

## Soft Skills: What Should Have Been Learned in Kindergarten

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**ABSTRACT:** Today's employers demand a talent pool armed with both *hard* and *soft* (aka *power*) skills. Sadly, the focus on development of the *power* skills ends somewhere between kindergarten and college. Discussion will center on core *power* skills which include: teamwork, communication, positive attitude, problem solving/critical thinking, professionalism, and time management. Come join us for an interactive discussion focused on designing activities and assessment strategies that promote the development of *power* skills to unleash the full potential of our graduates.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** At the conclusion of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Explain **what** soft skills are
- Describe **why** you should emphasize developing soft skills
- Identify **how** to develop activities focused on developing soft skills

**ONLINE RESOURCES:** The presentation and links to other resources related to soft skills are available virtually at:

<https://padlet.com/erikatSFSC/softskills>

or use this QR Code →



# Integrating Soft Skills into a Course

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>Course</b> |  |
|---------------|--|

|                                               | <b>Included?</b> | <b>How to incorporate it</b> | <b>How to assess it</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Teamwork</i>                               |                  |                              |                         |
| <i>Verbal Communication</i>                   |                  |                              |                         |
| <i>Written Communication</i>                  |                  |                              |                         |
| <i>Positive Attitude</i>                      |                  |                              |                         |
| <i>Problem Solving/<br/>Critical Thinking</i> |                  |                              |                         |
| <i>Professionalism</i>                        |                  |                              |                         |
| <i>Time Management</i>                        |                  |                              |                         |

# ***Infusing Soft Skills: Activities and More***

| Soft Skills                                  | Activities                             | Extension Activities                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Teamwork</b>                              | Do a skit                              | Write a case study                                                |
|                                              | Journaling activity                    | Complete a quiz                                                   |
|                                              | Small group reflection                 | Poster presentation                                               |
|                                              | Create a list, draw a picture, act out | Write a report                                                    |
| <b>Verbal Communication</b>                  | Watch a video followed by discussion   | Develop a hands-on activity                                       |
|                                              | Demo then reflection/discussion        | Give an oral presentation                                         |
|                                              | Role play then reflection/discussion   | Write a reflection journal                                        |
|                                              | Brainstorm possible solutions          | Create a top 10 list relevant to the topic                        |
| <b>Written Communication</b>                 | Discuss a quote                        | Make a video                                                      |
|                                              | Skill inventory then reflect           | Learning log                                                      |
|                                              | Teambuilding exercise                  | PowerPoint presentation                                           |
|                                              | Discuss a case study                   | Write and perform a skit                                          |
| <b>Positive Attitude</b>                     | What would you do if...                | Make a TV or radio commercial                                     |
|                                              | Tell me about a time when...           | Create a flow chart or diagram                                    |
|                                              | Conversation starter prompt            | Create questions and an answer key                                |
|                                              | Group activity                         | Make an instructional video                                       |
| <b>Problem Solving<br/>Critical Thinking</b> | Discussions                            | Create an infographic                                             |
|                                              | Hold a debate                          | Use a Venn diagram to compare two aspects of the topic            |
|                                              | Concept map                            | Make a pamphlet or brochure                                       |
|                                              | Unfolding case studies                 | Write a newspaper article                                         |
| <b>Professionalism</b>                       | Real-world simulation                  | Write a series of tweets                                          |
|                                              | Storytelling                           | Create a Facebook wall                                            |
|                                              | Cognitive rehearsal                    | Create a Pinterest board                                          |
|                                              | Mind mapping                           | Start a blog                                                      |
| <b>Time Management</b>                       | Team STEPPS                            | Create an Internet scavenger hunt                                 |
|                                              | Pop Up Coffee House                    | Write an advice column with several problems related to the topic |
|                                              | World Cafe                             | Create flash cards or trivia cards                                |
|                                              | Socratic Seminar                       | Make a short documentary film                                     |
|                                              | Philosophical Chairs                   | Create a newsletter                                               |
|                                              | Jigsaw Activity                        |                                                                   |
|                                              | Analyze a Photograph                   |                                                                   |

# 30 Tips to Teach Soft Skills

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1. Give students authentic choices about how they're going to learn and be assessed.
2. Provide a learning environment where trust, initiative, and taking risks are encouraged.
3. Hold all students to the same high standards.
4. Model perseverance by not giving up on students.
5. Support students by helping them find their own way.
6. Demonstrate alternate paths to content mastery.
7. Teach to the whole person (not just the "student").
8. Treat your students as mature individuals, even when they aren't following instructions.
9. Talk about tailoring communication styles for different audiences.
10. Build students' interpersonal skills through an environment of humility and respect.
11. Help students practice taking on different roles in different situations.
12. Differentiate opportunities for personal growth and opportunities for team growth.
13. Cultivate a sense of responsibility through meaningful and unique contribution.
14. Assign group exercises that give people the opportunity to speak, listen, write, organize, and lead.
15. Assess learning through interactive evaluations of real-world demonstrations of learning.
16. Challenge students' reactions to new obstacles and situations.
17. Emphasize that the same solution doesn't necessarily work every time, even in the same situation.
18. Incorporate exercises in delayed gratification in order to build persistence and grit.
19. Start grading students on how well they listen to their peers.
20. Discuss the importance of social-emotional intelligence in the real world.
21. Design opportunities for students to build and demonstrate resilience.
22. Make learning a personal experience, highlighting the way education shapes personality.
23. Create opportunities for students to innovate, both on their own and in groups.
24. Draw attention to the differences between online and in-person social etiquette.
25. Reward students who are willing to admit they're wrong.
26. Recognize students who are committed to communicating ideas to others.
27. Hold brainstorm sessions in which students list the possible uses for various soft skills.
28. Help build motivation through principles of self-reliance (read: Emerson, Thoreau).
29. Keep an open ear and encourage students to develop new thoughts and ideas they may have.
30. Develop learning ability through greater awareness of individual learning processes.