

DeKalb County Community Foundation

Communityworks Initiative

Report on Soft Skills Planning Process

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NIU Center for
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Alex Barkley, DeKalb County Community Foundation
Larry Bolles, Northern Illinois University
Deanna Cada, DeKalb County Community Foundation
Evelina Cichy, Kishwaukee College
Jane Dargatz, Sycamore Middle School
Robert Hammon, Kishwaukee Education Consortium
Liz Hoppenworth, DeKalb Area Retirement Center – Oak Crest
Shawn Maxwell, DeKalb County Community Foundation
Carol Quenett, Kishwaukee Education Consortium
Jesus Romero, Taxco Restaurant
Carolyn Stambaugh, Sycamore Middle School
Dan Templin, DeKalb County Community Foundation

On April 2, 2009, 10 additional DeKalb County representatives joined members of the Workforce Development Vision Committee to review the draft report and recommend improvements. The following individuals strengthened this report through their thoughtful contributions:

Peter Andrews, Illinois Department of Employment Security
Cohen Barnes, TBC Net Inc
Cindy Capek, DeKalb Park District
Linda Heinisch, DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC)
Mary Hess, Kishwaukee YMCA & DeKalb County KEYS Initiative
Russ Josh, DeKalb County Court Services
Angelo Lekkas, Genoa-Kingston Middle School
Karmen Roberson, Genoa-Kingston Middle School
Rose Treml, Sycamore Chamber of Commerce
Kris Wrenn, Kar-Fre Flowers, Parent Representative

Ten area schools also provided invaluable information about their current practices related to soft skills development with their students. They include:

Camelot School (K-12)
Clinton Rosette Middle School (6-8)
Genoa-Kingston Middle School (6-8)
Hiawatha Junior and Senior High School (6-12)
Huntley Middle School (6-8)
Hinckley-Big Rock Middle School (6-8)
Kishwaukee Education Consortium (6-12)
St. Mary School – DeKalb (PreK-8)
Somonauk Middle School (5-8)
Sycamore Middle School (6-8)

In addition, the authors and the Workforce Development Vision Committee recognize the more than 250 community members – educators, parents, employers, youth service providers, and middle school and community college students – who contributed their ideas and time by participating in focus groups or completing surveys.

DeKalb County Community Foundation Communityworks Initiative Report on Soft Skills Planning Process

Introduction

Success in today's global economy and technologically-connected world requires different skills than those called for only decades earlier. In particular, "soft skills," or the personal skills needed to communicate and relate with others, are growing in importance in today's high performance work environments. Employers are increasingly concerned about a lack of soft skills ranging from problem-solving and teamwork to basic workplace conduct such as punctuality and honesty. Soft skills also are important tools for building solid academic and technical skills as well as strong communities and families.

Developing strong soft skills in youth was identified as an important community need in a series of community forums hosted by the DeKalb County Community Foundation (DCCF) in 2006-2007. DCCF has responded to this need by embarking on a project to build the soft skills of DeKalb County's youth. Using funding provided through the Grand Victoria Foundation's Communityworks initiative, DCCF formed a Workforce Development Vision Committee to guide the design and implementation of a planning process for a DeKalb County soft skills project. Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) was contracted to provide data collection and analysis in support of this project and the effort was launched in March 2008.

Three premises drove this project. One is the importance of building on what is already working in schools and the broader community to foster soft skills in area youth. A second premise is that soft skill development is a community-wide enterprise involving schools, parents*, employers, human service organizations, and other partners. The third premise is that middle school is the developmental target of this project as it represents a period of physical, intellectual, and emotional growth.

This report describes the process, findings, and recommendations associated with DCCF's soft skills planning project. Six sections comprise the body of this document: an executive summary, the methods used for this project, the status of soft skills instruction in DeKalb County, highlights of the stakeholder perception data, main findings, and recommendations. To help with the readability of this report, much of the detail is provided in the attachments.

* Throughout this report the term "parent" includes any individual or person serving as the parent or guardian of a child.

Executive Summary

The DeKalb County Community Foundation (DCCF) has embarked on a project to build the soft skills of DeKalb County's youth with funding provided through the Grand Victoria Foundation's Communityworks initiative. DCCF formed a Workforce Development Vision Committee to guide this project and contracted with Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) to assist in data collection and analysis.

Between April 2008 and March 2009, focus groups and surveys were used to collect perception information about soft skills from more than 250 educators, parents, employers, students, youth service providers, and college students throughout DeKalb County. Five findings emerged from this data:

Finding 1: General agreement exists regarding the importance of the proposed soft skills.

Finding 2: Youth entering the job market may not fully understand the importance of soft skills to success in adulthood.

Finding 3: Parents and schools are viewed as having primary responsibility for teaching soft skills.

Finding 4: The soft skills identified by the DeKalb stakeholders align with other local and national initiatives.

Finding 5: An opportunity exists for DCCF to partner with DeKalb County's educational community to identify strategies for developing soft skills for all youth.

Two recommendations are offered to the Workforce Development Vision Committee to guide the next steps in its deliberations:

1. Consider modifying the 16 soft skills with an eye to consolidation and possibly adding complementary skills included in other national, state, and local frameworks. This more concise skills set should become the basis of a definition of soft skills that also speaks to their importance in today's world.

Solve problems	Work in teams
Negotiate	Behave appropriately in various circumstances
Resolve conflict	Demonstrate self-discipline
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	Demonstrate responsibility
Dress appropriately	Display leadership
Listen actively	Be self-confident
Speak effectively	Demonstrate self-motivation
Respect others	Demonstrate personal organization
2. Approach other community partners, particularly parents, schools, and students, to share the results of the planning process. A number of items should be discussed:
 - a. Work with each stakeholder group to "make the case" for soft skills development. Each sector of the community will respond to different message points about the importance of soft skills to success in life.
 - b. Potential modifications to the definition of soft skills.
 - c. Opportunities to build on existing efforts, such as Developmental Assets, that already convey the importance of soft skills development.
 - d. Ways in which other community members can support their efforts in developing soft skills. For example, schools may need employers to speak directly to their students about the relationship between soft skills and success in the workplace.
 - e. Identify specific roles, strategies, and measurable outcomes for each stakeholder group.

Methods

Focus groups and surveys were the primary data collection tools used for this project. Two sources of information were used to shape the content of these tools. First, an electronic survey was developed and sent to all of the public and private schools in DeKalb County. Questions included how the schools defined, taught, assessed, and partnered with elementary and high schools on soft skills development. Ten of 15 schools responded. The second source of basic information was a half-day workshop with 19 educational administrators and teachers held on April 9, 2008, at the Oak Crest Retirement Center. The participants provided their ideas about the overall structure and purpose of this project and laid a foundation for defining soft skills.

Using the information provided by the schools and educators, a basic set of questions was developed that asked individuals to rate the importance of various soft skills, to suggest additional important soft skills, and identify who should be teaching young people soft skills. These questions formed the basis for both the focus group discussions and the survey. Five additional stakeholder groups were identified: parents, employers, youth service providers, middle school students (7th grade students served this purpose), and college students (community college students served this purpose). The focus group questions and survey instrument were slightly modified for each stakeholder group.

Focus groups were the preferred method for collecting data as they allowed for a more free-flowing exchange of ideas and information. They were used for the initial educator workshop and with employers, middle school youth, and youth service providers. Surveys were used in lieu of a focus group in certain circumstances (i.e., during an evening open house at a middle school) or in addition to the focus group to ensure that skill-specific information was collected. Depending on the venue, this survey was administered either electronically or using paper copies. Data collection occurred between April 2008 and February 2009.

The table below summarizes the data collection methods and number of participants by stakeholder group involved in this project.

Stakeholder Group	Data Collection Method	Number of Participants
Educators	Workshop, Online survey	Workshop - 19 administrators/ Teachers; Survey - 10 schools
Parents	Survey	119
Employers	Focus group and Survey	Focus group - 40; Survey - 14
Youth service providers	Focus group and Survey	13
Students – Middle school	Focus group	27
College Students (Community college students)	Survey	42

As information from each stakeholder group was collected and analyzed by CGS, it was presented to the Workforce Development Vision Committee. These discussions provided an opportunity to compare new information with earlier results and to identify emerging patterns and any inconsistencies in the data. They also resulted in a number of work plan adjustments to strengthen the overall process and take advantage of new opportunities to engage the targeted stakeholder groups. The committee was provided with a review of soft skills research and literature available online, including curricula, programs, and practices. A major conclusion was that there was no single preferred program model or curriculum. The results of this research are provided in Attachment A of this report.

Status of Soft Skills Instruction in DeKalb County

The ten schools responding to the online survey during the summer of 2008 provided information describing a range of approaches and practices related to soft skills development. The ten schools and related grades include:

Camelot School (K-12)
Clinton Rosette Middle School (6-8)
Genoa-Kingston Middle School (6-8)
Hiawatha Junior and Senior High School (6-12)
Huntley Middle School (6-8)
Hinckley-Big Rock Middle School (6-8)
Kishwaukee Education Consortium (6-12)
St. Mary School – DeKalb (PreK-8)
Somonauk Middle School (5-8)
Sycamore Middle School (6-8)

A summary of the results of the survey is provided as Attachment B of this report. Six major observations may be drawn from this information.

1. There is no uniform definition of soft skills and schools use varying elements to describe soft skills. The characteristic used most often to describe soft skills was “relationship,” which referenced both inter- and intra-personal skills.
2. Schools use a variety of educational methods to instill soft skills in their students. These include (in order of frequency):
 - a. Instruction-based strategies (e.g., teaching life, social or study skills, cooperative learning, or integrating soft skills across the curriculum)
 - b. Modeling, demonstrating and reinforcing good soft skills behavior
 - c. Mentoring and other adult-student relationships
 - d. Peer mediation and group interventions
 - e. Specific related initiatives such as character development and preventing gang involvement, violence and bullying
3. Schools range in their assessment practices. Five were using multiple methods (e.g., student observation, disciplinary data, surveys, attendance, and behavioral referrals), three schools used a single method (which included bi-monthly evaluations of each school and student testing), and two schools did not assess soft skills at all.
4. Schools were partnering with community-based organizations (Ben Gordon Center and Youth Service Bureau) and programs to complement and reinforce their own efforts. Community-based programs identified by the schools included Junior Achievement, career fairs, parent-teacher organizations, local retailers, team-building, service students, and peer mentors.
5. Schools were also working with elementary and high schools and post-secondary institutions (Kishwaukee College and Northern Illinois University) to help reinforce soft skills development.
6. A number of the schools described resources that, if provided, would help them teach soft skills to their students. These included textbooks, workbooks and curriculum, as well as exposure to business professionals, other affective programs and practices, and tours of local workplaces.

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Stakeholder Results

Fifteen soft skills formed the basis of the focus groups and surveys used to collect data for this project. A sixteenth skill was later at the suggestion of the stakeholder groups. This set was developed from the skills identified by the educators at the April 9, 2008, workshop and was expanded to include soft skills identified in other studies and reports. The 15 soft skills are:

Solve problems	Work in teams
Negotiate	Behave appropriately in various circumstances
Resolve conflict	Demonstrate self-discipline
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	Demonstrate responsibility
Dress appropriately	Display leadership
Listen actively	Be self-confident
Speak effectively	Demonstrate self-motivate
Respect others	

This section summarizes the data collected for each of the six stakeholder groups. Complete survey results are provided in Attachment C and a summary of the employer and 7th grade focus groups are provided in Attachments D and E, respectively.

Educators. Middle school educators from throughout DeKalb County were the first group of stakeholders to be convened for this project. On April 9, 2008, 19 public and private school administrators and teachers participated in a three-hour soft skills workshop. In addition to providing useful feedback on the overall focus and intent of the project, the educators identified eight soft skills areas. In general order of priority these included:

Communicate effectively
Demonstrate self-discipline and responsibility
Solve problems, negotiate, and resolve conflict
Establish healthy interpersonal relationships
Respect others
Behave appropriately in various circumstances
Dress appropriately
Work in teams

Parents. A survey was distributed to parents during an open house at the Sycamore Middle School on September 10, 2008. A total of 119 parents* completed the survey, nearly all of whom had a child in the seventh grade. The six most often identified soft skills were:

Respecting others 92%
Demonstrate responsibility – 88%
Solve problems – 87%
Listen actively – 83%
Be self-confident – 83%
Resolve conflict – 82%

In response to a question about who was responsible for teaching soft skills to their children, **95% of the parents thought that they and other family members were most responsible.** When asked how often they were emphasizing soft skills to their children, 80% said that they were doing so daily and 24% said they were emphasizing

* When completing the survey, some of the parents were reporting on multiple children making the response numbers to the questions higher than the total number of parents who responded to the survey.

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them weekly. More than one-half (53%) indicated that their children were demonstrating many of the important soft skills, and another 45% said that some of the important soft skills were being demonstrated by their children.

Employers. A focus group was held with approximately 40 members of the DeKalb County Association of Human Resource Managers (DCAHRM) on October 9, 2008. DCAHRM's membership is made up of human resource managers, directors, and assistants; administrative managers and directors; staffing specialists and coordinators; controllers; and accounting specialists for DeKalb County businesses. A cross-section of these individuals participated in the focus group.

The top three skills identified as very important by these employers were:

- Listen actively – 100%**
- Demonstrate responsibility – 100%**
- Respect others – 93%**

The next tier of very important skills identified by 79% of the employers present included solving problems, behaving appropriately, and self-motivation. Additional skills identified as missing from the list included:

- Accountability
- Sharing in organizational values
- Time management
- Integrity/ethics/honesty
- Strong work ethic

Many employers expressed concern over the lack of preparedness and declining work ethic they have seen over time. They observed that employees are not dressing appropriately and have an overall lack of respect for supervisors and coworkers. These employers felt that parents and schools were most responsible for teaching soft skills to youth. Consistent with this, a majority of these employers were not actively implementing soft skills training programs. Those who were offering such programs stated that they had quarterly and annual training and evaluations. They believed that efforts to implement soft skills training in schools seemed to be positively impacting the students.

Youth Service Providers. A focus group was held with 13 DeKalb County youth service providers on November 6, 2008. All of the participants also completed a supplementary survey. Four soft skills were identified by the participants as “very important” and often lacking in the youth they serve:

- Resolve conflict – 100%**
- Solve problems – 100%**
- Respect others – 92%**
- Demonstrate responsibility – 92%**

These youth service providers identified a number of additional soft skills they thought should be added to the list:

- Money management
- Time management
- Speaking appropriately
- Written communication
- Organization (e.g., completing personal forms – identification cards, financial forms, etc.)
- Stress management
- Personal growth (e.g., hobbies, interests)
- Awareness of available community services
- Self-advocacy

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Many of the focus group participants felt that parents and the schools were most responsible for teaching soft skills to the youth. They also felt strongly that the police and juvenile justice system, the community as a whole, and the media should play a role in teaching and reinforcing soft skills with youth. Mentoring programs were thought to be effective in developing soft skills and better communication was needed to connect youth with other available resources.

Seventh Grade Focus Group. A focus group was held with 27 7th grade students at the Sycamore Middle School on December 12, 2008 during a Social Studies class. The students were introduced to the facilitator and the process by their instructor. After explaining what “soft skills” are, the facilitator asked the students to identify important examples of soft skills. Seven skills were identified:

- Responsibility**
- Respect**
- Being polite**
- Active listening**
- Dressing appropriately**
- Being on time/having follow through**
- Standing up for others**

The students thought that all of the soft skills were of equal importance. They also agreed that they were not strong in most of the skills and explained that as they get older and more is expected out of them, they will have developed and displayed those skills. These students identified their peers as having the greatest influence on soft skills development, and many identified the whole family (e.g., uncles, grandparents, and siblings) as having influence over the soft skills development, not only their parents.

College Students. In February 2009, soft skills surveys were distributed to students at Kishwaukee College as representatives of new entrants to the workforce. Students who responded to the survey included student workers at the college, students in a career planning class, and GED students. Only 15% of the students responding to the survey have not held at least one part-time job. Of the 42 respondents, the majority were female (57%) and between 19 and 21 years of age (52%). Of the remaining respondents, 24% were 18 or younger and 24% were over 21.

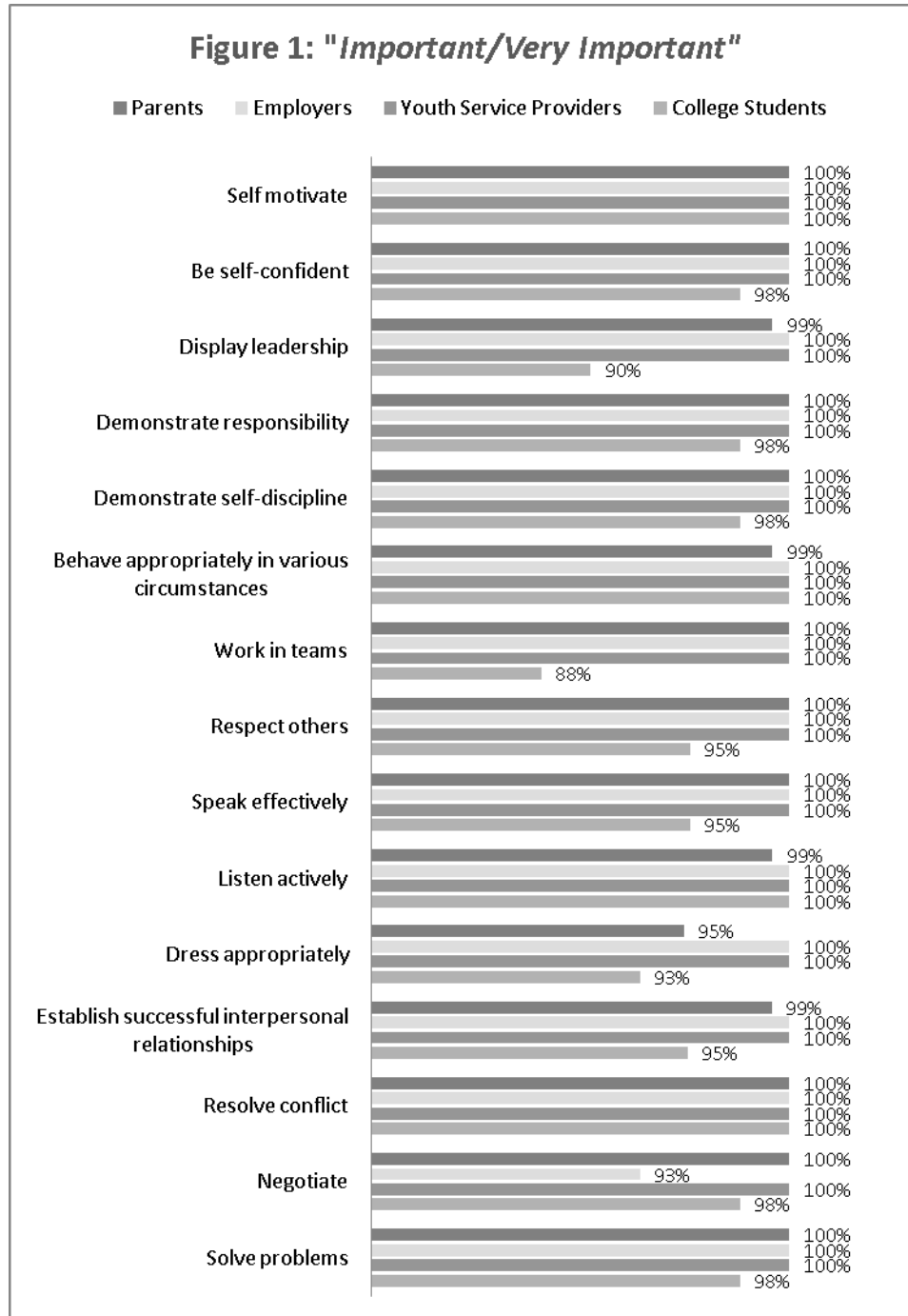
The top five soft skills most frequently identified by these students as being very important were:

- Respect others - 74%**
- Behave appropriately – 67%**
- Demonstrate responsibility – 64%**
- Listen actively – 62%**
- Demonstrate self-motivation – 60%**

These college students believed that parents and family members were most responsible for teaching soft skills to their children. A majority (59%) of these respondents thought that they had adequate soft skills preparation to perform in the workplace. In assessing their own soft skills, one-half thought that their problem-solving skills could be improved. Respecting others and dressing appropriately were the two soft skills for which the most respondents (86% for both) thought they were adequately prepared.

Findings

Finding 1: General agreement exists regarding the importance of the proposed soft skills. With only two exceptions, at least 93% of all respondents from each group surveyed felt that all 15 of the soft skills were important or very important to have. Both of the exceptions were from the college students in the skills of leadership and working in teams, but even then, 90% and 88%, respectively, thought them important. Figure 1 below compares stakeholder survey results by skill area.

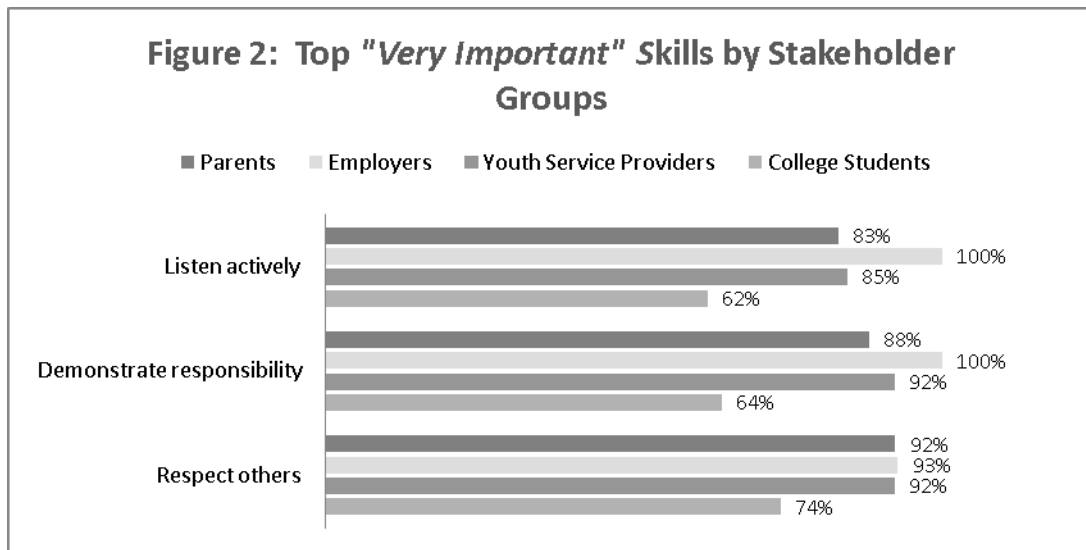


It is interesting to note that the three most important soft skills identified as “very important” by the DeKalb County stakeholders groups were:

- listen actively
- demonstrate responsibility
- respect others

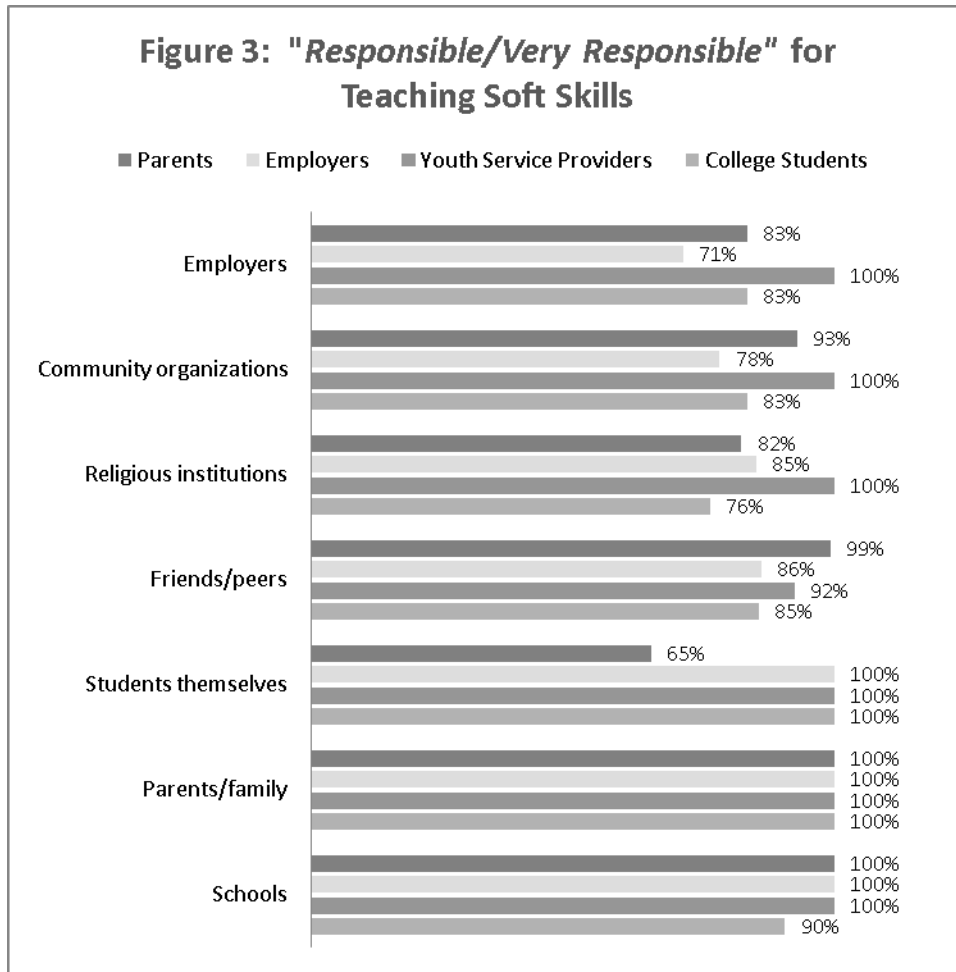
Youth service providers were the only exception as they identified solving problems and resolving conflict as their top two “very important” soft skills, a result that may reflect the situations in which many of their clients find themselves. These results are depicted in Figure 2.

Of the 13 additional soft skills suggested by employers and youth service providers, most could be readily addressed by an existing skill area. However, three of the stakeholders suggest that another soft skill area be added reflecting personal organization. This skill would include the effective management of time and money.



Finding 2: Youth entering the job market may not fully understand the importance of soft skills to success in adulthood. The stakeholder data suggest a disconnect between the perceptions of the community college respondents and the responses of the other stakeholder groups regarding the importance of soft skills. For example, as indicated in Figure 2, significantly smaller percentages of the college students view such skills as listening actively, demonstrating responsibility, and respecting others as very important compared to the other stakeholder groups. This finding gains importance in light of the middle school students’ observation that they understand the importance of soft skills, but they do not feel the need to master them until they are asked to do so. Although these responses are a small subset of the potential universe, they suggest a potential focus area for DCCF’s soft skills initiative.

Finding 3: Parents and schools are viewed as having primary responsibility for teaching soft skills. In all of the surveys and focus groups, the majority felt that parents were most responsible for teaching soft skills to young people. The students themselves followed as the second most popular response, followed by the schools. Employers, friends and peers, religious institutions, and community organizations were identified as having some responsibility but were ranked significantly below the top three.



Finding 4: The soft skills identified by the DeKalb stakeholders align with other local and national initiatives. The importance of soft skills has been affirmed in influential reports at all levels. **Nationally**, the skills framework developed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has emerged as an important contribution to the discussion of what every student needs to succeed as a citizen and worker. An advocacy organization that brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers, the Partnership has identified “life and career skills” as one of four elements that make up the skills, knowledge and expertise students require to succeed in work and life in the 21st Century.¹ These skills, which are provided in their entirety in Attachment F, fall into these categories:

- Flexibility and adaptability
- Initiative and self-direction
- Social and cross-cultural skills
- Productivity and accountability
- Leadership and responsibility

Seven of the specific life and career skills identified in the Partnership’s framework correspond to the soft skills identified through this project:

DCCF Stakeholder Data	21 st Century Skills – Life and Career Skills
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	Interact effectively with others
Work in teams	Work effectively in diverse teams
Demonstrate personal organization	Manage goals & time
Demonstrate self-motivation	Be a self-directed learner
Display leadership	Guide and lead others
Respect others	Work effectively in diverse teams
Demonstrate responsibility	Be responsible to others

At the **state** level, social/emotional learning is one of seven categories of standards that make up the *Illinois Learning Standards*. These were developed by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to define what all students in Illinois public schools should know and be able to do at five benchmark levels. ISBE’s goals and standards for social/emotional learning are listed below.

Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- A. Identify and manage one’s emotions and behavior
- B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports
- C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

- A. Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
- B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences
- C. Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others
- D. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

- A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions
- B. Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations

¹ The other three elements include “core subjects and 21st Century themes”, “learning and innovation skills”, and “information, media, and technology skills”.

C. Contribute to the well-being of one’s school and community

As with the Partnership’s skills framework, seven of ISBE’s social/emotional learning standards correspond to skills identified by the DeKalb stakeholders, although it is a slightly different set. These are presented below.

DCCF Stakeholder Data	ISBE Social/Emotional Learning
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others
Work in teams	Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
Resolve conflict	Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways
Demonstrate personal organization	Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals
Demonstrate self-discipline	Identify and manage one’s emotions and behavior
Respect others	Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations
Demonstrate responsibility	Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions

At the *local* level, a community forum was held on February 24, 2009, with 64 representatives of DeKalb’s business, civic, and educational communities to discuss what graduates of DeKalb High School needed to succeed in the 21st Century. Their ideas will be used to guide the design and implementation of a national model for a high-performing public high school at the new DeKalb High School. This effort is a partnership between DeKalb Community Unit School District 428 and Northern Illinois University.

Working in five small groups facilitated by CGS staff, the forum participants identified 578 specific ideas in response to the question “What should graduates of DeKalb High School be able to do to succeed in the 21st Century?” Each group clustered their ideas into categories and then voted on their top five categories. The five small groups identified a total of 64 categories spanning a range of capabilities.

At the time of this report, the design committee working with the forum results is still refining the data. However, a preliminary working report identified seven skill areas that may be considered soft skills. Three of these are listed below with their corresponding soft skill identified through this project. The other four areas identified in the community forum included “having a global perspective”, “being of good character”, “making healthy life choices”, and “engaging actively in community life”.

DCCF Stakeholder Data	DeKalb Community Forum Selected Skills
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	Have strong interpersonal skills
Work in teams	Work well with others
Demonstrate personal organization	Manage personal finances responsibly

A table summarizing the similarities across all four sources of soft skills is presented below.

	DCCF Stakeholder Data	21 st Century Skills – Life and Career Skills	ISBE Social/Emotional Learning	DeKalb Community Forum Selected Skills
1.	Establish successful interpersonal relationships	Interact effectively with others	Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others	Have strong interpersonal skills
2.	Work in teams	Work effectively in diverse teams	Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others	Work well with others
3.	Resolve conflict	n/a	Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways	n/a
4.	Demonstrate personal organization	Manage goals & time	Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals	Manage personal finances responsibly
5.	Demonstrate self-motivation	Be a self-directed learner	n/a	n/a
6.	Demonstrate self-discipline	n/a	Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.	n/a
7.	Display leadership	Guide and lead others	n/a	n/a
8.	Respect others	Work effectively in diverse teams	Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions	n/a
9.	Demonstrate responsibility	Be responsible to others	Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations	n/a
10	n/a	n/a	Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.	Engage actively in community life
11	<p><u>Other</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behave appropriately in various circumstances Dress appropriately Be self-confident Solve problems Negotiate Listen actively Speak effectively 	<p><u>Other</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be flexible Produce results Work independently Adapt to change 	<p><u>Other</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize personal qualities and external supports Recognize individual and group similarities and differences 	<p><u>Other</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be of good character Make healthy life choices Have a global perspective

Finding 5: An opportunity exists to partner with DeKalb County's educational community to identify strategies for developing soft skills for all youth. Considerable interest in soft skills development has been expressed by DeKalb County K-12 educational administrators and teachers who participated in this project. Additionally, leadership from other DeKalb area educational communities, including the community college and Northern Illinois University, are supporting efforts to define and address the full range of skills needed by young people to succeed in the 21st Century. DCCF's focus on bringing additional community leadership and resources to this effort is well-timed, and the spirit of partnership that has characterized this project suggests that a formal partnership with DeKalb's educational leadership is a logical next step.

Recommendations

Two recommendations have been identified for consideration by the Workforce Development Vision Committee. These will be a focus for a meeting to be held on May 5, 2009, and are likely to be modified and framed into a set of next steps for the committee.

1. The Workforce Development Vision Committee should consider modifying the set of 16 soft skills with an eye to consolidation and potential expansion to complementary skills included in other frameworks. This more concise skills set should become the basis of a definition of soft skills that also speaks to their importance in today's world.
2. The DCCF and committee members should approach other community partners, particularly parents, schools, and students, to share the results of the planning process. A number of items should be discussed:
 - a. Work with each stakeholder group to "make the case" for soft skills development. Each sector of the community will respond to different message points about the importance of soft skills to success in life.
 - b. Consider potential modifications to the definition of soft skills.
 - c. Build on existing efforts, such as Developmental Assets, that already convey the importance of soft skills development.
 - d. Explore ways in which other community members can support their efforts in developing soft skills. For example, schools may need employers to speak directly to their students about the relationship between soft skills and success in the workplace.
 - e. Identify specific roles, strategies, and measureable outcomes for each stakeholder group.

Attachment A Soft Skills Research*

I. Research: Studies & empirical research

- A. Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy
1. Engage all stakeholders (e.g., schools, parents, employers) in the education system to ensure that each understands the problem facing young people
 2. Ensure that incentives are installed to encourage young people to obtain the "new basic skills"
 3. Train teachers to emphasize these new basic skills through a combination of classroom and experiential activities
 4. Conduct regular assessments to measure progress and guide the refinement of existing practices
 5. Three basic skills to succeed in the work place:
 - The "hard skills," including mathematics, problem solving and reading
 - The "soft skills," including oral and written communication skills and the ability to work in groups
 - The ability to use personal computers at a basic level

Reference: Levy, F. & Murnane, R. (1996). *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Linking Schools, the Economy and Education Reform*. New York: Free Press.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/1997/fb022897.htm>

II. Articles: White papers, magazines, internet sources

- A. Teaching Life Skills for Student Success
Support of the Chicago Public Schools' Transitions Curriculum (see below)
- Reference:** Gamble, B. (2006). *Teaching Life Skills for Student Success*. Association of Career and Technical Education, 81(6), 40-41.

Retrieved from:

[http://acte.hodgsonconsult.com/uploadedFiles/Publications and E-Media/files/files-techniques-2006/Teaching-Life-Skills-for-Student-Success.pdf](http://acte.hodgsonconsult.com/uploadedFiles/Publications%20and%20E-Media/files/files-techniques-2006/Teaching-Life-Skills-for-Student-Success.pdf)

- B. The 21st century middle school: The "softer" side of learning, Monticello Central School District

Reference: The 21st century middle school: The "softer" side of learning. (2007).

Retrieved from:

<http://www.monticelloschools.net/District/ParentCorner/parentnewsletters/middleschool/pdfs/MSParentsJan07Final.pdf>

III. Curricula/Programs

- A. Transitions, Chicago Public Schools
1. Five modules
 - self-improvement skills
 - interpersonal relationship skills
 - communication skills
 - career preparation skills
 - on-the-job skills
 2. Lessons
 - pre-quizzes and student self-assessments

* This research was conducted by Shawn Maxwell, Community Initiatives Intern, DeKalb County Community Foundation.

- anecdotes and quotes
- engaging video vignettes
- small and whole group exercises
- role play activities
- situational judgment questions
- student interests assessments

See <http://transitions.ascl.info/>

Reference: NO Reference, Transitions was referenced in another article

B. Enterprise@One-Week Curriculum

Lesson topics

- Goal-setting and improving communication
- Interview techniques and active listening
- Time management
- Dressing appropriately
- Getting along with supervisors and co-workers
- Stress management

Reference: Enterprise@One-Week Curriculum (2006). Retrieved from <http://www.practitionerresources.org/cache/documents/49643.doc>

IV. Examples in Action

A. “Providence Place Academy”—Providence, RI

School partnered with stores in a new mall allowing students to gain real work experience and to help build soft skills

Reference: Roberts, M. (2000). *At your service*. Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers, 75(6), 26-27. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier (3539591).

B. “The DECA Storiolo”—St. Louis Park, MN

Marketing and Management/ DECA students develop and operate a school store within their high school

Reference: Ross, S.M. (2002). *School-based enterprise: The deca-storiolo*. Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers, 77(3), 24-25. Retrieved from ERIC database (EJ642383).

C. “Illinois Council on Economic Education”—DeKalb, IL

Students participate in a stock market training program

Reference: NO Reference (DCCF)

D. “Architecture & Construction Career Cluster”—Akron, OH

A work readiness program for those students interested in the construction industry

Reference: Lewis D.C. (2007). *Get to work*. Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers, 82 (5), 18-19. Retrieved from ERIC database (EJ764828).

V. “Best Practices”

- Forge partnerships with business sector: apprenticeships, on-the-job visits
- Incorporate into class setting: role playing, group work, written assignments
- Encourage students to be involved in extracurricular activities and clubs, volunteer to build leadership and teamwork
- Online training: i.e., universities in Iowa, Houston

VI. General Conclusions

- A. Employers desire individuals with “soft skills” as well as technical skills
- B. Many new young employees lack “soft skills”
- C. Skills most desired:
 - 1. Teamwork
 - 2. Interpersonal skills
 - 3. Communication skills
 - 4. Time management
- D. Suggested ways to teach soft skills: modeling
 - 1. Extracurricular activities, e.g. sports and intramurals
 - 2. Educational clubs, e.g. science club
 - 3. Music and performing arts, e.g. band or drama club
 - 4. Volunteerism
 - 5. Co-curricular activities, e.g. shadowing
- E. Suggestions for educators
 - 1. Encourage group-work activities (collaboration and teamwork)
 - 2. Encourage more research type of activities (personal responsibility)
 - 3. Have assignments with timelines attached (time management)
 - 4. Have assignments with presentations attached (communication and public speaking)
- F. Suggestions for parents
 - 1. Encourage/support after-school activities and/or sports
 - 2. Encourage/support volunteerism

Attachment B

DeKalb County Community Foundation Soft Skills Initiative Middle Schools Survey Results as of July 22, 2008

Respondents. Ten of 15 schools responded:

Camelot School (K-12)	Hinckley-Big Rock Middle School (6-8)
Clinton Rosette Middle School (6-8)	Kishwaukee Education Consortium (6-12)
Genoa-Kingston Middle School (6-8)	St. Mary School – DeKalb (PreK-8)
Hiawatha Jr/Sr High School (6-12)	Somonauk Middle School (5-8)
Huntley Middle School (6-8)	Sycamore Middle School (6-8)

Definition. Eight of the responses provided at least a partial definition of soft skills. The most common descriptors (i.e. more than one reference) included:

- Relationships (5 references), including inter- and intrapersonal skills and “social habits”
- Success as a student (2 references)
- Citizen (3 references)
- Employee (3 references)
- Character or personality traits (3 references)

Educational Methods/Effective Practices. A variety of practices is used to teach soft skills content to students. The following delivery vehicles and content were identified by DeKalb County middle school respondents:

1. Instruction-based strategies, such as classes focused on teaching life skills, social skills, or study skills; cooperative learning; or integrating soft skills across the curriculum (6 schools)
2. Modeling, demonstrating, and reinforcing good behavior (5 schools)
3. Adult-student relationships or mentoring (4 schools)
4. Peer mediation/group interventions (4 schools)
5. Content:
 - a. Character development (3 schools)
 - b. Prevention of gang involvement/violence/bullying (3 schools)

With the exception of Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS), no other practice was identified by more than one school as “particularly effective” in teaching soft skills. Other practices included staff members modeling soft skills, mentoring groups, student recognition, continued awareness by parents, students and teachers, teachers in the halls during passing time, Character Counts, Stop Bullying Now programs, practical job-seeking skills, team-building activities, Second Step, peer mediation, and life skills classes.

Current Assessments. The widest variation in responses was to this question. Two schools reported that they were not assessing soft skills in their students, although one of these will be using PBIS to help track this.

Of the remaining schools, three used a single method and five used multiple methods. Single methods included bi-monthly evaluations of each student and student testing. Multiple methods included student

observation based on the 10 Commandments, the 40 Assets survey, disciplinary data, student/parent surveys, attendance, behavioral referrals, the Point system, bullying surveys, and tickets issued for good behavior.

Desired Assessments. Five of the 10 respondents indicated they had no assessment method or tool they would like to use or that they were not yet ready to do so. Of the balance, one described the tools they were currently using, and the other four described a full-time staff person, a standardized assessment, opportunities to apply these skills in a workplace setting, the 40 Assets assessment, and attitude surveys.

Community Partners. Eight of the 10 responding schools identified these soft skills-related community partners: Ben Gordon Center (2), NIU partnerships (2), YSB (2), Junior Achievement, Career Fairs, PTO, local retailers, Spartan Reach team-building, Kishwaukee College, KEC 8th Grade Career Day/career fair (2), service students, and peer mentors.

Elementary Level Activities. Six schools reported soft skills-building activities at the elementary level, including critical thinking/conflict resolve (e.g., arguing both sides of an issue), community outreach, peer mentors, life skills, Character Counts, Core Values, and PBIS.

Five schools identified these elementary school-level activities as supporting their own soft skills efforts: scenario-based student/teacher interaction, career-based soft skills programs, cooperative groups/team-building, basic introduction to soft skills, PBIS, Character Counts, and Core Values.

High School Activities. Eight of the responding schools described how they were partnering with their area high school to prepare their students for secondary level soft skills development. These included:

- Having the assistant principal and the KEC meet with students prior to promotion to the 9th grade to evaluate their academic and social progress;
- Working with DHS to identify at-risk students for a special summer school program;
- Using community service clubs to incorporate soft skills into the high school;
- Using peer mentors with younger students, placing high school students into middle school work study programs, and peer mediation and social skills groups;
- Meeting in Professional Learning Community teams with the high school; and
- Career planning and PBIS.

Additional Resources: Six additional resource needs were identified by seven respondents: soft skills textbooks and workbooks, money, exposure to business professionals, other effective programs, tours of area factories and farms, and curriculum.

Attachment C Survey Results by Stakeholder Group

Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

DeKalb County Community Foundation Survey on Soft Skills - Parents

Q1. I have a child enrolled in the (check all that apply):

Answer Options	Response %	Response #
6th grade	5.10%	6
7th grade	98.30%	115
8th grade	2.60%	3

Q2. Following is a list of often-identified soft skills. Please indicate how important you think each one is.

Answer Options	Unimportant		Important		Very Important	
Solve problems	0	0%	15	13%	104	87%
Negotiate	0	0%	45	38%	73	62%
Resolve conflict	0	0%	21	18%	98	82%
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	1	1%	34	29%	81	70%
Dress appropriately	6	5%	73	61%	40	34%
Listen actively	1	1%	19	16%	99	83%
Speak effectively	0	0%	23	19%	96	81%
Respect others	0	0%	9	8%	110	92%
Work in teams	0	0%	58	49%	61	51%
Behave appropriately in various circumstances	1	1%	32	27%	86	72%
Demonstrate self-discipline	0	0%	23	19%	96	81%
Demonstrate responsibility	0	0%	14	12%	104	88%
Display leadership	1	1%	61	51%	57	48%
Be self-confident	0	0%	20	17%	99	83%
Demonstrate self-motivation	0	0%	23	19%	95	81%

Q3. Please indicate how responsible each of the following people or institutions are for teaching soft skills to our young people?

Answer Options	Not Responsible		Responsible		Very Responsible	
Schools	0	0%	66	58%	47	42%
Parents/family	0	0%	6	5%	107	95%
Employers	39	35%	59	53%	13	12%
Students themselves	1	1%	31	28%	80	71%
Friends/peers	20	18%	77	69%	15	13%
Religious institutions	8	7%	72	64%	32	29%
Community organizations	18	17%	75	69%	15	14%

Q4. How often do you emphasize the importance of soft skills with your own child/children?

Answer Options	Response %	Response #
Never	0%	0
Occasionally	4%	4
Weekly	24%	27
Daily	80%	90

Q5. How would you assess your child's/children's current level of soft skills?

Answer Options	Response %	Response #
Nonexistent	0%	0
Slight awareness	4%	4
Are demonstrating some soft skills	45%	51
Are demonstrating many of the important soft skills	53%	60

DeKalb County Community Foundation Survey on Soft Skills - Employers

Q1. Following is a list of often-identified soft skills. Please indicate how important you think each one is.

Answer Options	Unimportant		Important		Very Important	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Solve problems	0	0%	3	21%	11	79%
Negotiate	1	7%	9	64%	4	29%
Resolve conflict	0	0%	4	29%	10	71%
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	0	0%	5	36%	9	64%
Dress appropriately	0	0%	7	50%	7	50%
Listen actively	0	0%	0	0%	14	100%
Speak effectively	0	0%	5	36%	9	64%
Respect others	0	0%	1	7%	13	93%
Work in teams	0	0%	7	50%	7	50%
Behave appropriately in various circumstances	0	0%	3	21%	11	79%
Demonstrate self-discipline	0	0%	4	29%	10	71%
Demonstrate responsibility	0	0%	0	0%	14	100%
Display leadership	0	0%	13	93%	1	7%
Be self-confident	0	0%	8	57%	6	43%
Demonstrate self-motivate	0	0%	3	21%	11	79%

Q2. Please indicate how responsible each of the following people or institutions are for teaching soft skills to our young people?

Answer Options	Not Responsible		Responsible		Very Responsible	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Schools	0	0%	8	57%	6	43%
Parents/family	0	0%	0	0%	14	100%
Students themselves	0	0%	3	21%	11	79%
Friends/peers	2	14%	8	57%	4	29%
Religious institutions	2	14%	9	64%	3	21%
Community organizations	3	21%	9	64%	2	14%
Employers	4	29%	9	64%	1	7%

DeKalb County Community Foundation Survey on Soft Skill - Youth Service Providers

Q1. Following is a list of often-identified soft skills. Please indicate how important you think each one is.

Answer Options	Unimportant		Important		Very Important	
Solve problems	0	0%	0	0%	13	100%
Negotiate	0	0%	9	69%	4	31%
Resolve conflict	0	0%	0	0%	13	100%
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	0	0%	2	15%	11	85%
Dress appropriately	0	0%	11	85%	2	15%
Listen actively	0	0%	2	15%	11	85%
Speak effectively	0	0%	7	54%	6	46%
Respect others	0	0%	1	8%	12	92%
Work in teams	0	0%	11	85%	2	15%
Behave appropriately in various circumstances	0	0%	4	31%	9	69%
Demonstrate self-discipline	0	0%	3	23%	10	77%
Demonstrate responsibility	0	0%	1	8%	12	92%
Display leadership	0	0%	11	85%	2	15%
Be self-confident	0	0%	2	15%	11	85%
Demonstrate self-motivation	0	0%	5	38%	8	62%

Q2. Please indicate how responsible each of the following people or institutions are for teaching soft skills to our young people?

Answer Options	Not Responsible		Responsible		Very Responsible	
Schools	0	0%	4	31%	9	69%
Parents/family	0	0%	0	0%	13	100%
Students themselves	0	0%	5	38%	8	62%
Friends/peers	1	8%	9	69%	3	23%
Religious institutions	0	0%	7	54%	6	46%
Community organizations	0	0%	5	38%	8	62%
Employers	0	0%	9	69%	4	31%

DeKalb County Community Foundation Survey on Soft Skills – College Students

Q1. Are you male or female?

Answer Options	Response %	Response #
Male	43%	18
Female	57%	24

Q2. What is your age?

Answer Options	Response %	Response #
18 or younger	24%	10
19 - 21	52%	22
over 21	24%	10

Q3. Following is a list of often-identified soft skills. Please indicate how important you think each one is.

Answer Options	Unimportant		Important		Very Important	
Solve problems	1	2%	25	60%	16	38%
Negotiate	1	2%	25	60%	16	38%
Resolve conflict	0	0%	22	52%	20	48%
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	2	5%	22	54%	17	41%
Dress appropriately	3	7%	19	45%	20	48%
Listen actively	0	0%	16	38%	26	62%
Speak effectively	2	5%	16	38%	24	57%
Respect others	2	5%	9	21%	31	74%
Work in teams	5	12%	26	62%	11	26%
Behave appropriately in various circumstances	0	0%	14	33%	28	67%
Demonstrate self-discipline	1	2%	18	43%	23	55%
Demonstrate responsibility	1	2%	14	33%	27	64%
Display leadership	4	10%	16	38%	22	52%
Be self-confident	1	2%	20	48%	21	50%
Demonstrate self-motivate	0	0%	17	40%	25	60%

Q4. Indicate how responsible each of the following people or institutions should be for teaching soft skills to young people.

Answer Options	Not Responsible		Responsible		Very Responsible	
Middle Schools	4	10%	26	62%	12	29%
High Schools	3	7%	15	36%	24	57%
College/Post High School	5	12%	18	43%	19	45%
Parents/family	0	0%	9	21%	33	79%
You yourself	0	0%	11	26%	31	74%
Friends/peers	6	15%	28	68%	7	17%
Religious institutions	10	24%	21	50%	11	26%
Community organizations	7	17%	26	62%	9	21%
Employers	7	17%	23	55%	12	29%

DeKalb County Community Foundation Survey on Soft Skills – College Students (cont.)

Q5. Please indicate the number of jobs you have previously held.

Answer Options	None		One		Two	
Part-time	6	15%	9	22%	11	27%
Full-time	8	22%	6	16%	10	27%
	Three		Four		Five or more	
Part-time	7	17%	4	10%	4	10%
Full-time	4	11%	4	11%	5	14%

Q6. Do you feel that overall you had adequate soft skills training to perform effectively in these jobs?

Answer Options	Response %	Response #
Adequate level	52%	22
Somewhat adequate level	29%	12
Somewhat inadequate level	5%	2
Inadequate level	2%	1
N/A	12%	5

Q7. Which skills do you feel could be strengthened to perform effectively in your current and/or future jobs.

Answer Options	Could be improved		I have adequate skills	
Solve problems	21	50%	21	50%
Negotiate	14	33%	28	67%
Resolve conflict	15	36%	27	64%
Establish successful interpersonal relationships	12	29%	30	71%
Dress appropriately	6	14%	36	86%
Listen actively	12	29%	30	71%
Speak effectively	15	36%	27	64%
Respect others	6	14%	36	86%
Work in teams	15	36%	27	64%
Behave appropriately in various circumstances	8	20%	33	80%
Demonstrate self-discipline	13	32%	28	68%
Demonstrate responsibility	9	22%	32	78%
Display leadership	14	34%	27	66%
Be self-confident	14	33%	28	67%
Demonstrate self-motivation	11	26%	31	74%

Attachment D

DeKalb County Community Foundation Soft Skills Initiative Employer Focus Group Results

A focus group was held with members of the DeKalb County Association of Human Resource Management (DCA HRM) on October 9, 2008 at their October membership meeting. Approximately 40 members attended and participated in the focus group. The members were also given a written survey to support the focus group questions. Fourteen surveys were completed. The findings from both the focus group and the survey are included below.

Which are "Very Important"?

Skill:	No. of Votes
Listen actively	ALL
Respect others	42
Behave appropriately	41
Resolve conflict	36
Demonstrate responsibility	37
Speak effectively	32
Establish successful relationships	31
Solve problems	29
Demonstrate self-motivation	29
Dress appropriately	21
Work in teams	21
Demonstrate self-discipline	21
Be self-confident	19
Negotiate	13
Display leadership	2

Anything missing from the list?

Accountability
Sharing in organization's values
Time management
Integrity/Ethics/Honesty
Work Ethic

How well prepared (overall) are the workforce (young)?

Deficient in the majority of the soft skills
Incoming workforce has a sense of entitlement
Using personal cell phone
Dressing however they want
They are needing constant reinforcement of office policies and rules
Not valuing the job, lack of loyalty to the employer
On the other side there is a lack of loyalty from the employer to the employee
Bad employees may tend to influence the good employees or more seasoned employees
The parents may not be teaching the skills because of bad workplace experiences that have made them cynical (e.g., layoffs, cuts in benefits)

Has there been a shift over time in the quality of soft skills?

Many stated they have seen a shift in attitudes for the worse
Shift in hiring practices (e.g., hiring only older applicants for grounds crew work because of the stronger work ethic)
People are over-stimulated and it seems to be affecting their ability to work in teams, solve problems, and focus on specific tasks
This same group is also highly technically skilled and much more adaptable to change
Millennials / Echo Boomers (demographic)
"Helicopter" parenting (hovering, everyone wins, praising everyday normal behavior)

July 2009

“Spending parent’s paychecks as they come in”

The economic downturn may affect attitudes in a positive way (e.g., excess in exchange for minimalism, conservation vs. wastefulness)

Is there a difference between professional and technical employees and non-technical/ non-professional employees?

No, this is an across-the-board issue.

Where are the prepared employees getting the skills? Who is responsible for teaching?

Parents

Schools

Employers

All to some degree

Employers must provide formal training

There must be mutual respect between employers and employees

What are you currently doing (soft skill training, programs)?

The majority are not. Those who do are implementing programs and conducting evaluations (quarterly or annually).

Any trends of things others are doing for soft skill development?

There is a movement in some schools to implement soft skills training which seems to be positively impacting the students.

Attachment E

DeKalb County Community Foundation Soft Skills Initiative

7th Grade Focus Group Results

A focus group was held with approximately 20 7th grade students at the Sycamore Middle School on December 12, 2008, during Mrs. Stambaugh's third period Social Studies class. A summary of the main findings from that discussion is provided below.

The students were introduced to the facilitator and the process by Mrs. Stambaugh. The facilitator asked the students first if they knew what soft skills were. The students did not know what that meant. The facilitator gave them the definition crafted by the steering committee and asked them to identify examples of what they thought were the most important soft skills to have to be a productive citizen of the community.

The soft skills they identified were:

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Being Polite
- Active Listening
- Dressing Appropriately
- Being on time/having follow through
- Standing up for others

They felt that all of the soft skills were of equal importance. They also identified that they were not strong in most of the skills. When asked why not, they responded that as they get older more is expected out of them and so they will display those qualities when they are expected to. When the conversation shifted to peers, they seemed to have greater expectations of themselves and others. They identified that their peers had the greatest influence for teaching these skills to one another. Additionally, many identified the whole family as having influence over these skills, rather than just their parents. They mentioned uncles, grandparents and siblings.

When the group discussed how to best reach their age group, the responses and access to technology were all over the board. A few had access to the social network site myspace and none were members of facebook, either because their parents wouldn't let them or because they, themselves did not want to join. Some mentioned the use of text messaging to alert them of upcoming area events or programs. Such an attempt at communication would require a strong word-of-mouth to have the students elect to join this type of broadcasting system. A few others felt that they would be more likely to open up in a smaller group setting. There did seem to be interest in follow-up focus groups.

An issue that they seemed very interested in talking about and hearing about was bullying. Mrs. Stambaugh noted that the school has a zero tolerance policy towards bullying yet some of the students still felt it existed. When the facilitator mentioned that bullying can occur even as an adult, the students seemed very interested in how it had affected the facilitator and how it was responded to. This was the only point in the discussion where the students actively participated in the discussion without lots of prompting from Mrs. Stambaugh and the facilitator.

Attachment F

Life and Career Skills: The Partnership for 21st Century Skills

Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Adapt to Change

- Adapt to varied roles, jobs responsibilities, schedules and context
- Work effectively in a climate of ambiguity and changing priorities

Be Flexible

- Incorporate feedback effectively
- Deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism
- Understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions, particularly in multi-cultural environments

INITIATIVE AND SELF-DIRECTION

Manage Goals and Time

- Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria
- Balance tactical (short-term) and strategic (long-term) goals
- Utilize time and manage workload efficiently

Work Independently

- Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight

Be Self-Directed Learners

- Go beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise
- Demonstrate initiative to advance skill levels towards a professional level
- Demonstrate commitment to learning as a lifelong process
- Reflect critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress

SOCIAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL SKILLS

Interact Effectively with Others

- Know when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak
- Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner

Work Effectively in Diverse Teams

- Respect cultural differences and work effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds
- Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values
- Leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work

July 2009

PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Manage Projects

- Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressure
- Prioritize, plan and manage work to achieve the intended result

Produce Results

- Demonstrate additional attributes associated with producing high quality products including the abilities to:
 - Work positively and ethically
 - Manage time and projects effectively
 - Multi-task
 - Participate actively, as well as be reliable and punctual
 - Present oneself professionally and with proper etiquette
 - Collaborate and cooperate effectively with teams
 - Respect and appreciate team diversity
 - Be accountable for results

LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

Guide and Lead Others

- Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal
- Leverage strengths of others to accomplish a common goal
- Inspire others to reach their very best via example and selflessness
- Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in using influence and power

Be Responsible to Others

- Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind

Source: http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=266&Itemid=120, accessed March 23, 2009

ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT

Response to Recommendations

The committee agreed to focus on the following three priorities:

1. Broaden understanding and awareness of soft skill building
2. Broaden participation in soft skills building
3. Strengthen education-employer-youth connections county-wide, related to soft skill building

Broaden understanding and awareness of soft skill building

- Determine the needs of the schools by developing a formal assessment tool that will identify and capture the existing approaches the schools are taking to enhance soft skills training.
- Convene a meeting of middle school educators to introduce and start data collection around soft skill curricula and programs.

Broaden participation in soft skills building

- Create a Soft Skills Enhancement Committee (SSEC) to review and categorize existing approaches that schools are taking to enhance soft skills training. The SSEC will make recommendations to the Workforce Development Vision Committee on best practices utilized in schools and ways to support schools with soft skill enhancement.
- Cultivate interest at meeting of middle school educators – The SSEC will utilize the meeting of middle school educators to recruit additional invested committee members.

Strengthen education-employer-youth connections county-wide, related to soft skill building

- Build soft skill focus by tapping into existing opportunities like the 8th Grade Career Fair traditionally held every March at Kishwaukee College.
- Identify steps to support the development of an equivalent conference for the Southern portion of the County.