Hard Look at Soft Skills

How to Implement Soft Skills Development

With David Grimes
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The Role of Education in Building Soft Skills

Putting into Perspective the Priorities and Opportunities for Teaching Collaboration and Other Soft Skills in Education

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SMART
Figure 3 Focus on Ideal Mix of Skills versus Knowledge

We need to equip students with skills, knowledge, and empathy that will make them constructive leaders in a volatile future. We thought educators could guess
The Why
What does a model graduate look like at your school?
Veterinary Tech  Home Inspection
Medical Assisting  Massage Therapy  Industrial
Hospitality  Criminal Justice  Culinary  Aviation  Billing and Coding
Nursing  Welding  CDL Training  HVAC  Dental  Cosmetology
Information Technology  Business  Media  Nutrition

Teamwork
Collaboration  Critiques  Leadership

Communication
Verbal  Writing  Body Language

Critical thinking
Adaptability  Troubleshooting  Resourceful  Tolerant of Change

Work Ethic
Dependable  Make Deadlines  Time Management
“Repetition of the same thought or physical action develops into a habit which, repeated frequently enough, becomes an automatic reflex.”

-Norman Vincent Peale
Author & Minister
How do we embed it into the curriculum?
How to Start
Standards

Look to the career field for guidelines to include
Community

Look to local business leaders, handbooks, and advisory boards

Washington’s Tech Workforce Has An Emotional Intelligence Problem, Say CEOs

“Three different CEOs mentioned that they do not like to hire computer science graduates,” says John Shaw, NVTC’s research and strategic initiatives manager. “They would prefer to hire a liberal arts graduate, because they will have the communication skills that tend to be more of the focus in the liberal arts.”

Some employers told the council they would be willing to hire candidates who lack certain technical competencies as long as they possess soft skills like emotional intelligence. Employers reasoned they “could upskill technical competencies, but [lack] the expertise to do the same with soft skills.”
Frameworks

Look to the career field for guidelines to include
How to implement
Objectives

Specify soft skills students can demonstrate mastery of during the program

Low: The learner will list the six parts of a good employee evaluation

Higher: The learner will be able to appraise the strengths and weaknesses to determine best practices in the workplace from an employee evaluation.
Syllabi

Specify classroom rules to mimic the workplace

Included as objectives, as “rules”, or an addendum
Rubric

Replace the “participation” rubrics with soft skill requirements

Implement “everyday” soft skills regarding professionalism, communication, teamwork, and/or attitude
Role Play

Do not leave out soft skill attributes during demonstrations, procedures, or activities.

Assess the student on the hard and soft skills with customer service, teamwork, and communication.
All our life... is but a mass of habits—practical, emotional, and intellectual—systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly towards our destiny, whatever the latter may be.

- William James
Psychologist and philosopher
Keep in touch.

Thursday: Beyond Knowledge: Investigating Qualities Students Prefer in Faculty

Next week: Building Teamwork and Caring Beyond the Curriculum

May 23-25: Professional Development Conference in Reston, VA
Keep in touch.
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