

# **The Governor's Work Ethic Certification**

*Bridging Education and Success*



**Kosciusko Leadership Academy  
Class of 2018**

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## **GOVERNOR'S WORK ETHIC CERTIFICATE**

### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Employers everywhere are sharing their frustrations with the lack of both hard and soft skills within their workforces. The Governor's Work Ethic Certificate is a partnership connecting employers with students that have been offered the opportunity to practice the skills most desired by employers prior to graduation. This certificate program outlines a series of goals that can only be achieved with the dedication of each of the three benefitted parties: the students, the schools, and the employers. By pursuing these three goals collaboratively, employers can remain competitive within their industries, and students will be more prepared for their first jobs after graduation.

Participating employers are encouraged to endorse the program by offering suggestions and sharing the skills most sought after within their industry and organization. Of course, employers of different industries are partners of the program, which will allow the certificate to encompass a wide variety of diverse skills and traits most helpful for all employers of Kosciusko County. Employers will offer incentives that certificate holders are encouraged take advantage of after completion of the certificate program and high school graduation. The incentives offered by the employers are instrumental in attracting the students to the program. These incentives, as well as the desired traits displayed by the students, will require occasional reevaluation to ensure students are still engaged with the partnership and to validate that the skills are still the most sought for skills and traits in candidates within the workforce.

## **II. WEC: ABOUT**

The Work Ethic Certificate, initially starting under the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, is a certificate offered to high school students that have displayed fundamental excellence in the classroom beyond coursework and textbooks. The certificate serves as a credential, displaying strong work behaviors that will prepare students for higher education and today's most challenging workforces. In Kosciusko County, the Warsaw Area Career Center has partnered with area employers to establish criteria most desired in the workplaces of the employers endorsing the program. As students demonstrate proficiency within these criteria, participants are recognized and denoted eligible candidates for the Governor's Work Ethic Certificate. The certificate will be awarded to each successful student of the certificate program.

## **III. PROGRAM GOALS**

The industry leaders are the most important part of this program because without them there is no reason for the certificate. The employers hiring the new workforce coming out of high school need to know and recognize what the Governor's certificate is and what it means. This is also important because the certificate will allow students to have an upper hand against other job applicants that do not have the award.

Students will need to know what is expected of them while earning the work ethic certificate. There are multiple elements that the students will be graded on for hard and soft skills, and if some of the students don't know what is expected of them they might not have the full opportunity to succeed to their best potential. These skills include several items that can be listed in a spreadsheet and expressed numerically. Some of these items are attendance, tardiness, grade point average, late assignments, etc. All the items will be in the rubric and have some sort of point scale that could range from 0-3 or 0-4 depending on the criteria that can be added into

the skill. The teachers will be able to easily point the students according to the scale which is simple compared to the rubric for soft skills.

Soft skills are items that can be seen with every student. These skills are less difficult to recognize as they are not always as straightforward like hard skills are. Soft skills aren't as measurable because they deal a lot with personality and how a person *is* rather than an outcome of what they have done. A student might be on time every day but if they walk into class at the absolute last minute and they aren't fully prepared that says something different about that person's attendance.

Take a minute and imagine that you own a business. Now, picture in your mind a typical high school student. Is that the ideal person you'd like working for your business? Although high school students have a certain "reputation," we know that not ALL high schoolers are lazy and disrespectful, and we also know that there are many students who work hard, show respect and have great potential. The question is, "How do employers hiring in Kosciusko County decipher one type of student from the other?"

Employers that endorse and participate in the Worth Ethic Certificate program will have firsthand access to the hardest working and most respectful students, right out of high school. Plus, these participating businesses will be in the forefront of these students' minds when looking for employment. Students who graduate with the Work Ethic Certificate will be more enticed to stay and work in Kosciusko County, because of the incentives offered by the different businesses. That's why it's so important that businesses in Kosciusko County support and participate in this program. We know that the success of a business relies heavily on the employees that work there. We believe The Work Ethic Certificate could literally change the future of Kosciusko County employment.

#### **IV. IMPLEMENTATION**

This certificate program is going to help influence the upcoming workforce into a standard most desired by employers across Kosciusko County. The goal is to first attract students to the idea of achieving the certificate and the benefits that will incur if they receive it. At the same time this has to go hand in hand with the employers that will be working with these students that have the certificate.

The collaboration with the students involved and with the employers involved into the certificate will go hand in hand. One will not work without having the other and because of this they both need to understand and be able to give when needed. The students will have to make sacrifices to be able to achieve the certificate as well as the employers. The employers will have a chance to give different tiers of items to the cause of the certificate which include, but not limited to: guaranteed interviews, certain pay advantage, extra PTO, etc. The items provided by the employers will help the students want to make the sacrifices for the certificate.

There are some different ways the students will have to sacrifice and perform to be able to acquire the certificate. Most of the sacrifices will be items that are clearly measurable which could include attendance, disciplinary events, grades, etc. Some of the items that will allow the student to obtain the certificate aren't as measureable. Soft skills aren't something that can be graded on a piece of paper or software. These soft skills are more general things such as personality, willingness to work with others, attitude, etc.

This certificate will be more geared to the soft skills as this is what most employers are needing in their workforce. There are a lot of students that don't get straight A's that are more than capable of doing the work required by employers and this certificate will help show that. This certificate is not something that all students will get. If the certificate is not something that

is difficult to obtain then it loses its power. One of the biggest obstacles to overcome with this certificate is to make sure everyone involved has the same vision on what the work ethic certificate really entails. If neither the employees nor employers recognize the impact of obtaining the certificate then it will be a useless award.

The Governor's Work Ethic Certificate is something that will allow students to have the upper hand in the workforce when they start applying for jobs after high school. It is a certificate that will be given once they graduate and they'll have a sash or tassel showing the accomplishment when they walk to get their diploma. This is not a certificate every student will have the ability to receive because it will truly have to be earned, rather than simply awarded to all.

## **V. SUSTAINABILITY**

The KLA team for this whitepaper has teamed up with the Warsaw Area Career Center (WACC) to help them get this project moving. Ronna Kawsy, Director of the Warsaw Area Career Center, and Jill Jackson, Assistant Director of the Warsaw Area Career Center have agreed to facilitate the first initial launch of the project. Ronna and Jill have begun the launch by notifying current juniors, high school graduates of 2019. Those meetings were the first of letting the students know what was going to be expected of them and the different skills they were going to be graded on.

Our teams collaborated on several occasions to discuss future plans about how and when we needed to proceed forward. The goal was to get the program running so that this year juniors will have the chance to earn the certificate for their senior year. Once we knew that, then we at minimum, had our goal and decided that our next step was to meet with industry leaders and start the process.