specific connection to career goals.	Reflection is missing or does not address value/relevance.
Documentation Completeness	Includes complete documentation (e.g., certificate copy, training details) and a polished 200-word reflection.	Documentation is mostly complete, with minor omissions; reflection is adequate.	Documentation is incomplete or unclear; reflection lacks detail.	Documentation or reflection is missing or significantly incomplete.
Evidence of Rigor	Demonstrates completion of a rigorous certification process (e.g., passing a proctored exam, completing extensive training).	Demonstrates completion of a standard certification process with moderate rigor.	Certification process lacks rigor or evidence of completion is unclear.	No evidence of certification completion.

1f – Career Experience Reflection Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Depth of Reflection	Provides insightful, detailed reflection on how the 8–12-hour experience shaped career interests, with specific examples (500-750 words or 3-5 minutes).	Offers clear reflection with general examples of career impact.	Reflection is superficial or lacks specific examples.	Reflection is vague, minimal, or missing.

Analysis of Skills and Impact	Clearly articulates specific skills gained and their relevance to workplace readiness, supported by examples from the experience.	Describes some relevant skills and their general impact on career goals.	Mentions skills with limited or vague connection to career goals.	No discussion of skills or career impact.
Documentation Quality	Includes complete, professional documentation (e.g., signed log, photos/videos, professional artifact) meeting all requirements.	Documentation is mostly complete, with minor gaps or less professional quality.	Documentation is incomplete or lacks required elements.	Documentation is missing or significantly incomplete.
Presentation and Clarity	Reflection is well-organized, polished, and error-free, meeting length/time requirements and professional standards.	Reflection is mostly clear and organized, with minor errors or lapses.	Reflection has noticeable errors or disorganization, impacting clarity.	Reflection is disorganized, error-filled, or fails to meet requirements.

Unit 2: Career Documents and Interview Preparation

2a – Resumé Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Formatting and Style	Consistent, professional format with clear sections, appropriate fonts, balanced whitespace, and alignment with industry standards.	Mostly consistent format with minor deviations (e.g., slight font inconsistencies); professional appearance maintained.	Inconsistent formatting (e.g., uneven spacing, mixed fonts) or unprofessional elements that detract from clarity.	Unprofessional or disorganized format; lacks clear sections or industry alignment.

Content Relevance	Highly tailored to a specific job posting, emphasizing relevant skills, experiences, and achievements with clear alignment to career goals.	Mostly tailored to the job posting with relevant content, but some details lack specificity.	General content with minimal tailoring to the job posting; lacks focus on career goals.	Content is generic, irrelevant, or misaligned with the job posting or career goals.
Action Verbs	Uses strong, varied action verbs to highlight achievements effectively.	Uses action verbs, but lacks variety or specificity in some areas.	Limited use of action verbs; achievements are vague or not measurable.	Lacks action verbs; descriptions are generic or absent.
Mechanics and Proofreading	Error-free with precise grammar, spelling, and punctuation; polished and professional.	Minor errors (1–2) that do not detract from professionalism.	Several errors (3–5) that distract from clarity or professionalism.	Numerous errors (>5) that significantly undermine readability and professionalism.

2b – Cover Letter Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Structure and Tone	Well-organized with clear introduction, body, and conclusion; maintains a professional, confident, and engaging tone.	Organized with minor structural flaws; tone is mostly professional but may lack engagement.	Disorganized structure or inconsistent tone; lacks clarity or professionalism.	Unstructured or unprofessional tone; lacks coherence or engagement.
Personalization	Strong, specific connections between qualifications, experiences, and the job posting; demonstrates research and alignment with employer needs.	Some personalization with connections to the job posting, but lacks depth or specificity in parts.	Minimal customization; vague references to job requirements or employer needs.	Generic content with no tailoring to the job posting or employer.

Mechanics and Clarity	Clear, concise, and error-free with polished grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	Clear with minor errors (1–2) that do not detract from readability.	Several errors (3–5) or unclear phrasing that affects readability.	Numerous errors (>5) or unclear writing that undermines professionalism.
Alignment with Resumé	Seamlessly complements resumé, reinforcing key qualifications and experiences with no redundancy or inconsistency.	Mostly complements resumé; minor inconsistencies or redundant details present.	Weak alignment with resumé; noticeable inconsistencies or irrelevant details.	No alignment with resumé; significant inconsistencies or irrelevant content.

2c – Reference List and Letter Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Accuracy of Contact Information	All reference entries include complete, accurate details (name, title, organization, phone, email) in a professional format.	Most entries are complete and accurate; minor formatting or detail errors.	Some entries incomplete or inaccurate; formatting lacks consistency.	Many entries missing, inaccurate, or unprofessionally formatted.
Appropriateness of References	All references are highly credible (e.g., teachers, employers) and relevant to the career field, with strong ability to attest to qualifications.	Most references are credible and relevant, but one may be less appropriate.	References are questionable or loosely related to the career field.	References are not credible or unrelated to the career field.
Letter Quality	Reference letter is specific, detailed, and tailored, highlighting relevant skills and achievements with a professional tone.	Letter is clear and relevant but lacks some specificity or detail.	Letter is vague, generic, or lacks relevance to the career field.	Letter is poorly written, unprofessional, or missing key details.

2d – Job Application Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Completeness	All sections completed accurately and thoroughly, with consistent information across resumé and cover letter.	Minor omissions or inconsistencies that do not affect professionalism.	Multiple incomplete sections or inconsistencies with other documents.	Most sections incomplete, inaccurate, or inconsistent with other documents.
Clarity and Neatness	Exceptionally clear, legible, and professionally presented; no errors in presentation.	Mostly clear and legible with minor presentation issues.	Somewhat unclear or messy; presentation detracts from professionalism.	Illegible, unclear, or unprofessionally presented.
Accuracy and Truthfulness	All information is accurate, truthful, and verifiable; aligns with professional standards and job requirements.	Minor inaccuracies or omissions that do not misrepresent qualifications or affect professionalism.	Noticeable inaccuracies or omissions that raise concerns about truthfulness or relevance.	Significant inaccuracies or misrepresentations; lacks truthfulness or professionalism.

2e – Interview Reflection Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Reflection Depth	Insightful, detailed analysis (250–300 words or 2–3 minutes) of interview performance, with specific examples of strengths, weaknesses, and impact on career goals.	Clear reflection with some specific examples of performance; lacks depth or detail in parts.	Vague reflection with minimal examples; limited insight into performance or career goals.	Minimal, unclear, or missing reflection; no connection to performance or career goals.

Self-Awareness	Clearly identifies specific strengths (e.g., confident delivery) and actionable areas for improvement (e.g., better eye contact), supported by concrete examples.	Identifies general strengths and areas for improvement; examples lack specificity or detail.	Limited identification of strengths or weaknesses; examples are vague or unsupported.	No clear assessment of strengths or weaknesses; examples are absent.
Mechanic and Organization	Well-organized, polished, and error-free; formatting enhances readability and professionalism.	Organized with minor errors (1–2) that do not detract from clarity or professionalism.	Organizational issues or errors (3–5) that affect clarity or professionalism.	Disorganized or numerous errors (>5) that undermine readability or professionalism.
Connection to Career Goals	Clearly articulates how interview performance and feedback align with career goals, supported by specific, relevant examples.	Shows some alignment with career goals; examples lack specificity or depth in parts.	Weak or vague alignment with career goals; examples are minimal or generic.	No alignment with career goals; examples are absent or irrelevant.

Unit 3: Portfolio Development

3a – Portfolio Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Organization	Portfolio is logically organized, with a clear table of contents, intuitive navigation, and consistent formatting across all sections.	Portfolio is mostly organized with a table of contents; minor navigation or formatting issues do not detract from usability.	Portfolio has noticeable organizational flaws (e.g., missing table of contents, inconsistent formatting) that hinder navigation.	Portfolio is disorganized, lacks a table of contents, or has significant formatting issues, making it difficult to navigate.
Professionalism	Polished, visually appealing, and professional presentation; uses	Mostly professional with minor visual or formatting	Presentation has unprofessional elements that	Unprofessional appearance with significant formatting

	consistent fonts, colors, and layouts aligned with industry standards.	inconsistencies; presentation is clear but less polished.	detract from quality.	errors or lack of visual coherence.
Inclusion of Required Elements	Includes all required elements (academic evidence, career inventories, resumé, cover letter, job application, certification, career experience, reflections) fully completed and aligned with career path.	Includes most required elements; minor omissions or incomplete sections do not significantly impact quality.	Missing several required elements or includes incomplete sections that affect alignment with career path.	Missing many required elements or includes highly incomplete sections; lacks alignment with career path.
Reflection Quality	Reflections (extracurricular and skill-based) are insightful, specific, and clearly connect transferable skills to career goals with concrete examples.	Reflections are clear with some specific connections to career goals, but lack depth or examples in parts.	Reflections are vague, lack specific examples, or have weak connections to career goals.	Reflections are minimal, generic, or missing; no clear connection to career goals.

3b – Career Plan Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Goal Specificity	Includes three short-term and three long-term goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), with clear timelines and actionable tasks.	Goals are mostly SMART with minor vagueness in timelines or tasks; still actionable and relevant.	Goals are vague, lack measurability, or have unrealistic timelines/tasks; limited actionability.	Goals are unclear, non-specific, or missing; no actionable timelines or tasks.

Connection to Course	Strong, specific connections between course experiences (e.g., certifications, career activities) and career plan, supported by detailed examples.	Clear connections to course experiences, but some examples lack specificity or depth.	Weak or unclear connections to course experiences; examples are vague or minimal.	No clear connection to course experiences; examples are absent or irrelevant.
Reflection Depth	Reflection (300–500 words or 2–3 minutes) is insightful, articulates personal growth, and clearly links course experiences to postsecondary goals with specific examples.	Reflection is clear with some insight into growth and course connections, but lacks depth or specificity in parts.	Reflection is surface-level, with minimal insight or vague connections to course experiences or goals.	Reflection is minimal, unclear, or missing; lacks connection to growth or goals.
Research and Alignment	Demonstrates thorough research of postsecondary options (e.g., college, training, employment) using credible sources, with clear alignment to career path and industry expectations.	Shows adequate research with mostly relevant postsecondary options; minor misalignment with career path.	Limited research; postsecondary options are vague or loosely aligned with career path.	Minimal or no research; options are misaligned or unrelated to career path.

3c – Career Readiness Reflection Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Reflection Depth	Final reflection (300–500 words or 2–3 minutes) provides a thorough,	Reflection is clear with some examples of growth and course	Reflection is vague or lacks specific examples; limited insight	Reflection is minimal, unclear, or missing; no insight into

	insightful evaluation of growth, with specific examples of how course experiences enhance postsecondary readiness.	contributions, but lacks depth in parts.	into growth or readiness.	growth or readiness.
Skill Identification	Identifies three specific skills (e.g., adaptability, collaboration) with 200–300-word or 1–2-minute reflections that clearly connect skills to career path using detailed examples.	Identifies three skills with clear reflections, but connections to career path lack depth or specificity in parts.	Identifies skills with vague or minimal reflections; connections to career path are weak.	Skills are not clearly identified; reflections are generic, minimal, or missing.
Mechanics and Organization	Reflections are well-organized, polished, and error-free; formatting is professional and enhances readability.	Reflections are organized with minor errors (1–2) that do not detract from professionalism.	Reflections have organizational issues or errors (3–5) that affect clarity or professionalism.	Reflections are disorganized or have numerous errors (>5) that undermine readability.
Alignment with Career Goals	Reflections clearly articulate how skills and course experiences align with specific career goals, supported by relevant, industry-specific examples.	Reflections show some alignment with career goals, but examples lack specificity or industry relevance.	Reflections have weak or vague alignment with career goals; examples are minimal or generic.	Reflections lack alignment with career goals; no relevant examples provided.

Unit 4: Exhibit Creation and Presentation

4a – Exhibit Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Artifact Selection	Includes five or more high-quality artifacts (e.g., resumé, certification, career plan) that strongly demonstrate academic and career readiness, with clear alignment to the career path.	Includes at least five relevant artifacts; minor gaps in quality or alignment with career path.	Includes fewer than five artifacts or artifacts with limited relevance to academic/career readiness.	Artifacts are missing, low-quality, or unrelated to academic/career readiness.
Visual Design	Cohesive, visually appealing, and professional design; uses consistent fonts, colors, and layouts aligned with industry standards; clear labels and 50–100-word captions enhance clarity.	Mostly cohesive and professional design; minor inconsistencies in fonts, colors, or captions do not detract from clarity.	Noticeable design flaws (e.g., cluttered layout, inconsistent formatting); captions are vague or incomplete.	Disorganized, unprofessional, or visually unappealing; captions are missing or unclear.
Multimedia Use	Multimedia (e.g., 1–2-minute video, photo gallery) is seamlessly integrated, enhances engagement, and demonstrates technological proficiency relevant to the career field.	Multimedia is adequately integrated and supports engagement; minor technical or relevance issues.	Minimal or ineffective multimedia use; lacks engagement or relevance to career field.	No multimedia or poorly executed (e.g., broken links, low-quality visuals).

| **Functionality** | Exhibit is fully functional (e.g., all digital links work, physical setup is sturdy), ensuring seamless presentation to the panel. | Exhibit is mostly functional; minor issues (e.g., one broken link) do not significantly disrupt presentation. | Noticeable functionality issues (e.g., multiple broken links, unstable setup) hinder accessibility. | Significant functionality issues (e.g., inaccessible digital content, unusable setup) prevent effective presentation. |

4b – Presentation Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Clarity and Organization	Presentation (8–12 minutes) is clear, logically organized, and engaging; outline effectively introduces career interests, artifacts, experiences, and postsecondary goals.	Presentation is mostly clear and organized; minor deviations from outline or time limit (e.g., slightly under/over time).	Presentation is somewhat unclear or disorganized; deviates significantly from outline or time limit.	Presentation is disorganized, unclear, or significantly off time; lacks coherent structure.
Professional Delivery	Confident, enthusiastic delivery with strong eye contact, clear enunciation, and professional tone; engages panel effectively throughout.	Mostly confident delivery with clear enunciation and professional tone; minor lapses in eye contact or enthusiasm.	Nervous or inconsistent delivery; limited eye contact, unclear enunciation, or unprofessional tone.	Unprofessional, inaudible, or disengaged delivery; lacks eye contact or enthusiasm.
Visual Aids	Visual aids (e.g., slides, exhibit excerpts) are polished, relevant, and enhance key points without overwhelming the presentation.	Visual aids are clear and relevant; minor issues (e.g., cluttered slides) do not detract significantly.	Visual aids are poorly designed, irrelevant, or distract from the presentation.	Visual aids are missing, unprofessional, or ineffective.

Response to Questions	Answers three panel questions with thoughtful, complete, and relevant responses; demonstrates critical thinking and self-awareness.	Answers questions adequately; responses are relevant but lack depth or clarity in parts.	Answers are vague, incomplete, or partially relevant; limited critical thinking or self-awareness.	Unable to answer questions appropriately; responses are irrelevant or absent.

4c – Reflection Integration Rubric

	Excellent	Proficient	Developing	Beginning
Insight and Relevance	Reflections (150–250 words or 1–2 minutes each) are insightful, specific, and clearly explain artifacts' contributions to academic growth, career exploration, or workplace readiness.	Reflections are clear with some specific insights; minor gaps in depth or relevance to artifacts.	Reflections are vague or lack specific insights; limited relevance to artifacts or goals.	Reflections are minimal, unclear, or missing; no relevance to artifacts or goals.
Skill Connection	Each reflection clearly connects one specific skill (e.g., communication, problem-solving) to the career path or postsecondary goals with concrete, relevant examples.	Reflections connect skills to career path/goals; examples lack specificity or depth in parts.	Reflections have vague or weak skill connections; examples are minimal or unclear.	No clear skill connections; examples are absent or irrelevant.

Integration Method	Reflections are seamlessly integrated into the exhibit (e.g., captions, separate section) with professional formatting.	Reflections are clearly integrated; minor formatting issues do not detract significantly.	Reflections are poorly integrated (e.g., unclear placement, inconsistent formatting)	Reflections are disconnected, missing, or unprofessionally integrated
Mechanics and Organization	Reflections are polished, error-free, and well-organized; formatting enhances readability	Reflections are organized with minor errors (1–2) that do not detract from professionalism.	Reflections have organizational issues or errors (3–5) that affect clarity or professionalism.	Reflections are disorganized or have numerous errors (>5) that undermine readability.

4d – Career Experience Evidence Rubric

	Excellent (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Developing (2)**	**Beginning (1)**
Artifact Quality	Includes two or more high-quality artifacts (e.g., supervisor-signed log, photos, work samples) clearly demonstrating real-world career exposure and alignment with career path.	Includes two relevant artifacts; minor gaps in quality or alignment with career path.	Includes fewer than two artifacts or artifacts with limited relevance to career exposure.	Artifacts are missing, low-quality, or unrelated to career exposure.
Explanation Clarity	Explanations (100–150 words or 1 minute each) are clear, specific, and articulate how experiences influenced career interests, affirmed goals, or developed skills.	Explanations are clear with some specificity; minor gaps in connecting experiences to career goals or skills.	Explanations are vague or lack specific connections to career goals or skill development.	Explanations are minimal, unclear, or missing; no connection to career goals or skills.

Skill Connection	Clearly highlights two or more transferable skills (e.g., teamwork, time management) with specific, relevant examples tied to career plan or industry expectations.	Highlights two transferable skills with examples; connections to career plan/industry are less specific in parts.	Highlights fewer than two skills or provides vague connections; examples lack relevance.	No skills highlighted or connections are absent; examples are irrelevant or missing.
Professional Presentation	Artifacts and explanations are professionally presented, with clear formatting and error-free content that enhances exhibit coherence.	Artifacts and explanations are mostly professional; minor formatting or errors (1–2) do not detract significantly.	Artifacts or explanations have formatting issues or errors (3–5) that affect professionalism.	Artifacts or explanations are unprofessional, disorganized, or have numerous errors (>5).