

Scalable Work-Based Learning for All Students

CACTE 2026



Presenters

Christy Biedron

Director of Education, Junior Achievement – Rocky Mountain

Lisa Hollingsworth

Mapleton School District

Early Career Prep Internship Coordinator



Agenda

- Why It's Important
- Sharing / Best Practices
- JA Resources and Activity



WORK-BASED LEARNING

Building the Skills AI Can't Replace

A conversation on career-connected learning in the AI era

Two overlapping teal circles of different shades are positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, serving as a decorative element.

Accenture:

**Real value shows up when
people and technology
advance together.**

Accenture Research Report: Talent Reinventors, March 16, 2026
<https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/accenture-com/document-4/Accenture-Talent-Reinventors-Report.pdf#zoom=40>



What's Rising in Value

As AI absorbs routine tasks, employers describe adaptability as the new job security.

1

Judgment & Decision-Making

Someone still has to decide what to do with AI's output.

2

Adaptability

Fast learners across many tools beat experts in just one.

3

AI Literacy

Knowing where AI fails and when to push back on it.

4

Ethical Reasoning

Someone has to decide not just what AI can do, but what it should.

From Skill to Experience

Work-based learning is how these skills actually get practiced.

Adaptability

Job shadows & internships

Ambiguous, unscripted situations a classroom can't replicate

Judgment

Simulations & Experiential Learning

Weighing incomplete information and living with the outcome

Creativity

Industry Sponsored Projects

Problems with no answer key — AI can generate options, not pick one

AI Fluency

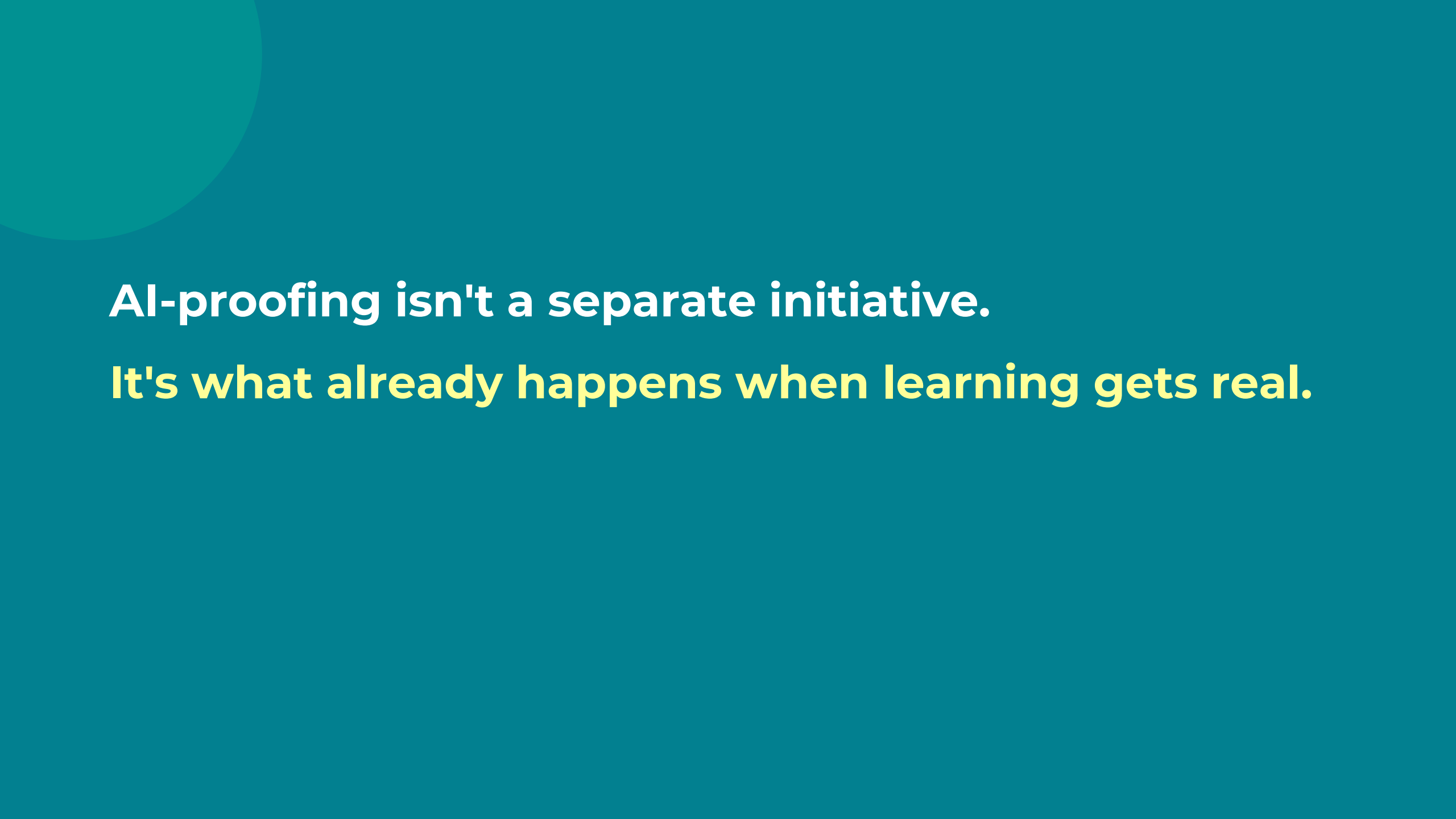
Applied practice, real stakes

Learning when to trust AI output and when to override it

Local Industry Knowledge

Career Speakers and Site Visits

Direct line to what's actually happening in the field right now



AI-proofing isn't a separate initiative.

It's what already happens when learning gets real.

2026 National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook Report

The NACE Job Outlook survey is a forecast of hiring intentions of employers as they relate to new college graduates. Each year, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) surveys its employer members about their hiring plans and other employment-related issues to project the market for new college graduates from the current class and to assess a variety of conditions that may influence that market.

<https://naceweb.org/research/reports/job-outlook/2026/>



Almost 70% of respondents use skills-based hiring

Employer use of skills-based hiring has grown over the last year, with nearly 70% now saying they are using it.

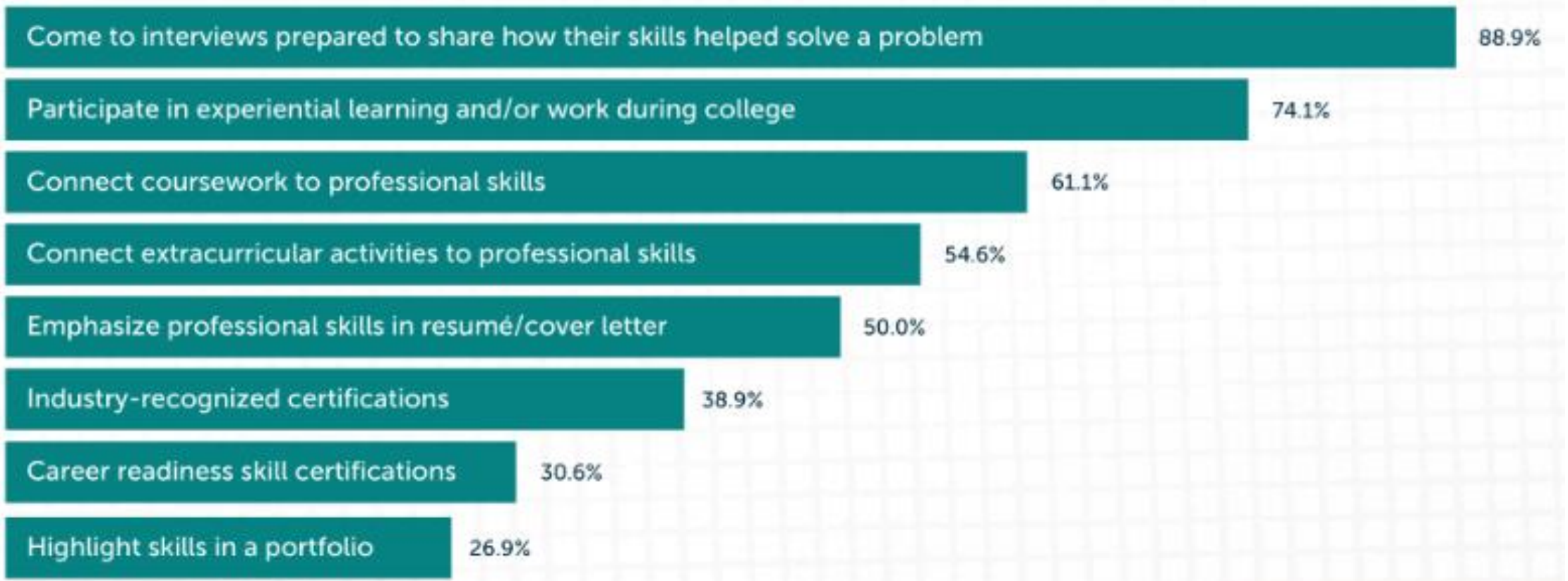


69.5% Yes

30.5% No



How can students demonstrate their skills during a skills-based hiring process?



Group Discussion:

What's Working for You?





EDUCATION FOR
WHAT'S NEXT™



Work Based Learning Solutions



- Engaging and relevant learning experiences act as scaffolding – up to 30 hours
- Prepares students for additional work-based learning, jobs, internships, and apprenticeships
- Includes stackable credential
- Provided at no cost to schools and include continuous support from our education staff.

JA Essential Work Skills

Student Learning Journey

Participate in one learning experience to learn and apply competencies in collaborative environment.

JA Essential Skills for Work

or

JA Company Program



Earn competency-based micro-credentials by passing work scenario-based skills tests.



Earn the JA Essential Work Skills Credential.



JA Essential Skills for Work

Prerequisite Learning Experience



Initial Release: July 31st, 2026

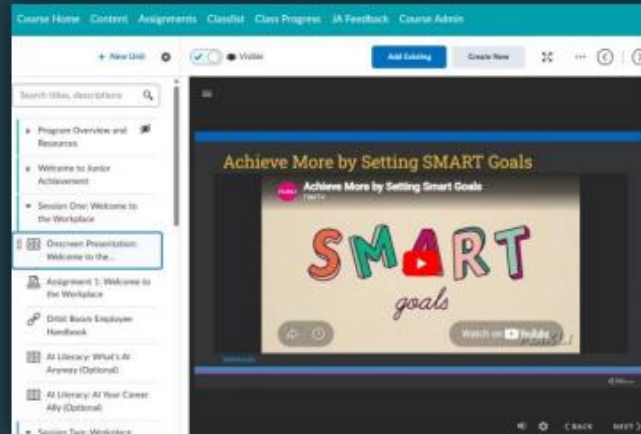
- 10-session, facilitator-led learning experience for 10th-12th grade
- Builds transferable workplace skills through collaborative business challenges and a workplace simulation
- Students apply critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-direction in real-world scenarios
- Build student confidence, teamwork, and job readiness through engaging activities and independent project
- Prepares students for the JA Essential Work Skills Credential

Engaging Materials



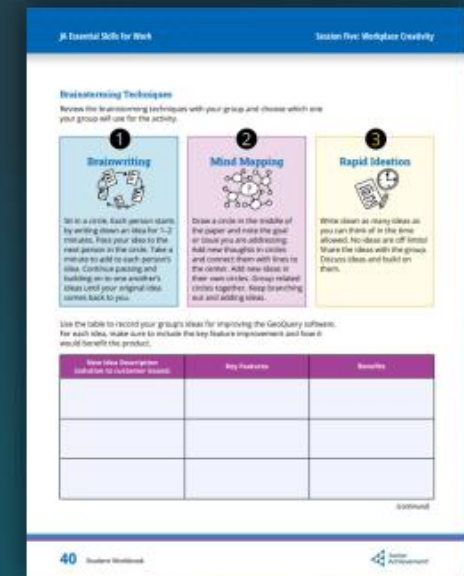
Everything you need to teach in one platform:

- Resources to prepare
- Facilitator guides
- Slide presentations
- Printable/downloadable student materials
- Digital activity materials



Collaborate on a Solution

- Listen to each other's points of view.
- List the options.
- Take a vote on each option to narrow down the list.
- Discuss the remaining options, giving everyone a voice.
- Take another vote.
- Have a final discussion to refine the wording of the agreed-upon solution.



JA Essential Work Skills Credential

Earn 6 competency-based, stackable micro-credentials by passing scenario-based assessments to receive the full Essential Work Skills Credential

JA Essential Work Skills Credential ⓘ



JA Essential Work Skills Credential
Earn all 6 micro-credentials to receive your credential.



SHARE

LEARN



TAKE TEST



TAKE TEST



TAKE TEST



TAKE TEST



TAKE TEST

Patience and Sergio, co-owners of Inner Beauty Salon, are discussing their current business sales for the year.
Watch the video and answer the corresponding questions.



What the Credential Represents



- Provides evidence students have practiced and demonstrated **foundational workplace behaviors** through authentic, scenario-based assessments
- **Prepares students** for first real-world skill application (internships, work-based learning, jobs, college, and career exploration)
- Serves as a **readiness signal**—not a certification of mastery



Engaging Communication
ESSENTIAL WORK SKILLS

3 attempts left

LEARN SKILLS:

Engaging Communication

Score: 54% not passed

Ready to sharpen your skills? These learning resources can help you level-up, boost your confidence, and prepare for the Skills Test.

Complete the required learning before retaking the test.



Clear Communication

① Skill / 10 mins / Not Taken

REQUIRED LEARNING



Prepare for Hired

① Skill / 15 mins / Not Taken

REQUIRED LEARNING



Active Listening in the Workplace

① Skill / 15 mins / Completed

RETAKE



Communicate Virtually

① Skill / 15 mins / Not Taken

REQUIRED LEARNING



Tailor Your Communication

① Skill / 10 mins / Not Taken

LEARN



Cleaning Up Your Communication

① Skill / 10 mins / Not Taken

REQUIRED LEARNING

- Each competency includes learning modules for additional skill-building and preparation prior to each assessment attempt
- Learners have 3 attempts to achieve an 80% or higher score to earn each micro-credential
- After non-passing attempt, required learning modules are to be completed prior to retake



Prepare for Hired

Junior Achievement

Contribute to Group Success

HELLO

my name is

type your name here

Audio Programmer Intern

Write your name on the name badge to get started.

Continue



SKILLS TEST:

Critical and Analytical Thinking

Score: 100% passed

Congratulations! You have earned the Critical and Analytical Thinking Micro-credential. Go to your dashboard to earn more.

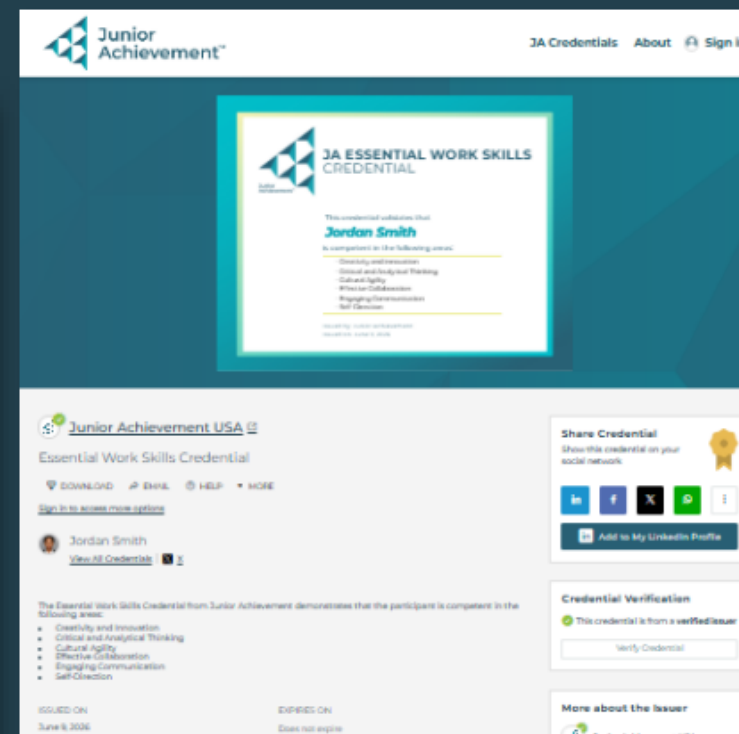
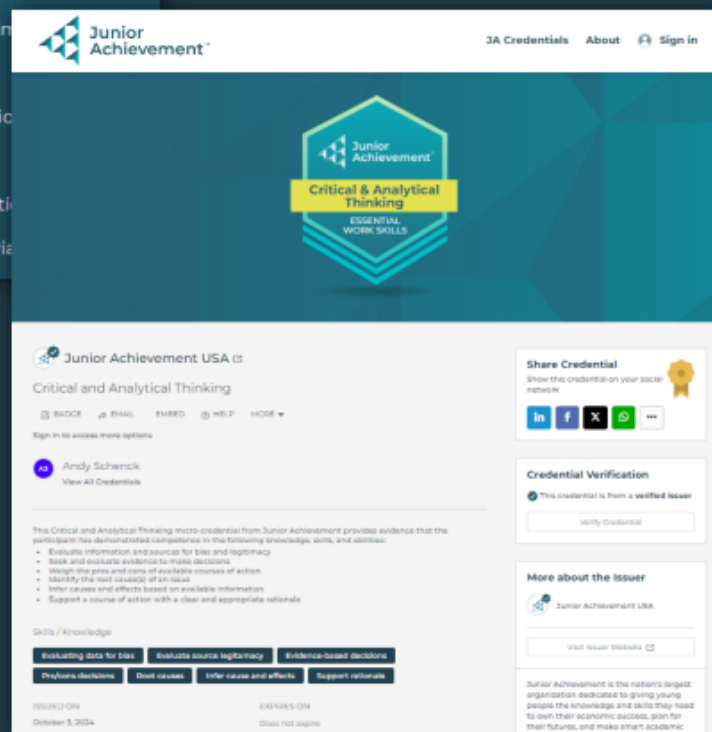
[DASHBOARD](#)

[VIEW TEST HISTORY](#)

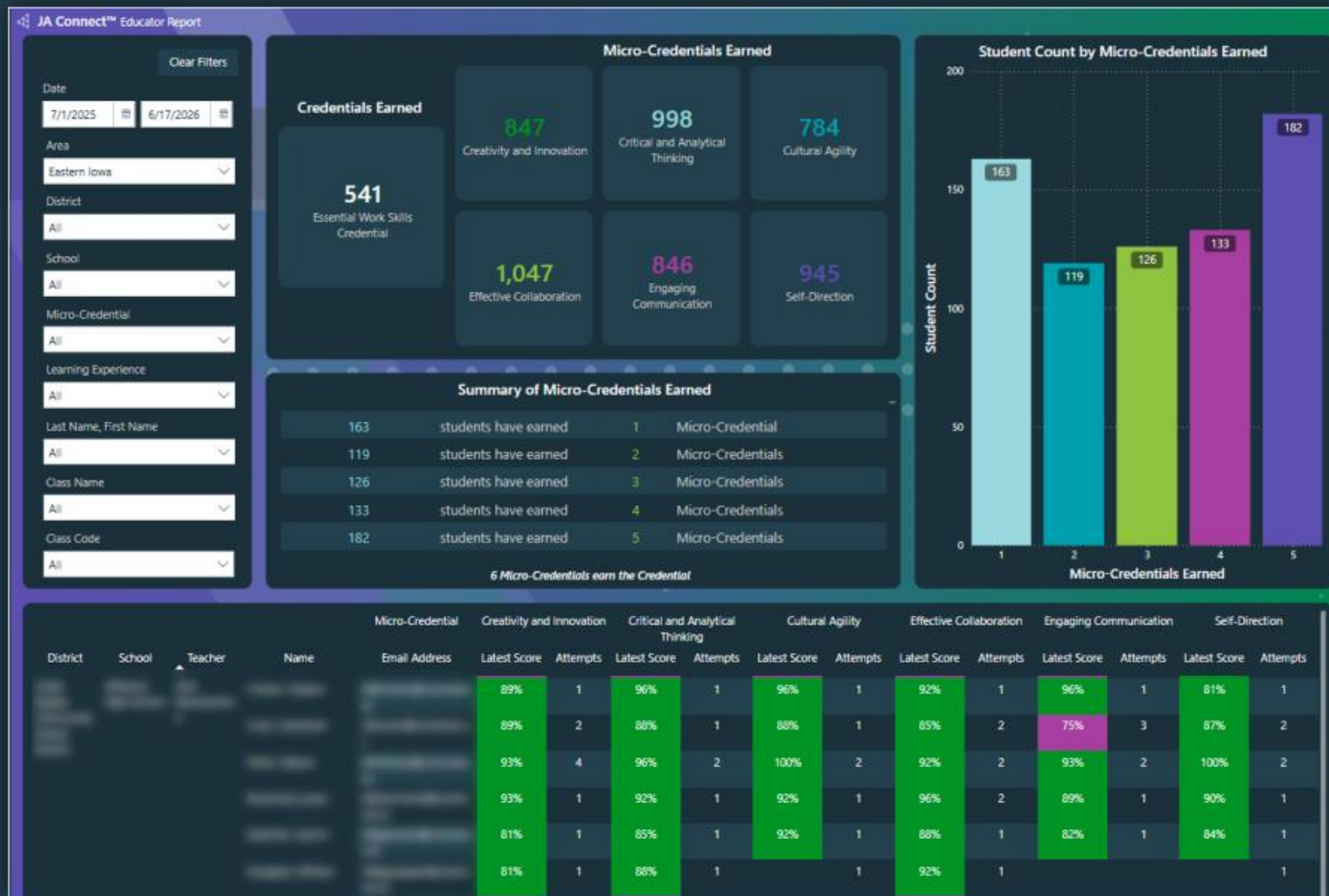
Critical and Analytical Thinking Skills

- Evaluate information and sources for bias and legitimacy
- Seek and evaluate evidence to make decisions
- Weigh the pros and cons of available courses of action
- Identify the root cause(s) of an issue
- Infer causes and effects based on available information
- Support a course of action with a clear and appropriate rationale

- **Share earned credentials with employers or colleges in a variety of ways like LinkedIn**
- **Provide evidence of employer-relevant skills and workforce readiness**
- **Credentials are JA validated and portable**



Robust Reporting Tools



Real-time Data

- Verify student completion
- Educator and School District Reporting
- Insights to improve implementation



Why Credentialing Matters Now

Today's learners need:

- ✓ Verified skills
- ✓ Sharable workforce signals
- ✓ Postsecondary-ready evidence
- ✓ Digital credentials that travel with them

Market Drivers

Skills-based hiring



Workforce readiness initiatives



State accountability systems



Credential attainment priorities



Future-Ready Leaders

- **Quality Work-Based Learning** that is scalable, meaningful, and enjoyable
- Skill-development sessions facilitated by industry leaders and educators: Leadership skills, workplace communication, critical thinking & problem solving, and cultural agility
- Students demonstrate their learning through a hands-on experience organized by JA
- Concludes with an industry-led structured reflection activity

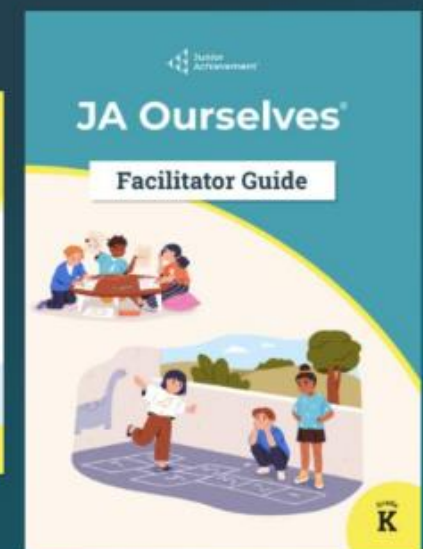


Engaging Materials, K-5



Everything you need to
manage your K-5
experience:

- Facilitator Guides
- Training Resources
- Onscreen Presentations
- Printed kit materials and manipulatives
- Digital Student Materials
- Surveys



Engaging Materials - JA Future Ready Leaders



Everything you need to manage JA Future Ready Leaders :

- Facilitator Guides
- Training Resources
- Onscreen Presentations
- Printable/downloadable student materials
- Surveys

What might these students need from a facilitator right now?



PREP SESSION 1: Communicating and Responding as a Facilitator

QUICK-START GUIDE

Session Length	Grade Level	Expected Prep Time
45 min	6-12	15-20 min

Guiding Question

How do I communicate clearly and respond to what younger students need as every learner stays engaged and supported?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, students will be able to:

- Identify key communication behaviors (verbal, nonverbal, listening) that support younger learners.
- Recognize common student cues and describe appropriate facilitator responses.
- Practice clear and engaging communication while facilitating a short activity.
- Set one specific communication goal for their applied learning experience.

PREP SESSION 1 Communicating and Responding as a Facilitator

Story Remix

Option A: Describe a time you noticed someone in your group was struggling but didn't say anything. What did you do—or what do you wish you had done?

Option B: Tell about a moment when you realized someone needed something different from you than what you were giving. How did you figure that out?

Choose the elements that made your story clearest and most engaging.

- ☐ Facing
- ☐ Tone
- ☐ Structure
- ☐ Gestures
- ☐ Eye contact
- ☐ Examples
- ☐ Pausing
- ☐ Clarity of language
- ☐ Audience check-ins
- ☐ Simplifying details
- ☐ Slowing down
- ☐ Emphasizing key points

Go With The Flow Reference

Acknowledge → Redirect → Keep the Session Moving

JA FUTURE READY LEADERS Facilitator Guide



VALUE FOR STUDENTS



Builds real-world leadership skills



Applies learning in an authentic setting



Builds confidence and sense of purpose



Strengthens **future-ready** competencies



Creates meaningful connection to community



Reinforces core concepts through teaching

Simon Says: JA Edition



Character Traits

How You Treat People



- Respect
- Empathy
- Teamwork

How You Handle Responsibility



- Responsibility
- Initiative
- Honesty

How You Handle Pressure



- Courage
- Self-Control
- Adaptability

Expanded Leadership Filter

- What's really happening?
- Who is affected?
- What character traits does this call for? Have I developed them?
- **What options do you have?**
- **What would you choose? Why?**



Slow down.
Understand what's going on.
Make a thoughtful decision.

Demonstrations

