C-FILE REPORT

Character Education Resource Center

LIFE SKILL

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TOPIC ONE: SKILL COMMENTS

A Skills Memory: I loved playing baseball. Our city had open try-outs for minor league teams. On day four, one of the coaches said to me, "Son, we can't have players on this team without **skills** in every area." I had "grit" but couldn't hit. I also had "perseverance," so I became a teacher, a principal, a dean. (The question of how skillful is open to debate.)

A Skills Quote: *"Expressing care for another is not an innate ability present more naturally in some people than others, but rather a **skill** that can be taught and nurtured through a supportive educational environment."*
                    -Scotty McLennan, Dean for Religious Life, Stanford University

A Skills Perspective: Recent employee surveys show that employers are looking for certain qualities in employees such as listening and communication *skills*, adaptability, creative thinking *skills*, problem-solving *skills*, goal setting *skills,* and competence in reading, writing, and computation *skills*.

It seems to me that **skill development** should be an essential part of a school's character education initiatives (with character strengths and emotional skills as the other two).

TOPIC TWO: CHARACTER VIRTUES AND THINKING SKILLS

We begin with a list of thinking skills (remember Bloom's Taxonomy), and character traits/virtues that have been gleaned from the research and from promising school practices.

You will recognize that these virtues and skills are not independent. They are intertwined-integrated-connected-relational. Students need to learn and practice them. To do this they need teachers, at every level, to teach them.

Thinking Skills:	Character Traits/Virtues
Knowing	Golden Rule
Analyzing	Respect
Synthesizing	Responsibility
Summarizing	Courage
Comprehending	Perseverance
Applying	Confidence
Evaluating	Trust
Comparing	Honesty
Critiquing	Integrity
Creating	Cooperation
Contrasting	Kindness
Exploring	Caring
Experimenting	Tolerance

Reflecting	Gratitude
Interpreting	Diligence
Predicting	Justice
Inferring	Wisdom
Questioning	Love
	Self-discipline

TOPIC THREE: SOCIAL SKILLS

A survey conducted through Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel, asked the question: *"What are the best skills for kids to have these days?"*

The responses:
 90% – Communication
 86% – Reading
 79% – Math
 77% – Teamwork
 75% – Writing
 74% – Logic
 58% – Science
 25% – Athletics
 24% – Music
 23% – Art

Social skills include habits and attributes that some call **Habits of the Heart.** These "habits" included providing instruction and practice in helping students to be respectful, responsible, honest, trustworthy, caring, courageous, courteous, compassionate, and fair.

These learned skills are coupled with **Habits of the Mind** – being a critical thinker, appreciating the importance of knowledge and learning, learning how to learn, practicing self-discipline, making ethical decisions, learning to problem solve, resisting peer pressure, and thinking before acting.

The third skill set is often labeled, **Habits of the Hands** (see Topic Two).

Stephen Elliott (Vanderbilt Peabody education and psychology researcher), co-authoring with Frank Gresham, developed a program called The Social Skills Improvement System Class-wide Intervention Program (SSIS-CIP).

They identified the top 10 skills that **students need to succeed** based on surveys of over 8,000 teachers and over 20 years of research in classrooms across the country. The skills are:
 Listen to others.
 Follow the steps.

Follow the rules.
Ignore distractions.
Ask for help.
Take turns when you talk.
Get along with others.
Stay calm with others.
Be responsible for your behavior.
Do nice things for others.

They report: *"In our research, we found that elementary kids and teachers value cooperation and self-control. When we teach and increase those behaviors, we reduce problem behaviors and maximize learning time….If we increase social skills, we see commensurate increases in academic learning. That doesn't mean that social skills make you smarter; it means that these skills make you more amenable to learning."* (More information about the SSIS Program can be found at: http://www.PearsonAssessments.com)

"Children who scored high on social skills were four times as likely to graduate from college than those who scored low."

Teaching Social Skills to Improve Grade and Lives, David Bornstein,
http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/24

TOPIC FOUR: SOFT SKILLS

Over the past few years, business people have been talking and writing about the skill development of employees focusing on the need for developing their **soft skills**.

I read that CEOs are talking about wanting employees who are trustworthy, empathetic, adaptable, who can manage their emotions (self control), and have the skills to be better decision-makers. It has been reported that 85% of those who lose jobs do so because of inadequate social skills.

The Graduate School at the University of Cincinnati compiled a list of the **10 top soft skills** that employers seek (with definitions not included here).

- *Dependability/Reliability*
- *Motivation/Initiative*
- *Communication*
- *Commitment*
- *Creativity*
- *Flexibility*
- *Problem Solving*
- *Teamwork*
- *Leadership*
- *Time Management*

https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/news/soft-skills.html

There have been numerous discussions about students and employees learning and using "21st century skills." There is an abundance of skill lists. A couple of examples will give you the "skills picture" for the future.

One group's list includes:
- *Ways of Thinking (creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and learning)*
- *Ways of Working (communication and collaboration)*
- *Tools for Working (information and communications technology, and information literacy)*
- *Skills for Living (citizenship, life and career, and personal and social responsibility)*

And, according to this group's team managers, the two skills that cut across all four categories are "collaborative problem solving" and "learning in digital networks."

The Thoughtful Learning Group notes that 21st century learning skills are captured in the *4 C's:*
- **Critical thinking** *is focused, careful analysis of something to better understand it.*
- **Creative thinking** *is expansive, open-ended invention and discovery of possibilities.*
- **Communicating** *involves a range of skills such as analyzing, evaluating, reading, speaking, writing, etc.*
- **Collaborative skills** *require one to be engaged in team building, resolving conflict, managing time, etc.*

The 80/20 Rule*: It was established back in 1918 by Mann's study on engineering education that approximately 80 percent of success is due to soft skills while 20 percent is due to hard skills.*

National Soft Skills Association, August 3, 2017

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