

SkillsUSA Overview



Historical Perspective and Introduction to SkillsUSA

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled work force. We help each student excel.

Almost every segment of the American economy is suffering from a shortage of well-trained, highly employable skilled workers. Hundreds of American industries have turned to SkillsUSA as a source of technical employees who exemplify "Champions at Work." This quality is achieved through a commitment by SkillsUSA students to a philosophy of work and life, a philosophy that informs not only job skills but job attitudes as well. The effect of that commitment is displayed at the [SkillsUSA Championships](#).

SkillsUSA is a nonprofit educational association founded in 1965. Today, SkillsUSA serves more than 302,000 student and instructors, organized into more than 14,700 sections and 54 state and territorial associations. SkillsUSA has served more than 8.8 million members. SkillsUSA is in public high schools, career and technical centers, and junior and community colleges. SkillsUSA has developed more than 8.8 million workers through active partnerships between employers and educators. SkillsUSA is recognized by state and federal departments of education as a vital part of career, technical and occupational education.

SkillsUSA complements technical skills training with instruction in the "employability skills" that employers increasingly cite as deficient in the emerging work force. SkillsUSA activities develop creativity, problem-solving skills, team work, leadership, self-esteem and integrity—all competencies and foundation skills urged by Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), which was formed by the U.S. Department of Labor. SkillsUSA also introduces students to the corporate quality culture and emphasizes the dignity of work, high standards in trade ethics and workmanship, life-long learning and job safety. Community service, patriotism and an understanding of the free enterprise system are also core elements of a SkillsUSA education. SkillsUSA bridges the gap between "school work" and the "workplace."

Business and industry rely heavily on the skills our nation's young people receive in Career and technical education. Active participation of business and industry in the educational process is the key to SkillsUSA's success. SkillsUSA has pioneered and enhanced links between education and corporate America. Involvement with SkillsUSA gives employers a direct link with the educational system. There is an even exchange of benefits as teachers provide relevant training and employers put well-prepared people to work.

[The SkillsUSA Championships](#) is the annual capstone to the long devotion of students to [SkillsUSA's Program of Work](#). A major element in the program of work involves competitions, designed by business and industry, in which SkillsUSA students demonstrate their

occupational and leadership skills. The Louisiana SkillsUSA Championships represents the culmination of contests held at local and district levels across the state. There is no better forum at which to witness the quality and relevance of technical training in American public education than the SkillsUSA Championships.

Throughout the year, SkillsUSA features 10,000 skill competitions all over the United States at the local, regional and state levels. State champions go on to compete in the SkillsUSA Championships. This two-day event represents a \$36.0 million dollar investment by business, industry and labor in staff time, travel, supplies and materials. It requires 500,000 square feet of floor space. The SkillsUSA Championships is the result of involvement throughout the year with business and industry technical committees that run the contests. Over 5,800 students demonstrate the skills needed, both personally and professionally, to be a winner in today's society.

Some of our high-performance state competitors have the opportunity to compete at the national level. SkillsUSA Louisiana strives to prepare our competitors not only for the SkillsUSA Championships, but more importantly to prepare them to enter the work force.

SkillsUSA competitions motivate tomorrow's skilled workers to achieve. The entire competitive process, from local through international levels, is guided by the work of technical committees, drawn from business and industry, who design and manage the contests. The expectations of business and industry for entry-level skilled workers are thereby transmitted throughout the educational system. SkillsUSA programs are successful examples of applied learning, school-to-work transitions and business-education partnerships.

SkillsUSA has helped develop more than six million workers through active partnerships between employers and educators. Founded in 1965, its founders include the U.S. Department of Education, AFL-CIO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Career and Technical Education Association and National Association of State Supervisors of Trade and Industrial Education. State and federal departments of education recognize SkillsUSA as a vital part of career, technical and occupational education.

Active participation of business and industry keys SkillsUSA's success. SkillsUSA has pioneered and enhanced links between education and corporate America. Involvement with SkillsUSA gives employers a direct link with the technical educational system, producing an even exchange of benefits as students receive more relevant training and employers put better-prepared people to work.

[The Youth Development Foundation of SkillsUSA, Inc.](#) raises awareness, involvement and funds to support SkillsUSA's progressive programs. Funds come from corporations, foundations, trade associations, labor organizations and individuals. Since 1972, the YDF has raised more than \$8 million.

SkillsUSA conducts an annual [National Leadership and Skills Conference](#) (NLSC) during the last week of June. This includes the SkillsUSA Championships, which showcases the finest Career and technical students in more than 94 skilled trade and leadership competitions. Featured are more than 5,800 contestants, 1,500 judges and corporate technical committee members, and thousands of spectators, all on the equivalent of 11 football fields of competition floor space. The estimated total business contribution to this event exceeds \$36.0 million! This includes corporate staff time, expenses and overhead and in-kind donations of equipment and supplies.

National experts in each field set standards and evaluate the contestants. These skill standards represent the closest thing there is in many trades to a national set of industry standards for training tomorrow's skilled work force. Updated and distributed to nearly 14,000 educators every year, the SkillsUSA Championships Technical Standards is used by SkillsUSA instructors in preparing students for local, state and national skill competitions.

Some contestants who do well at the SkillsUSA Championships earn the opportunity to compete in SkillsUSA's qualifying trials for the [World Skills Competition](#). Trials are conducted at major trade shows related to particular skills. Involvement of business and industry, associations and foundations, through funding and training the contestants, is essential for TeamUSA to compete against 35 other nations. Although the SkillsUSA Championships and the WSC are SkillsUSA's most visible programs, there are many more program of work activities going on throughout the year in local chapters.

SkillsUSA has been serving students, educators and members of business and industry by being responsive to employers' needs, as well as education mandates and trends. Business, industry and education partnerships thrive in contests, as well as curricula programs that require industry input in classroom standards.

SkillsUSA offers local teachers resources that are incorporated into their curricula. Among these is SkillsUSA's widely used and award-winning [Professional Development Program \(PDP\)](#). PDP was the only recipient of the International Association for Continuing Education and Training's "1996 Oracle Award." PDP helps individual students master the skills they need to make a smooth transition from school to work. Through a stepped incentive program, PDP helps students map out career paths, set goals, learn job interview and resume writing skills and make contacts in their occupational fields. Business and industry representatives as well as teachers, monitor students' progress. PDP is endorsed by Allied Signal Aerospace, Caterpillar Inc., DEWALT Industrial Tool Co. General Motors Corporation, Toyota Motor Sales USA, J.C. Penney Co. Inc., and Sears, Roebuck and Co. These companies use it as their gold standard for teaching employability skills.

In the training programs in Louisiana we use the SkillsUSA PDP to give our students the edge in order to make a smooth transition from school to work. The SkillsUSA PDP teaches and guides students thought 70 employability skills lessons.

Companies partnering with SkillsUSA can participate in recommending training standards. An affiliated company has a direct link to schools and instructors in 102 different skill training categories and in thousands of shops, classrooms and labs nationwide. This gives companies access to students who are the best our public technical educational system has to offer.

"The PDP is absolutely fundamental to employment skills, and maybe even more important that, to life skills."

Bob Flint, General Manager, Remanufactured Products Group, Caterpillar Inc.

We at SkillsUSA are proud of our students and our alumni. They truly are among the finest workers and trainees in America.