

Post Secondary Education to Teach Soft Skills

Part 1

Ensuring Successful Outcomes

Jefferson Parish Transition Capacity Building Initiative

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What are Soft Skills



- Soft skills are non-technical skills that help people get a job and keep a job
- Soft skills are not generally skill specific and make it more difficult to teach and measure
- Soft skills are sometimes referred to as “people skills”

What are soft skills?

Communication is often the most highly ranked soft skill identified by potential employers

Other highly valued soft skills:

- Professionalism
- Problem Solving, Decision Making and Critical Thinking
- Teamwork
- Enthusiasm and Attitude
- Adaptability
- Confidence
- **These traits are more important than technical skills because employees are unable or unwilling to teach and/or remediate soft skills.**



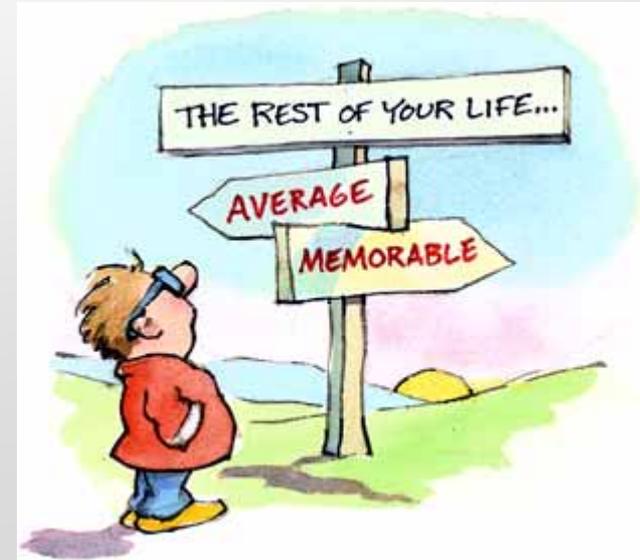
Soft Skills Identified

- U.S. DOL identified six major areas for teaching soft skills in a curriculum developed:
- communication,
- enthusiasm and attitude
- teamwork
- networking
- problem solving and critical thinking
- professionalism



Case in point:

- How does a HS graduate make it to the age of 23 never having been employed?
- Despite the fact that they might have watched children and pets for many families, they likely never actually went through the process of composing a resume and cover letter.
- And never had an interview of any kind.
- When it was time to experience employment, there were a lot of failures that could have been avoided. With a focus on soft skills their success would have arrived sooner!



Promote part time work!

- The process needs to begin while the student is in high school
- Prepare them for interviews and employment by focusing on necessary soft skills
- Teach soft skills in all environments



Hard vs Soft Skills ~ Examples

Hard Skills:

- Calculations
- Computer programming
- Speaking a foreign language
- Completing a cosmetology certificate or any other certificate or degree program
- Driving a car
- Being a good writer
- Knowing how to use tools



Hard vs Soft Skills ~ Examples

Soft Skills:

- Having good manners
- Taking initiative
- Time management
- Getting along with people
- Adaptability/Flexibility
- Integrity
- Being able to ask for help at the appropriate time
- Problem Solving
- ... and many, many more



Hard Skills vs Soft Skills~ Examples:

Baseball player

- Hard skills = Hitting the ball, catching the ball, running the bases
- Soft skill = Accepting the umpire's decision

Surgeon

- Hard skills = Good eye hand coordination, knowledge of anatomy, precision at "cutting"
- Soft skill = Speaking to the patient in a caring manner, aka "good bedside manner"

Why talk about soft skills?

Post high school reality:

- Students need to be prepared for competitive employment
- Employees need to possess hard and soft skills
- SLPs, Job Coaches, Parents and Teachers won't be there to assist past a certain point



Real World Issues with Working Hard Skills vs Soft Skills

27 year old male employee with Asperger's with expert programming skills

Manager/employer had been coached on some considerations:

- how to facilitate employee's participation at Team meetings
- how to help employee deal with lunch time routines plus other ways to help him feel more comfortable at work
- Employee left job after four months of his six month contract

Real World Issues with Working~Hard Skills vs Soft Skills

- Expert programmer = hard skill
- Environmental modifications = understanding manager/employer = employee had success at meetings, lunch
- Quit b/c did not want to write documentation, a necessary but tedious part of writing code (programming)

Employee struggled with soft skills of:

- Adaptability and Attitude
- In HS, student was waived/accommodated to not have to do tedious work he could prove he knew...which did not help him build the skill for tolerating a task

Teacher role in teaching soft skills;

Most students with language issues, even those with good social skills/pragmatics, need assistance with developing soft skills

Examples:

- Constructing email asking teachers for assistance
- Problem solving difficult peer challenges
- **Students with pragmatic and social language issues, as well as those students with executive function issues, have even more difficulty with soft skills**

“GETTING THE DUCKS IN A ROW!”

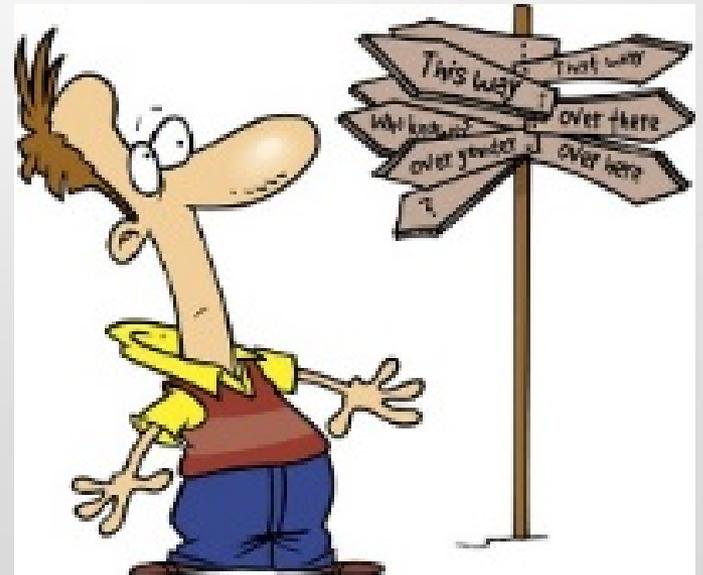


Students struggle with:

- Idioms and figurative language
- Multiple meaning words
- Nuances of language such as tone, inflection, sarcasm
- Ambiguous language
- Body Language
- So many “roads” lead to miscommunication

Cutting out the CONFUSION

- Miscommunication easily leads to confusion = poor job (or school) performance
- Communication and other areas are essential soft skills
- Our students need explicit instruction and practice in order to improve.
- Teachers can provide support and strategies for teaching soft skills.



The End

- Questions and/or Comments?