

PRESS RELEASE



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NEW STUDY BY VIRGINIA LEARNS, AMERICA SUCCEEDS, AND EMSI BURNING GLASS SHEDS LIGHT ON THE DURABLE SKILLS VIRGINIA EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

The “High Demand for Durable Skills” report underscores the need to prioritize development of lifelong skillsets in our K-12 public education system. Virginia Learns is actively championing this goal across the Commonwealth.

RICHMOND, VA - Virginia Learns has collaborated with America Succeeds and Emsi Burning Glass to promote the “High Demand for Durable Skills” report that details which durable skills employers want their employees to have.

Durable skills – previously referred to as “soft” or “life” skills – are those that learners can take with them to whatever careers they choose and wherever they go professionally. These skills are important - regardless of educational attainment levels - and include important factors such as critical thinking and the ability to collaborate on a team while effectively communicating with others.

The [High Demand for Durable Skills](#) report was developed by studying over 30,000 companies and more than 2.3 million job postings across the Commonwealth over the past two years. Emsi Burning Glass found that communication, leadership, and metacognition are the top three durable skills employers are looking for in Virginia. These durable skills align perfectly with the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, which describes the knowledge, skills, attributes and experiences identified by employers, higher education and the state Board of Education as critical for future success.

“This report shows us that 79% of the job postings studied demanded durable skills - the need for these skills is clearly embedded in our workforce already. The next step is integrating these into our education system at every level,” said **Robert Nomberg, president and CEO of Virginia Learns**. “These findings are something educators, policymakers, and business leaders alike should pay attention to and ask themselves: ‘Are we really preparing students for the future?’ This is the natural evolution of the *Profile of the Virginia Graduate*.”

The High Demand for Durable Skills report also debunks a common misconception reported among job seekers that “hard skills” are what stand out to employers. The report refutes this claim by showing that the top five durable skills were requested by employers four times more than the top five hard skills.

Tom McInerney, Genworth President and CEO and Virginia Learns director, stated, “Serving Genworth’s nearly 3 million policyholders requires technical skills, from actuaries to customer service. It’s the durable skills, though, like empathy, a growth mindset, communication, and critical thinking, that enable us to work as a team across our areas of technical expertise.”

Sharon Dabney-Wooldridge, Virginia Learns director stated, “As CEO of The Kleane Kare Team, Inc. for 36 years, it has become apparent to me the importance of Durable Skills to move the needle in the success of the company. A honed skill set in communication increases productivity and improves relationships with co-workers. The Durable Skills allows the workforce and management to work as a team to accomplish company goals and meet client expectations.”

“We hire and onboard hundreds of new employees every year at Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Virginia. Coming out of the pandemic these durable skills will be even more invaluable as Anthem adjusts to an ever-changing landscape,” said **Jeff Ricketts, Anthem Virginia President and Virginia Learns director**.

“Estes Express Lines has been in business for over 90 years and we now employ over 20,000 teammates. While technical skills have altered the nature of our core operations, our teammates have always needed the core durable skills of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creative thinking,” said **Rob Estes, Estes Express Lines President and CEO and Virginia Learns director**.

“The need for inclusive, soft skills-based education and hiring was apparent long before the pandemic but COVID-19 has greatly accelerated existing trends,” said **Tim Taylor, co-founder, and president of America Succeeds**. “We launched this unique research initiative to start a national conversation around Durable Skills so that schools understand the importance of educating for them and corporate leaders recognize the urgent need to partner with the education system to solve their workforce challenges.”

“Seven of the 10 most requested skills by Virginia employers were durable skills. In fact, Virginia employers on average request Communication and Leadership skills more often than other employers across the U.S.,” said **Anna Brown, Economist and Vice President of Education Consulting at Emsi Burning Glass**.

Virginia Learns intends to use the report to further its goal of creating the workforce Virginia employers need and setting students up for success in school, work, and life. Many notable businesses in Virginia have already joined this effort, including Allianz Partners, Bassett, Anthem, Atlantic Union Bank, Estes, and Genworth. Virginia Learns is actively seeking other businesses with a like-minded interest in revitalizing Virginia's public education system. For more details on how your company can get involved, visit Virginia Learns at VirginiaLearns.org/durable_skills. The High Demand for Durable Skills report can be downloaded from the Virginia Learns website by [clicking here](#).

About Virginia Learns

Virginia Learns is a nonpartisan nonprofit and statewide education operating foundation. Through aligned leadership, we inform and influence local and state decision makers; amplify the voices of those most impacted by education policy decisions; and advance state and local partnerships that bring needed change and positive results. Virginia Learns is the only business group whose sole mission is to strengthen education. We accomplish this goal by creating a trusting and collaborative relationship with businesses, educators, and policymakers so we can create the workforce Virginia needs and set students up for success in school, work, and life.

About America Succeeds

America Succeeds is a non-profit organization based in Denver that is committed to improving educational opportunity, outcomes, and equity by harnessing the power and acumen of the business community in accelerating systems change. The organization is uniquely positioned between business and the education policy sector—acting as an “education voice to business” nationally and a “business voice for education” at the state-level.

About Emsi Burning Glass

Emsi Burning Glass is a leader in advanced labor market analytics, including the development of skills data to better connect job seekers and employers. Emsi Burning Glass provides its clients with the knowledge and tools needed to make strategic, data-driven decisions, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their action plans, which result in wealth creation for their citizens. For over 20 years, Emsi Burning Glass's economists and data scientists have been taking traditional labor market and industry data and making it understandable and actionable for clients. Emsi Burning Glass Skills represents the next evolution of analyzing labor market information, now from a real-time perspective.