

## Executive Summary

The key to Georgia's economic prosperity is a reliable and consistent workforce. Therefore, one of the Georgia Department of Labor's (GDOL) fundamental goals is to equip Georgia's future workforce with the skills they need to succeed in the global marketplace. As such, Georgia Labor Commissioner Mark Butler developed GeorgiaBEST (Business Employability Skills Training) for citizens across the state. GeorgiaBEST focuses on the employability skills needed in the workplace as identified by Georgia businesses. The program was developed in 2011 and piloted in 20 high schools in 2012. The number of participating high schools grew exponentially, middle schools were added in 2013, and Adult Education/GED programs came on board in 2014. In 2016, Commissioner Butler decided to take the program to the next level. Based on employer feedback, GeorgiaBEST has now expanded to a three-pronged approach: GeorgiaBEST@School, GeorgiaBEST@Work, and GeorgiaBEST@Home. GeorgiaBEST is presented in a train-the-trainer format that empowers teachers, training managers, facilitators, parents, and others to teach employability skills to their students, employees, participants, or children. Those who become part of the GeorgiaBEST community have exclusive access to GeorgiaBEST training manuals, videos, lesson plans, and additional teaching materials and resources.

### *What necessitated the improvements?*

1. The need to protect the integrity of the GeorgiaBEST certificate – to ensure it is something of value and not just a piece of paper.
2. The need to grow the program to meet requests from employers who desire training for their incumbent workforce. The need to serve educators who desire curriculum for all grade levels. The need to assist correctional facilities who desire training for returning citizens, to help faith-based organizations and civic groups who desire training to improve the lives of those who live in their communities, along with concerned parents and unemployed individuals who desire to improve the skills of their children or to improve their own skills.
3. The need to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, track the participants, analyze the data, and report the results.
4. The need to respond to the input from 1100 Georgia employers (Survey Monkey results from 330 employers plus Employer Summit results from 770 employers).

### *What has changed?*

1. The BEST now stands for Business Employability Skills Training. Rationale: "Employability Skills" is the commonly used term nationwide; it is the term used by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation.
2. A new tag line: **Show Georgia Employers Your BEST!**
3. New standards, now called components. Since the inception of GeorgiaBEST in 2011, employers, teachers, and vendors have identified other topics that need to be addressed. The table below shows the three components with the 15 attributes/competencies/skills:

Personal Characteristics		Interactions with Others	Employer Expectations	
Attitude	Organization	Respect	Attendance and Punctuality	Technology Usage and Social Media Ethics
Initiative	Discipline	Effective Communication	Customer Service	Professionalism
Flexibility	Integrity	Teamwork	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	Adherence to Policy

4. A three-pronged approach for implementing GeorgiaBEST:
  - a. **GeorgiaBEST@School** is designed for Pre-K through Post-Secondary teachers to facilitate discussion in their classrooms. Goal: at the earliest age – exposure to concepts. For all students – introduce components, model, teach, reinforce, acknowledge, and reward appropriate behavior and skills in order to prepare students for the workplace, for higher education, and for life. The University of North Georgia (UNG) is partnering with GDOL to develop curricula. Teachers will be able to print “certificates of participation” for each grade level. The principal, local school superintendent, college president, or other academic official can sign the certificate to demonstrate that the local school system or education provider is working to meet the needs of the local employers.
  - b. **GeorgiaBEST@Work** is designed for Georgia employers to use with their existing workforce. It may also be used by non-profit organizations, government agencies, and any other entity who employs individuals in either a paid or non-paid capacity. Goal: to assist employers with their need to train both new employees and incumbent workers. There will be 90 days of employer-observed paid or un-paid work experience to validate evaluation. The trainer will be able to print a Commissioner Butler-signed certificate. Work-Based Learning, Youth Apprenticeship, student interns, or other working students (paid or unpaid) will have an opportunity to earn an annual student participation certificate (GeorgiaBEST@School) and a more valuable GeorgiaBEST@Work certificate.
  - c. **GeorgiaBEST@Home** is designed for individuals, parents, mentors, after-school programs, faith-based organizations, civic groups, community agencies, etc. Goal: exposure to concepts; develop an understanding of employer expectations; work to improve skills and competencies. While there will be no certificate at this level, there will be an opportunity to do a self-assessment. Training can be self-directed or led by a facilitator.
5. An evaluation that more closely resembles how employees are evaluated in the workplace. The new form is called a Frequency Observation Tool. Since evaluating soft skills is so subjective, the research suggests it is preferable to use a behavior-based scale where participants are assessed on the frequency of the behaviors being observed. Teachers and trainers will complete and submit the Frequency Observation Tool through a simple online process.
6. New certificates. Students will have an opportunity to earn a GeorgiaBEST@School certificate of participation each year. GDOL will post a new template each academic year so teachers can print certificates for those students who meet the criteria. The GeorgiaBEST@Work certificate will be based on 90 days of employer observation. This is the certificate that is signed by Commissioner Butler. The employer can print the certificate for those employees who meet the criteria.
7. New training materials including lesson plans, study guides, resources, videos, teacher’s manuals, facilitator’s guides, icebreaker activities, and a library of ethical choice scenarios.

### How is it administered/What is the timeline for implementation?

The GeorgiaBEST program is administered at no-cost by the GDOL through a partnership with the UNG. When launched in July 2018, the new website will serve as a portal or “front door” to access the UNG platforms that allow registration; house the lesson plans, activities, videos, manuals, and other training materials; provide access to the online evaluation tool; and the capability to print the GeorgiaBEST certificates. Statewide rollout is planned for August 1, 2018.