SOFT SKILLS: The Missing Component That Prevents Many Students From Blasting Off Into Their Careers

Soft Skills: The Missing Component That Prevents Many Students From Blasting Off Into Their Careers

Warm-up Challenge

Puzzle Challenge

What Skills Did You Notice At Work?

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Time Management
- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Adaptability
- Creativity
- Leadership
- Positive Attitude
- Interpersonal Skills
- Willingness to Learn
- Resilience
- Attention to Detail
- Influencing
- Personal Skills
- Organization

Learning Outcomes

- Be able to explain what soft skills are.
- Be able to describe why you should emphasize developing soft skills.
- Be able to identify how to develop activities focused on developing soft skills.

Kindergarten to College

Learning Outcomes

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Note Taking Guide

Put questions here

Put notes here

Summarize here

Soft Skills

What?

Soft Skills

A simple term for a complex set of personal qualities

Origin of the term “soft skills”

U.S. Army training manual in the 1972
“skills, abilities, and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge.”

Many Other Names

• Power Skills
• Employability Skills
• Communication Skills
• People Skills
• Emotional Intelligence

• Behavioral Skills
• Leadership Skills
• Human Skills
• Personal Skills
• Interpersonal Skills

Soft vs. Hard Skills

Soft skills are character traits and interpersonal skills that characterize a person’s relationship with other people.

Hard skills are specific, quantifiable, and teachable abilities that can be defined and measured.
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Hard and Soft Skills Should be Taught in Tandem

Hard Skills

Soft Skills

Soft Skills Get a Bad Rap!

• General public says..
  • They’re soft.
  • Not measurable or teachable.
  • Not very important.

• Research says..
  • They are hard!
  • They are measurable and teachable!
  • They are important!

Changing Nature of Soft Skills

No longer easy to tell the tone of voice

Bad News

Some people are innately better than others at soft skills

Good News

Soft skills can be trained, coached, and developed

Which is most important?

A. Teamwork
B. Communication
C. Positive Attitude
D. Critical Thinking
E. Professionalism
F. Time Management
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**Why?**

- **Because there is a need!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Considered Essential by hiring managers</th>
<th>Rated Proficiency by college graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork/Collaboration</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking/Problem Solving</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism/Work Ethic</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral/Written Communications</td>
<td>95.9%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Management</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

**Reframing the WHY**

*We must be willing to disrupt the way we do business or someone else will!*

**21st Century Challenge**

80% of executives believe we need to fuse the three R’s with the four C’s

- **Reading**
- **Writing**
- **Arithmetic**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Creativity**
- **Collaboration**
- **Communication**

**What amount of job success attributable to soft skills excellence?**

- A. 27%
- B. 46%
- C. 65%
- D. 85%

**December 2019**
What percent of executives rate soft skills at least as important as technical skills?

A. 43%
B. 63%
C. 78%
D. 92%

What percent of executives report difficulty finding talent with soft skills?

A. 36%
B. 55%
C. 73%
D. 89%

“We hire for hard skills. We fire for soft skills.”

https://www.ispot.tv/ad/d5qg/mcdonalds-skills-that-work-for-you

Shoulder Partner Activity

Discuss with your shoulder partner what soft skills are and why they are important in the workplace

How?
Teaching **Soft Skills**

Cannot be done in a vacuum but must be...

- Introduced
- Developed
- Refined
- Practiced
- Reinforced

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Follow the Universal Design for Learning

- Enable demonstration of learning through multiple modalities
- Encourage the use of technology
- Include opportunities for "do-overs"
- Provide instructions identifying steps to completion
- Encourage students to present their own thoughts and opinions
- Provide feedback in multiple forms
- Include opportunities for students to collaborate
- Provide opportunities for students to ask questions

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Learning Content should be...

- Engaging and fun
- Easy to understand and complete
- Relevant to their needs
- Applicable not only to workplace but their personal lives as well
- Presented in ways that make it easy to digest and retain

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Implementation Options

- Offer as a stand-alone course (1-2 credits)
- Embed components into curriculum of every program
- Offer as CWE course

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Recommended Framework

1. Discussion
2. Activity
3. Conclusion/Reflection
4. Extension Activity

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Discussion

- Start the class with a short overview of the topic
- Engage in discussion
- Present a situation and ask for comments
- Show a video and then discuss
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Activity

- Engage students in a fun, yet meaningful, activity focused on a specific soft skill
- Easy to understand and relevant
- Applicable to both workplace and home
- Presented so it easy to digest and retain

Activity Examples

- Perform a skit
- Journaling activity
- Discuss a quote
- Draw a concept map
- Analyze a photograph
- Unfolding case study
- Watch a video then discuss/reflect

Conclusion/Reflection

- Summarize what should have been learned from the activity
- Ask students some reflective questions
  - What would you do?
  - What would you tell your friend?

Extension Activity

- After-class assignment to assess the learning that was accomplished
- Individual or group assignment
- Options:
  - Post online for others to comment
  - Present in class at next meeting
  - Submit for evaluation and grade

Extension Activity Examples

- Create a poster presentation
- Create an infographic
- Develop a hands-on activity
- Write and perform a skit
- Create an internet scavenger hunt
- Create a Facebook wall
- Make a video

Teaching Time Management

Critical Thinking
Creativity
Collaboration
Communication
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Time Management

- Effective planner
- Organizing time
- Prioritization of tasks
- Process of planning time
- Time allocation
- Time analysis
- Time control
- Time optimization
- Time scheduling
- Timing
- Working time arrangement

Discussion

- In small groups, define time management and multitasking
- Make a list of skills involved in managing time
- Compare lists with other groups
- Can you be effective doing two or more tasks at the same time? Let’s find out!

Teaching Time Management Activity

Activity Example - Part 1

- Write down your typical morning routine while *simultaneously* counting out loud backwards from 100 by ones
- Record the number of words you wrote and the number you reached

Activity Example - Part 2

- Write down your typical morning routine
- Record number of words you wrote
- Now, count backwards from 100 by ones
- Record the number you reached

Conclusion

- Compare your results from Parts 1 and 2
- What observations did you notice?
- Now, how effective do you think you are at multitasking?
- Share some apps related to time management
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Extension Activity
- Write a case study on time management
- Develop a hands-on activity on time management
- Write a reflective journal
- Find and review 10 apps related to time management
- Create an Internet scavenger hunt related to time management

Teaching Communication

Communication
- Able to listen
- Listening
- Negotiation
- Nonverbal communication
- Persuasion
- Presentation
- Public speaking
- Read body language
- Storytelling
- Verbal communication
- Visual communication
- Writing reports/proposals
- Writing skills

Discussion
- Communication comes in many forms (e.g., verbal, aural, non-verbal, written, visual)
  - Can you give me an example of each?
- It is important to understand your preferred communication method and those you work with
- Communication skills are some of the most desired skills employers look for

Activity Example
- Get a sheet of paper (last page of handout)
- Hold it in front of you
- Close your eyes and listen carefully to my directions
- The rules: No peeking or questions!
- Fold your sheet of paper in half
- Now, tear off the upper right-hand corner
- Fold the paper in half again and tear off the upper left-hand corner
- Fold in half again in half
- Now tear off the lower right-hand corner
• Open your eyes and unfold your paper. If I did a good job of communicating and you did a good job of listening, all of our sheets should look exactly the same!
• Hold up your sheet for everyone to see. Compare your sheet with others.
• Why do you think no one else’s paper matched your paper exactly?

Conclusion
• Part of being a good communicator is recognizing that people need to receive information in different ways in order to be successful.
• If the goal of this activity was really to have everyone’s snowflakes look exactly the same, what changes could have been made to the directions?
• Work in small group to create a definition of “Good Communication” by making a list of responsibilities for being a good communicator and a good listener.

Extension Activities
• Create a poster on communication
• Develop a hands-on activity on communication
• Create a top 10 list of good communication traits
• Create an instructional video on communication
• Write an advice column with several communication problems

Teaching Teamwork

Teamwork
• Accept feedback
• Collaborative
• Customer service
• Deal with difficult situations
• Deal with office politics
• Disability awareness
• Diversity awareness
• Emotional intelligence
• Empathetic
• Establish interpersonal relationships
• Intercultural competence
• Interpersonal skills
• Influential
• Networking
• Persuasive
• Self-awareness
• Selling skills
• Social skills
• Team building
• Team player
Discussion

- If you were picking players to play on your soccer team, what attributes would you look for?
- Discuss how not everyone who plays on a soccer team can score the goal but everyone has an important role to play
- Relate soccer example of teamwork to the workplace

Activity

- Divide the class into smaller groups
- Each group is assigned one scenario
- Ask each group to develop a skit and act out BOTH a positive and negative alternative for working through and solving their assigned scenario

What would you say to a team member who...

1. Is always late
2. Starts side conversations during discussions
3. Gets upset when his/her recommendations are not followed
4. Hogs the conversation/discussion
5. Leaves before the job/work is done
6. Constantly jokes and get people off track
7. Refuses to work with a “certain” team member
8. Won’t share in the leadership role
9. Just sits there

Conclusion

- Working in small groups, make a list of the attributes of a good team player.
- Have you been a team player in this assignment? Convince those in your group.
- Why do you think employers value team players?
- Your best friend is in trouble at work because she is not a team player. What suggestions would you give to her?

Extension Activities

- Create a poster on teamwork
- Create a video related to teamwork
- Create an infographic related to teamwork
- Write and perform a skit related to teamwork
- Write an advice column with several teamwork problems

Now, It’s Your Turn!

- Each table is assigned a different soft skill
- At your table, discuss teaching that skill
- Develop a draft lesson with a:
  - Discussion
  - Activity
  - Conclusion/Reflection
  - Extension Activity
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30 Tips to Teach Soft Skills

Infusing Soft Skills: Activities and More

Soft Skill Teaching Plan Activity

LET’S DEBRIEF

Skills to Pay the Bills

- Curriculum developed by ODEP focused on teaching “soft” or workforce readiness skills
- Modular, hands-on, engaging activities and videos that focus on six key skill areas:
  - Communication
  - Enthusiasm and Attitude
  - Teamwork
  - Networking
  - Problem Solving and Critical Thinking
  - Professionalism

Resources

https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/

Also available in Spanish
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Employability Skills

Soft Skills Addressed:
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Time Management
- Critical Thinking
- Innovation
- Leadership
- Negotiation
- Effective Boundaries
- Written Communication
- Productivity
- Customer Experience

Curriculum Components:
- Teacher Guide
- Teacher Workbooks - set of 5
- 5G Power Skills Presentation Slides
- Multiple Student Centers - set of 19

Length:
This 5G™ Power Skills curriculum is comprised of 16 lessons.

https://www.realityworks.com/

5G™ Power Skills Certification

https://www.5gmatrix.com/

Learning Reflection

- Can you explain what soft skills are?
- Can you describe why you should emphasize developing soft skills?
- Can you identify how to develop activities focused on developing soft skills?

Bit.ly/TeachingSoftSkills
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Will you consider promoting training on soft skills at your institution?

A. Already do!
B. Yes
C. Maybe
D. No

How will you implement soft skills training at your institution?

A. Imbed into curriculum
B. Stand-alone course
C. CWE
D. All of the above
E. Not sure

Questions?

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