“Soft” Skills that Open Doors
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About Child Trends

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that improves the lives and prospects of children and youth by conducting high-quality research and sharing the resulting knowledge with practitioners and policymakers.

We . . .

1. take a whole child/youth approach
2. study youth in the real world
3. want youth to flourish
4. value objectivity and rigor
5. pursue knowledge development and knowledge transfer

childtrends.org
Motivation

• Obtaining employment and becoming financially independent is a critical component in the successful transition to adulthood.

• Yet, 75 million youth around the world are unemployed.

• Individual factors contribute to youth unemployment including technical, academic, and “soft skills”.

• Currently, there is a lack of consensus on which soft skills are the best investments for improving youth workforce outcomes, and how these skills are defined.

• To this end, Child Trends seeks to answer the question,

“What soft skills are most important for workforce success?”
Framework for Linking Individual Skills to Workforce Success

Contextual Factors
- Family
- Schools
- Community
- Job Availability
- Accessibility
- Education
- Training
- Policies

Individual Skills
- Technical Skills
- Academic Skills
- Soft Skills

Outcomes
- Employment
- Performance & Promotion
- Income
- Entrepreneurship
Methodology

• Reviewing the literature

• Expert & Implementer interviews and focus groups

• Focus groups with youth and employers led by FHI360

• Drawing conclusions across sources and perspectives: economics, employers, organizational development, workforce development programming, positive youth development, psychology

• Asking for your input!
Soft Skills Literature

- Empirical studies
- Employer Surveys
- Consensus Projects
- Other literature
Considerations in Selection

Key soft skills for workforce success should:

- Predict workforce outcomes
- Be applicable across contexts and sectors
- Be malleable

Important for specific groups, sectors, and contexts

Important for all sectors, ages, contexts
PRELIMINARY Key Soft Skills Across All Workforce Outcomes

- Communication
- Problem solving, critical thinking, decision making
- Social Skills
- Self-control
- Positive attitude
- Hardworking and dependable
- Teamwork
- Positive self-concept
- Self-motivation
- Leadership
- Integrity
Relevancy

Breadth and Quality of Support

Problem solving
Teamwork
Self-motivation
Communication
Leadership
Self-control
Positive attitude
Social skills
Integrity

Note: Size of data point reflects the quantity of positive findings
Top Soft Skills by Workforce Outcome

**Employment**
- Communication
- Problem solving, critical thinking, decision making
- Teamwork
- Social skills
- Leadership
- Positive attitude
- Hardworking and dependable
- Planfulness
- Positive self-concept
- Integrity

**Performance/Promotion**
- Self-control
- Social skills
- Problem solving, critical thinking, decision making
- Hardworking and dependable
- Self-motivated
- Communication
- Positive self-concept
- Integrity
- Positive attitude
- Teamwork

**Increased wages/Income**
- Responsibility
- Positive attitude
- Positive self-concept
- Self-control
- Social skills
- Hardworking and dependable
- Leadership
- Resilience
- Self-motivated
- Goal orientation

**Entrepreneurship**
- Social skills
- Initiative
- Creativity
- Positive attitude
- Self-motivated
- Communication
- Learning and growth orientation
- Integrity
- Hardworking and Dependable
- Self-control
- Teamwork
Next Steps

• White paper recommending Key Soft Skills to prioritize investments in programs
• Incorporate input from a Symposium of stakeholders in early Spring 2015
• Complete a review of existing measures of these skills
• Contribute to development of an instrument to assess skills that can be used in program evaluations

Thank you!