Bridging the Gap: ELA and College and Career Readiness for Real World Success

October 2024
Rachel Spinks: PD Specialist and ELA Consultant

Welcome

Bridging the gap between English Language Arts (ELA) and College and Career Readiness (CCR) involves integrating literacy instruction with the practical skills and knowledge students need for the workforce.

Preparing Adult Education students for the real world is crucial for many reasons:

- Empowers students with practical skills for job success + economic mobility
- Bridges skills gaps that help to meet workforce needs
- Builds confidence in professional settings and promotes independence
- Helps students to meet their personal and professional goals
- Impactful to community and economic development

ATDN
Adult Training & Development
Network at EdAdvance Educate · Collaborate · Innovate

Who is responsible for ensuring that students receive an education that readies them for college and/or career pathways?

School Counselling Staff	Career Navigator
Faculty	Director

Session Objectives:

Develop a greater understanding of the skillsets that make a student college and career ready

+

Learn how to incorporate lesson plans that integrate real world context with ELA content

+

Explore strategies that build career ready skills such as critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving abilities

The Jobs Are Out There!

According to the Department of Labor, Connecticut has approximately 84,000 jobs open as of September 2024. Employers are reporting significant challenges replacing retiring workers with new employees.

The top three industry super sectors that added employment or were unchanged in August 2024 included:

- Educational and Health Services: +1,200, 0.3%, 368,900
- Information Technology: +600, 2.0%, 30,800
- Government: unchanged, 0.0%, 235,900

ATDN
Adult Training & Development
Network at EdAdvance | Educate · Collaborate · Innovate

According to research, what do employers consider the most important competency in a potential employee?

95.5% of employers cite Communication as the most important competency they seek in potential employees.

Source:

NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers)

https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/trends-and-predictions/

ELA teachers can play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between English lessons and career readiness by embedding real-world skills into the curriculum. There are multiple strategies to successfully do this.

- Communication Skills
- Collaborative Projects
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Career-Oriented Texts
- Digital Literacy
- Resume Writing and Interview Skills
- Guest Speakers and Career Days
- Real World Assignments

Communication Skills

Strong written and verbal communication is a key career skill. ELA teachers can emphasize clear, concise writing, professional email etiquette, and presentation skills through assignments like business letters, reports, and public speaking exercises.

Developing Communication and Collaboration Skills

• Speaking and Listening: Include activities that build oral communication skills such as debates, presentations, and group discussions. These exercises teach students how to articulate ideas clearly, listen actively, and collaborate—all essential for teamwork in the workplace.

• Role-Playing: Use role-playing exercises to simulate real-world situations like job interviews, workplace conflicts, or group meetings. This builds confidence in communication and helps students navigate professional environments.

Example: In a lesson on communication, students role-play a workplace scenario in which they need to mediate a conflict or lead a team meeting, practicing clear and respectful communication.

Collaborative Projects

Encourage teamwork and collaboration through group projects. Working on presentations, debates, or research papers in teams helps student build interpersonal skills that are critical in the workplace.

Diverse Grouping: Create groups with diverse skills, backgrounds, and perspectives. This diversity can enhance problem-solving and creativity.

Clear Roles: Assign specific roles within each group (e.g., facilitator, researcher, presenter) to ensure that everyone has a defined responsibility and feels accountable.

Structured Guidelines: Provide clear guidelines for the project, including objectives, timelines, and evaluation criteria. This clarity helps students stay focused and organized.

Collaboration Tools: Utilize technology tools (like Google Docs, Trello, or Padlet) that facilitate collaboration, allowing students to share ideas and work together seamlessly.

Team-Building Activities: Start with icebreakers or team-building exercises to help students bond and understand each other better, setting a positive tone for collaboration.

ATDN
Adult Training & Development
Network at EdAdvance | Educate · Collaborate · Innovate

Collaborative Projects

Regular Check-ins: Schedule regular check-ins or progress meetings to encourage communication, provide support, and address any challenges the groups may face.

Peer Feedback: Incorporate opportunities for peer evaluation and feedback throughout the project. This encourages students to reflect on their teamwork and communication skills.

Celebrate Achievements: Acknowledge and celebrate the group's achievements, both big and small, to motivate students and reinforce the value of teamwork.

Reflective Practices: After the project, have students reflect individually and as a group on their collaboration experience, discussing what worked well and what could improve.

Focus on Process, Not Just Product: Emphasize the importance of collaboration and the process of working together, not just the final outcome. This helps students appreciate teamwork beyond grades.

ATDN
Adult Training & Development
Network at EdAdvance | Educate · Collaborate · Innovate

Collaborative Project Example: Business Reports

Day 1: Introduction and Research
1. Introduction (15 minutes)
•Briefly explain the purpose and components of a business report.
•Discuss the importance of collaboration in business settings.
2. Group Formation (10 minutes)
•Divide students into groups of 4-5.
•Each group should have a mix of skills (e.g., research, writing, data analysis).
3. Topic Assignment (10 minutes)
•Assign each group a different business topic (e.g., market analysis for a new product, financial performance of a company, sustainability practices in business).
•Provide clear guidelines on what the report should include (e.g., executive summary, analysis, recommendations).
4. Research Phase (50 minutes)
•Allow groups to use computers to research their assigned topics.
•Encourage students to gather data, case studies, and statistics that support their report.
•Circulate among the groups to provide guidance and support

Day 2: Report Writing and Presentation
1. Report Writing (50 minutes)
•Each group organizes their research and begins drafting the report.
•Encourage collaboration: assign roles (e.g., writer, editor, presenter, researcher).
•Remind groups to adhere to the report format and to cite sources correctly.
2. Presentation Preparation (20 minutes)
•Groups prepare a short presentation (5 minutes) to summarize their report findings.
•They should focus on key points, insights, and recommendations.
3. Group Presentations (20 minutes)
•Each group presents their report to the class.
•Allow time for Q&A after each presentation.

This sample student paper is a business report task which demonstrates the requirements for APA referencing style.

https://www.jcu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2109296/Sample-Student-Business-Report.pdf

ATDN
Adult Training & Development Network at EdAdvance Educate · Collaborate · Innovate

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Case Study Analysis: Assign students to analyze a specific case related to their field of study (e.g., a business case, a scientific breakthrough, or a social issue). They should identify the problem, analyze the data, and propose potential solutions.

Simulation Projects: Create simulations where students must make decisions based on real-world scenarios (e.g., running a business, managing a city's budget, or leading a nonprofit). They can work in groups to develop strategies and respond to dynamic challenges.

Research Projects: Have students research a current issue (like climate change, public health, or economic inequality) and analyze different perspectives. They can present their findings in a report or presentation.

Interdisciplinary Projects: Design assignments that require students to combine knowledge from different subjects (e.g., a science and ethics project on genetic engineering) to solve a complex issue, encouraging holistic thinking.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Role-Playing Debates: Organize debates where students must take on roles (e.g., stakeholders in a community) and argue for or against specific solutions to a problem. This helps them understand multiple viewpoints and the complexity of real-world decisions.

Ethical Dilemmas: Present students with real-world ethical dilemmas relevant to their field (e.g., in healthcare or technology) and ask them to analyze the situation, discuss various perspectives, and propose a course of action.

Collaborative Problem Solving: Use complex, open-ended problems that require teamwork to solve (e.g., designing a sustainable city). Groups must research, brainstorm, and present their solutions.

Inspiration: Teaching Entrepreneurship

1. Ask students to define the word "entrepreneur" (someone who takes a calculated risk to create a new business, often by innovating a new solution to a problem or need). Given that most new businesses fail, successful entrepreneurs tend to be persistent and tenacious in the face of obstacles.

2. Divide the class into small groups. Explain that each group will research a different entrepreneur. Hand out the Study a Star Entrepreneur activity sheet and the Entrepreneur Bios. Depending on time and resources, students can conduct additional Internet research.

3. Once students have finished reading and taking notes independently, have them share what they learned with their group.

4. Have each group briefly report on the entrepreneur they studied using their notes for reference. Group members can split up the questions and present on the areas they researched. Direct the class to take notes as they listen so they can draw conclusions across different entrepreneurs' stories.

5. Lead a class discussion about what similarities and differences students noticed among the different entrepreneurs. Ask: What traits do these entrepreneurs share that helped them be successful in business? What lessons can we learn from how these entrepreneurs found success?

Source
https://www.scholastic.com/sharktank/pdfs/Shark_Tank_Teaching_Guide.pdf

ENTREPRENEUR BIOS

ROBBIE CABRAL
BenjiLock

When Robbie Cabral moved from the Dominican Republic to the United States, he struggled to make ends meet. He worked as a dishwasher and custodian before finally getting hired for a job in real estate. However, the company laid him off after just six months, leaving him unemployed with a newborn baby at home.

That was when Cabral's fortunes began to change. **He was in the gym locker room when he came up with the idea that would change his life.** He wondered why no fingerprint-based padlocks existed, so he decided to make one. He patented his idea and worked hard to make his new dream a reality. This led him to an appearance on the TV show *Shark Tank*, where businessman Kevin O'Leary bought into his idea. O'Leary helped Cabral sign a deal to work with security company Hampton Products International. His invention, called BenjiLock, is expected to hit the market in late 2018.

JAMIE SIMINOFF
Ring

When tech giant Amazon bought a company called Ring for over a billion dollars in February 2018, it was a big deal for the company's founder, Jamie Siminoff. He had worked hard on Ring, and now that hard work had paid off—big-time.

Siminoff had been fascinated by technology ever since childhood, but he didn't come up with his most successful idea until he was an adult. While working in his home office, Siminoff was annoyed that he couldn't hear the doorbell from his office in the garage. This got him thinking about a solution: a "smart doorbell" that would alert his cell phone when someone was at the door and show him video of who was there. In 2013, he pitched his idea on *Shark Tank*, but was not able to reach a deal to partner with any of the show's business experts. Still, his appearance was the marketing boost his fledgling company needed, and he signed that billion-dollar deal five years later—the result of one great idea and a whole lot of hard work.

ANDREA SRESHTA AND ANNA STORK
LuminAID

Many entrepreneurs just want to get rich, but others aren't motivated by wealth. This is true of Andrea Sreshta and Anna Stork, the founders of LuminAID. Sreshta and Stork met while they were studying architecture at Columbia University in New York City. They were both still in school there in 2010, when an earthquake hit Haiti. The disaster left many people without homes or power. So Sreshta and Stork came up with an invention to help: a solar-powered light that could pack flat so it was easy to transport.

The two women appeared on a 2015 episode of *Shark Tank*, where they partnered with investor Mark Cuban. Today, LuminAID products can do more than just provide light; they can charge cell phones too, making them even more valuable in disaster relief efforts. **With their company, Sreshta and Stork are helping people in need, one light at a time.**

ENTREPRENEUR BIOS

MADAM C.J. WALKER

Madam C.J. Walker had to overcome a lot of hardship to find business success. She was born as Sarah Breedlove in Louisiana in 1867. Both of her parents had lived as slaves, but Breedlove was born free. Still, she lived a hard life. She married for the first time when she was just 14 years old and gave birth to a daughter a few years later.

Breedlove saw a business opportunity in the fact that black women didn't have many options when it came to hair-care products. She worked for a while for Annie Turnbo Malone, a successful entrepreneur, selling hair products to black women. Soon, she struck out on her own, creating her own line of products and promoting them under a new name she thought had more marketing potential: Madam C.J. Walker. She worked hard to sell her products, and that hard work paid off; some say she was the first American woman to become a self-made millionaire.

ANDREW CARNEGIE

Andrew Carnegie was born in Scotland in 1835. When he was young, his family moved to Pennsylvania, where he started working when he was just 12 years old. Carnegie worked hard and rose quickly in his career; by 24 years old, he was already superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company's Pittsburgh division.

Carnegie had a knack for smart investments that went big. His keen business sense paid off most when he decided that the future was in steel. He proved to be a brilliant businessman who dominated the steel industry by pioneering new techniques for manufacturing the metal more effectively and efficiently. In 1901, he sold his company for $250 million, retired from business, and devoted his life to philanthropy. He worked to give his vast wealth away to those in need, saying that a "man who dies rich dies disgraced."


HAMDI ULUKAYA

Hamdi Ulukaya was born in 1972 in Turkey, where he spent his early life as a nomadic shepherd. His family made cheese and yogurt. Ulukaya wasn't planning to stay in the family business when he moved to the United States, but that's exactly what he ended up doing. In 2005, he saw an ad for an old yogurt factory that was for sale. At that point, the Greek-style yogurt that Ulukaya grew up eating was a rare find in the U.S. He bought the closed-down factory, betting his savings that Americans would grow to love the yogurt of his youth.

Ulukaya's gamble paid off. Within five years, his company, Chobani, had reached over a billion dollars in sales. **He earned a reputation for treating his employees well, offering them good wages and benefits, and giving jobs to refugees.** Today, Ulukaya's yogurt can be found in refrigerators across America.
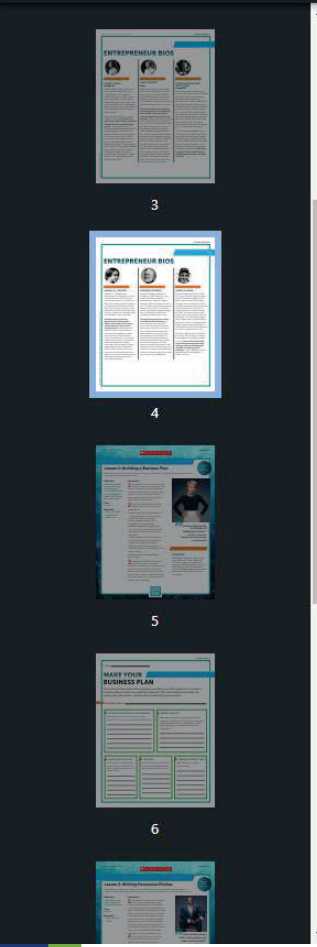
Extension Activity:
Domain Specific Vocabulary

CCR Anchor 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Example: Have students create their own business dictionary by researching the following business literacy terms that they might hear.

Profit Margin

Royalty

Valuation

Business Model

Acquisition

Patent

Proprietary
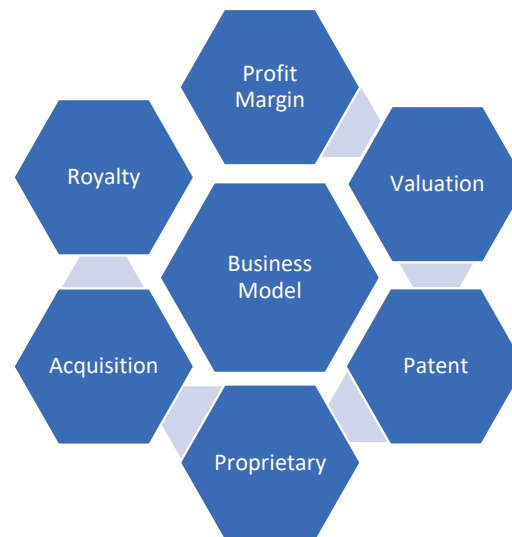
Digital Literacy

- Use career exploration tools to match strengths and interests to career fields and then use those results as a basis for research-based assignments. https://www.mynextmove.org/

- Incorporate web-based, career-related materials, such as articles, biographies, or stories that highlight different professions using multiple media sources.

- Incorporate Google's FREE Workspace Training into your curriculum: Learn how to use Google Workspace like Docs, Sheets, and Drive to help improve productivity and collaboration in school, work and life.

https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/en/workspace

Google | Applied Digital Skills

Start teaching   Start learning   Browse curriculum   Teaching resources   ?   Sign in

10 lessons in this collection

Google Workspace: Docs - Part 1

☰ 1 lesson   🕐 45—90 minutes

Digital publishing   Document formatting

Learn to edit and format a document.

Quick view

Google Workspace: Docs - Part 2

☰ 1 lesson   🕐 45—90 minutes

Collaboration   Data visualization   Document formatting   +2

Learn tools and settings for working in a document.

Quick view

Google Workspace: Drive

☰ 1 lesson   🕐 45—90 minutes

Account creation   Collaboration   Communication   +6

Learn to organize, manage, and share files in Drive.

Quick view

Google Workspace: Sheets - Part 1

☰ 1 lesson   🕐 45—90 minutes

Data analysis   Organizing data   Sorting and filtering   +2

Build, organize, and format a spreadsheet using Google Sheets.

Quick view

Google Workspace: Sheets - Part 2

☰ 1 lesson   🕐 45—90 minutes

Conditional formulas   Data analysis   Data representation   +5

Evaluate and interpret data with different spreadsheet functions, filters, and charts using Google Sheets.

Quick view

Google Workspace: Sheets - Part 3

☰ 1 lesson   🕐 45—90 minutes

Advanced formulas   Conditional formulas   Data analysis   +6

Use advanced functions and conditional formatting in Google Sheets.

Quick view

Google Workspace: Slides - Part 1

Google Workspace: Slides - Part 2

Google Workspace: Slides - Part 3

Resume Writing and Career Skills

Practicing practical skills such as resume writing and application completion can engage student in ELA skills as well as supporting them in the search for careers or preparation for future job searches.

There are many examples of existing unit plans that teach these skills.

Work Solutions offers a wonderful unit plan that helps students to evaluate and practice effective communication in applications, resumes, basic introductions and interviewing.

This is teacher ready....just print!

https://www.wrksolutions.com/documents/individuals/online-training/adult-curriculum-workbook-module-2.pdf

Guest Speakers and Career Days

Invite Guest Speakers: Reach out to local professionals from various fields (healthcare, technology, education, trades, business owners) who can share their journey. This is a great way of forming community relationships. Ideally have 2-4 guest speakers from different industries. Ensure each speaker has 10-15 minutes to present and an additional 5-10 minutes to answer questions.

Students should be prepared through the introduction of the concept of career pathways (perhaps collaborate with your career developer) and have students research the guest speaker's industries and write 2-3 questions that they have about that career pathway.

Post Activity Assessment: Students write a career reflection answering questions such as "What is one career you found particularly interesting and why?" and "What is one piece of advice you heard today that you will use in your career planning?"

ELA skillsets: Listening, Note taking, Interviewing, Questioning, Summarizing, Reflection

ATDN
Adult Training & Development
Network at EdAdvance| Educate · Collaborate · Innovate
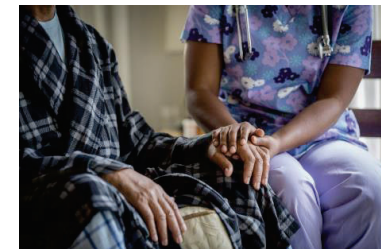
Real World Assignment Example

Brought to you by The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), Claim Your Future® is a game that encourages students to:

•Have conversations about their future goals and aspirations.
•Link today's educational choices to future careers and financial stability.
•Distinguish between wants and needs and learn to prioritize.
•Describe benefits of saving and the impact of long-term student debt.

Assigns or allows the student to choose a career, uses the average salary for this career to then budget while helping students to learn about finances, budgeting and student debt.

https://fame.claimyourfuture.org/

I would suggest using this paired with a text such as an article about student loan debt to expand this into a standards aligned ELA lesson.
https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-statistics
https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-student-loan-debt-trends-economic-impact
https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/see-how-student-loan-borrowing-has-changed

ATDN
Adult Training & Development
Network at EdAdvance Educate · Collaborate · Innovate

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Digital ATDN

- ☑ **Professional learning for instructional routines and teaching tools**

- ☑ **Assistance locating resources to address specific needs**

- ☑ **Individualized support for lesson planning and design**

🌐 **atdn@atdnct.org**   🌐 **digital.atdn@atdnct.org**

ATDN
Adult Training & Development
Network at EdAdvance | Educate • Collaborate • Innovate