The best way to determine if someone can do something is to see them to do it. If we want to know whether students have active listening skills, it makes sense to have them demonstrate how to listen actively -- i.e., to require the performance we wish to elicit and evaluate.

The Lab’s 21st Century Skills Badges are comprised of performance assessments “The Proving Ground” at the sub-competency level. Each badge has 4 core sub-competency components, so students go through a series of 4 Proving Grounds for each badge they earn.

By their very nature, competencies are applied; they are about doing, not simply knowing. This is particularly relevant given employers’ well-documented frustration with the inability of most college graduates to apply their content knowledge in the workplace. These 21st Century Skills Badges can play an important role in demonstrating that students who have earned these badges can indeed apply their knowledge and skills in context where and when it is needed.

The Proving Ground is a place for an employer to see students flexing their skill muscles in a relevant and useful way. While it’s important for students to learn how to write a research paper, and it does help build upon many of our 21st century skills, it’s not an artifact employers are likely to use when judging a job candidate. Instead, the Proving Ground asks students to apply those skills to work-based scenarios like gathering and evaluating stats for a presentation, confronting a difficult situation with a manager, or recognizing biases in the office.

The Lab believes these 21st Century Skills are being learned everywhere; from gathering the neighborhood kids for a game of capture the flag, to writing an APA style research paper for your US History class. No matter where the skills are practiced and developed, all learners will be able to strut their stuff (skills) in the Proving Ground, so employers can quickly and clearly see their skills translated into a situation that’s relevant and realistic.

Jump in and see the Proving Ground assessments along with the rest of the FREE Badge Toolkit:
Sign up at eddesignlab.org/badge-access-form/