

Innovative Instructional Strategies for Integrating Soft Skills

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Assisting students in recognizing the vital role of soft skills within organizations is a critical component of any business education classroom. Soft skills are increasingly becoming required skills for success in today's workforce; no longer are exceptional technical skills enough. Without developing the softer interpersonal and relationship-building skills that help people to communicate and collaborate effectively, students will find themselves unable to find or continue in a job. Technical skills help a worker obtain an interview; soft skills allow the worker to become an employee and keep the job. People skills are more critical than ever as organizations struggle to find meaningful ways to remain competitive and to be productive in the age of texting and social media as the primary communication tools used by teens and adults. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2013) reported that employers are seeking candidates who can work in teams, make decisions, solve problems, plan, organize, prioritize, and communicate verbally as the most important job skills.

Soft skills and how to incorporate the skills into the classroom have been discussed and presented for many years; however, it is a topic that continues to be important in the "Data Era," as soft skills impact social and workplace interactions (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.; LaFrance, 2009; Miertschin, O'Neil, Kovach, Ding, & Johnson, 2012; Wilson & Bayless, 2013). This chapter will discuss three skill areas for the 21st century student and how business educators can incorporate the skills into all subject areas. Strategies for each of the areas will be presented, including activity ideas and resources for the classroom teacher.

SOFT SKILLS: WHAT ARE THEY AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

LaFrance (2009) defined soft skills as “a complex system of traits and habits commonly sought by employers” (para. 2). She continued by listing several soft skills that employers seek; the most popular are “problem solving, thinking inventively, the ability to compromise, negotiate and persuade, the ability to mentor, teach, communicate, network and perform public speaking” (para. 2). According to McCorkle, Payan, Reardon, and Kling (2007), soft skills are often innate skills that a few people possess; however, soft skills can be taught over time. Harel (2014) added to the list such skills as “inventive thinking, digital literacy, [and] fluency in digital participation, digital communication, coding and making digital stuff” (para. 4).

Using definitions from the Framework for 21st Century Learning (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009), three areas can be identified as areas of soft skills that students should master through integration into the core subjects:

- Learning and innovation skills
- Information, media, and technology skills
- Life and career skills

All three areas involve well-developed soft skills. One way to teach soft skills to students involves parents, teachers, and other adults modeling the behaviors as part of their everyday routine (LaFrance, 2009). Additionally, offering multiple opportunities for students to practice and perfect soft skills builds confidence and the ability to use multiple soft skills as a natural part of everyday life.

Learning and Innovation Skills

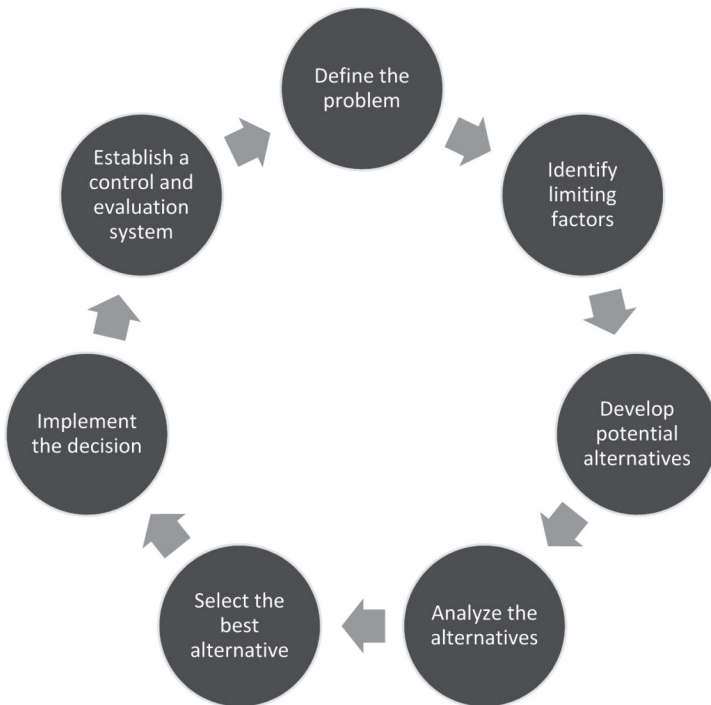
Learning and innovation skills include creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. Important to life-long learning, “a focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009, p. 3). Many of the skills are interrelated. For example, when teaching creativity, the teacher may need to incorporate problem-solving skills into the lesson because solving problems requires students to assess a situation and then create a solution.

Creativity. In the context of education, creativity is exemplified through novel processes that solve a problem or evaluate a situation (McCorkle et al., 2007). Creativity is a “function of the education system used and, consequently, creativity can be learned” (McCorkle et al., 2007, p. 256). Today’s students should learn how to think creatively, work creatively with others, and implement innovations because, according to Bartel (2014), “Creative people do not have answers, but they habitually question the status quo and think about alternatives and improvements” (para. 2).

Critical thinking and problem solving. Critical thinking and problem solving include the ability to reason effectively, use systems thinking, make judgments and decisions, and solve problems. Smith (2003) stated that many students at all levels “solve problems in a rote formulaic way, rather than through creative strategies grounded in sound analysis; and their decisions reflect biased appraisals that satisfy no plausible norms of rationality” (p. 25). Problem solving—a critical skill that 35 states use as a performance-based assessment during student teaching—incorporates teaching strategies required for business teacher education candidates (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, & Equity, 2014).

Many models are available to demonstrate problem solving; the steps provided by CliffNotes (n.d.) incorporate the essential components. Figure 1 illustrates the steps.

Figure 1. Problem-Solving Model



Source: Adapted from CliffNotes (n.d., para. 3).

Communication and collaboration. Communication and collaboration, often thought to be the roots of all soft skills (Miertschin et al., 2012), include the ability to communicate clearly and effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal skills, along with the ability to collaborate with others. The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education's (2014) Policy Statement No. 95 recognized the diversity of the business environment and the importance of business education in preparing students for success. Through the curriculum taught and the skills learned in business student organizations, business students learn and demonstrate "interpersonal, teamwork, technology, communication, and leadership skills" (p. 1). Additionally, students learn and practice a variety of skills that benefit the community through service and business activities that can lead to economic growth and an increased tax base.

"Communication plays an integral role in all areas of personal and professional interactions. Without excellent communication skills, students will not be equipped to compete in the global business economy" (Wilson & Bayless, 2013, p. 137). A comprehensive communications course includes negotiation, writing, speaking, nonverbal communication, listening, and reading strategies.

Writing strategies incorporate frequent opportunities for students to write, to receive formative feedback from both faculty members and peers, and to edit. Through this process, students develop personal writing and communication skills as they provide feedback to peers. A part of the writing process includes a review of grammar and other technical skills such as spelling and capitalization.

Speaking strategies or presentation strategies include more than learning the rules of Microsoft PowerPoint. Effective speakers learn how to tell a story that captivates the audience. Effective presenters begin with a plan for the presentation. They then practice the presentation to become comfortable with the materials without sounding rehearsed, and they engage the audience. Part of engagement includes paying attention to the nonverbal cues from audience members and responding accordingly.

Nonverbal communication strategies vary among cultures and even regions within a country. For example, many Native American tribes teach young people to speak to an elder or authority figure with eyes downcast; however, in the business culture of the United States, employers expect employees to look them in the eye when speaking.

Listening strategies depend on the situation. Palmer (2014) offers three strategies to improve listening skills: (a) listen for answers, (b) take notes, and (c) re-listen / find a fix. When listening for an answer, complete a preview activity such as creating questions to ask about the topic. By listening for an answer to a question, the mind will remain active and listening should improve. For tactile and visual learners, taking notes allows one's primary learning style to motivate the listening. Teachers can show students various methods of taking notes, such as creating a personal shorthand, making

connections through drawing shapes into the notes, and noting nonverbal cues to identify important information. If the mind becomes bored, it is harder to listen effectively. If possible, re-listen to an audio recording or ask the speaker to repeat information. If re-listening is not possible, write short notes that will remind you to ask questions at a later time.

Reading strategies involve more than reading. The art of critical reading is the goal of most teachers. To teach critical reading skills, use a model that has the students questioning their reading. The students should be able to paraphrase the key points of the reading and use their own examples to describe the key points.

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

Today's students live in an environment in which media and technology are the primary forms of obtaining information. These students face "1) access to an abundance of information, 2) rapid changes in technology tools, and 3) the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale" (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009, p. 5).

Information literacy. Students must have the ability to access and evaluate information, as well as use and manage information. Information literacy is identified as a needed skill for today's students. In an age when the computer has been a part of their daily lives, students appear to be less information literate than past generations. The reason is that information is not knowledge and only becomes knowledge when the information is used for something (Doyle, 1994). Teaching information literacy may begin with teaching search strategies and critical evaluation of Internet resources.

Media literacy. In a 24-hour news cycle, students are bombarded with information. The need for media literacy has never been greater. According to the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2009), students need to be able to analyze media. This involves not only knowing how messages are constructed but also the purpose of the message. Along with the vast amounts of information available, students must be able to analyze media and create media products (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009).

Information and communications technology (ICT) literacy. Information and communications technologies have been discussed in the literature for many years. As early as 1984, Hunter defined computer literacy as "the skills and knowledge needed by a citizen to survive and thrive in a society that is dependent on technology for handling information and solving complex problems" (p. 45). Although access to information has exploded, this definition applies to information literacy today. In addition to using the information, students also need to be technologically literate because technology is the appropriate tool for finding, organizing, evaluating, and communicating this information (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009).

Life and Career Skills

The working environment is a complex and competitive arena that business students will be facing soon. To be successful, students need to learn the appropriate life and career skills. These skills include flexibility, adaptability, initiative, self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity, accountability, leadership, and responsibility. Teaching life and career skills requires creativity on the part of the teacher using a curriculum-wide focus because these skills are difficult to teach in a single lesson. They are most effectively taught when they are present in all business courses.

Flexibility and adaptability. According to the doctrine of Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, the only constant in today's world is change.¹ Change, uncertainty, and variability are a part of everyday life, so the ability to be flexible and adaptable provides a competitive edge for business students. A study by Martin, Nejad, Colmar, and Liem (2013) found that students who are more adaptable are more likely to participate in class discussion, like school, be more satisfied with life, and have higher self-esteem. By helping students develop the ability to be flexible and adaptable and to respond to uncertainty and change, business courses prepare students for both life and career.

Initiative and self-direction. Employers need employees who will perform without overt supervision. Today's students need to learn to manage personal goals and time, work independently, and use self-direction. In a case study of eight schools, Martinez and McGrath (2013) found that the schools' culture can be used to help new students become self-directed and responsible learners. For example, at Casco Bay High School in Portland, Maine, a letter from seniors accompanied by a formal interview with freshmen provides advice concerning the importance of becoming self-directed, responsible learners. The value placed on self-direction can also be integrated into assessment tools such as rubrics. Rochester High School in Rochester, Indiana, has a set of schoolwide learning outcomes that include both work ethic and collaboration (Martinez & McGrath, 2013).

Social and cross-cultural skills. Whether a business is located locally, nationally, or internationally, it is very likely their customer base will be quite diverse, so social and cross-cultural skills are attributes businesses are looking for in employees. The Association of American Colleges and Universities found that 96 percent of business executives surveyed identified intercultural skills as being important; 63 percent indicated these skills were very important (Hart Research Associates, 2013). It is vital for schools to help students develop skills to solve problems with people whose views are different than theirs. Singmaster and Manise (2014) suggested that business courses that integrate global competencies and cross-cultural skills can be more engaging for students and help them become more marketable when they enter the workforce by aiding them in the development of the skills necessary to interact with others and work effectively in diverse teams.

¹According to Heraclitus of Ephesus (n.d.), "Life is Flux' (Panta Rhei in Greek, meaning everything or all things change)."

Productivity and accountability. It is important to help students become productive and hold them accountable for their own success in the classroom because employers will do the same in the workplace. These attributes are related to initiative and self-direction because employers need employees who can manage projects and produce results. According to Graham (n.d.), students must “step up to the plate and become responsible learners” (para. 2). Graham also offered several strategies that teachers can use to foster both productivity and accountability, including creating a classroom atmosphere that is positive and respectful, ensuring that students and parents become “partners in the success” (para. 9) of the student, and using rubrics to provide students with the information needed to get them invested in their work. Teaching students to be productive and accountable may not be easy but it is both important and possible.

Leadership and responsibility. The ability to guide and lead others provides an invaluable service to employers. In a case study, Gergen, Rego, and Wright (2014) reported that the Riverside School in Ahmedabad, India, recognized the importance of developing leadership and responsibility by instituting a curriculum that develops skills in these areas. As a result, a leadership culture has emerged that focuses not only on the development of academic skills but also on what the school calls 21st century skills of collaborative enterprise. Using a cycle of reflection, learning, and adaptation, students become empowered to shape the future and learn to be responsible to others within the greater community.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SOFT SKILLS, INCLUDING CROSS-DISCIPLINE

Teachers may feel underprepared or even unprepared to teach soft skills. Multiple strategies can be used to teach many soft skills at any grade level, including across business disciplines and levels of education. However, soft skill assignments often pose grading challenges for teachers. The website EdTechTeacher provides a list of rubrics used in measuring student learning for a variety of soft-skill-type assignments. The rubrics are posted at <http://edtechteacher.org/assessment>. One resource available for the high school teacher focuses on workforce readiness skills (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). The activities in the Department of Labor’s *Skills to Pay the Bills* (available free from <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>) were created for incorporation into existing courses.

Strategies for Teaching Soft Skills

Options and choice. Teachers should offer various options to students. This does not mean providing limited instruction but, instead, offering activities from which students can choose. In this way, teachers allow students to take ownership of the project and its outcome. Mistakes provide learning opportunities. Frustrations in completing the task offer a chance to seek alternative paths to completion (Bartel, 2014). For example, teachers can give students the option of preparing a presentation, poster, or report to demonstrate learning.

Open-ended questioning techniques. Ask open-ended questions to guide students. It is often easier to supply the correct answer to move the student forward to project completion; however, by asking the open-ended question, the student begins to learn how to problem solve through creative thinking. Teachers can (a) model asking open-ended questions for students; (b) use what, why, and how questions during discussions; and (c) ask students to elaborate or provide additional details.

Problem solving. One teaching strategy involves using a problem-solving model, such as the one shown above in Figure 1 above, to teach creativity. Teachers can offer students projects that require them to work through the steps. At the conclusion of the activity, the students present their findings to the class using a paper, poster, or oral presentation.

Brain teasers. Puzzle stories or logic stories provide a way to build problem-solving skills. A puzzle story includes a situation in which the reader is given very little information about the problem and is then required to find a solution. Often, one avenue of thinking reaches an end without a solution, forcing the person or group to think creatively to find a different, workable solution (Sloane, n.d.). Resources for puzzle stories include the following:

- Paul Sloane's (n.d.) article entitled "The Top Ten Lateral Thinking Puzzles" (<http://www.destination-innovation.com/articles/the-top-ten-lateral-thinking-puzzles>)
- The U.S. Department of State's webpage entitled "Puzzle Stories" (http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/154-161-s6-puzzle-stories.pdf)
- Mind Trap Brain Teaser Board Game (<http://www.outsetmedia.com/games/mind-trap/20th-anniversary-edition>)

Project-based learning. Project-based learning (PBL) is a tool that can be used to teach both flexibility and adaptability. When using PBL, the design of the lesson is critical. Any PBL lesson needs to be interactive. Through the collaboration provided by PBL, students learn a variety of soft skills, including responsibility, confidence, communication, and adaptability. All PBL activities begin with the learning objectives to be met. Once the objectives are identified, a problem that the students must explore can be used. Case studies are one way of designing the problem for PBL. Students need ground rules for working in teams. In the beginning, teachers should practice the activity to teach the students how to participate in a PBL scenario and how to conduct peer review and self-reflection on learning activities. It is important to have clear assessment rubrics. Graeber (2012) suggested that teachers ask the following questions in order to build the PBL assignment:

- What instructional unit do I want to transform?

- What engaging, relevant, real-world problem could students attempt to solve that is related to the concepts and skills in the unit?
- What authentic roles can students take on to try solving this problem?
- How might students be asked to work collaboratively to try solving this problem? (p. 5)

Once the teacher answers these questions, s/he should prepare for seven phases of the PBL assignment as follows (Graeber, 2012):

- *Phase 1* is an introduction to the problem or the essential question that must be answered through the activity.
- *Phase 2* is the culminating challenge that will be an authentic assessment or activity that the students complete to demonstrate mastery of learning.
- *Phase 3* develops subject matter expertise. Teachers should provide enough background for the students to complete the project then let the students figure out the solution and how to move forward.
- *Phase 4* provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning through a performance assessment. If possible, teachers should bring in outside experts to evaluate the learning project.
- *Phase 5* allows the class to debrief and reflect upon what was accomplished with the task. Debriefing could be oral, written, or both.
- *Phase 6* revisits the culminating challenge. At this stage, the students should have a deeper understanding of the problem and be able to discuss the issues in more depth and detail.
- *Phase 7* is the summative assessment for the project.

One example of PBL is the use of a “Shark Tank”-type challenge. Students are given the assignment to develop a business idea that can be pitched to a group of potential investors (Phases 1 and 2). As the students learn about entrepreneurship and business concepts (Phase 3), they create their pitch, which will be presented to a group of business people from the community (Phase 4). After the investors have heard all the presentations from students, teachers should allow time for the investors to offer advice to the students. The students then consider the feedback and write a reflection paper on how to improve their idea and/or presentation skills (Phase 5). As a class, the students discuss entrepreneurship and business concepts (Phase 6) before completing a final exam on the concepts (Phase 7).

Conflict management. Negotiation and compromise strategies can be taught in middle and high school grades through a program called *Conflict Managers* (Conflict Resolution Unlimited Institute, 2004). The premise of this tool includes discovering

the problem from the other person's perspective, exploring the problem through active listening strategies, and finding solutions and reaching agreement.

One way to teach negotiation and compromise skills involves partnering with a similar class in another state or country. Both classes can investigate a topic and provide a solution. Through negotiation and compromise, one report can be written that includes the findings of both groups. Another strategy would include cooperation with the civics class. As the civics class studies the process for a law to be created, the communications/business class researches the issue. The civics class acts as one branch of "Congress," while the business class acts as the other. Both classes draft a potential "law" that would impact the school (e.g., a new dress code policy). Working through the process, the two classes negotiate and compromise to create a final version of the bill to present to the principal for approval or veto.

Written communication. Teachers may offer students scenarios that require them to draft a response using proper business document formats. For example, students in a college business communication class write persuasive letters to high school seniors to encourage the high school students to declare a specific major.

Another example involves high school students in a computer applications class preparing a weekly or monthly newsletter to send home to parents. Additionally, working with the school office or counselor, the students prepare informational brochures about upcoming events in the school, such as preparing flyers for college night or homecoming.

Oral communication. Confident speakers are able to discuss multiple topics in impromptu settings. One strategy for teaching speaking skills is to have each student speak for 2–3 minutes on any topic that interests him/her. Another strategy requires the student to write down a topic that interests him/her greatly and answer a question, for example, "Should college athletes be paid for playing?" Once the topic has been identified, the student researches and presents on the opposite viewpoint. By presenting the alternative viewpoint, students learn to process information, think critically about the information found, and present without bias.

Conducting a conversation is another skill needed by students. Conducting role-model exercises improves conversation skills. Offering students conversation starters and providing conversation time allows practice for learning conversation skills. Conversation starters could include questions such as "What did you do this weekend?" or "What is your favorite book, sports team, musician, etc.?" As students learn how to conduct a conversation, the topics can become more technical or in depth.

Nonverbal communication. Lessons that teach various nonverbal behaviors are important in order to understand the full communication process. One project that incorporates many soft skills requires the students to research a culture; write a report

about the culture; present the findings to the class, both orally and through a creative component such as a poster or flyer for the business traveler; and demonstrate any nonverbal communication cues about the culture.

To learn about the use of gestures in different countries, teachers may assign a research project. Each student is assigned a particular culture or country to investigate how gestures are used in that culture or country. Once students have completed the research, the class compiles a *World Gestures* video to share with a World History or World Geography class.

Listening as part of communication. To build listening skills, teachers may provide pre-learning activities, such as guided notes, vocabulary terms, or study guides, which allow the students to listen for the main ideas. By removing the need to write down everything, students focus on the important new information. Related to providing pre-learning activities, teachers may offer students structured activities to practice listening. For example, the teacher may stop a video and ask the students to write down the main ideas and any questions from the previous segment. Additionally, one effective strategy is to stop repeating instructions. When teachers repeat themselves, they de-value the skill of listening. They should allow students to ask questions to clarify the information and instructions but not repeat the actual instructions (Blake, 2014).

Reading as part of communication. A strategy to teach reading skills involves the student creating questions for the author of a news article. According to Larry Lewin (2010), the students can “ask tough questions about the author’s position, decisions, biases, or agenda” (“From Curious to Suspicious,” para. 3). Example questions include the following:

- Why don’t you mention _____?
- Did the author consider _____?
- What you say is interesting, but I think that _____. (para. 7)

Using online learning strategies also teaches critical reading skills. Suggestions for teachers include preparing a unit that is deployed through a classroom learning management system (LMS); placing all instructions and activities in the LMS; and requiring that students complete the activities through the LMS. Edmodo is a popular free LMS for use in K–12 school settings.

Strategies for Teaching Information, Media, and Technology Skills

Information literacy. Although not all information found on the Internet is reliable, students “Google” everything. One strategy that can be used to teach students how to evaluate information found on the Internet involves using the website found at <http://www.dkmo.org/facts.html>. This website explains the dangers of dihydrogen monoxide.

Using a rubric provided by the teacher, students are required to determine if this is a reliable website. As students read through the website, they learn that the substance discussed is actually water. The teacher should provide a rubric for the evaluation process. Eastern Michigan University (n.d.) provided one example of a rubric, shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Web Site Evaluation Rubric

Name:

Date Web site was accessed:

Title of Web Page:

URL of Web Page:

	5-4	3-2	1-0
CONTENT	The content is complete and reliable. The information is not biased. The content is error-free in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	The content is not complete but reliable. The information may be biased. The content has a few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	The content is neither complete nor reliable. The information is biased. The content has many errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.
AUTHORITY	The author or publisher is an authority on the topic. There is no hidden agenda or motivation.	The author or publisher is qualified to speak on the topic. There may be some hidden agenda or motivation.	The author or publisher is not an authority or qualified to speak on the topic. There is a hidden agenda or motivation.
CURRENCY	The Web site is current based on the topic.	The Web site is fairly current based on the topic.	The Web site is not current based on the topic.
PURPOSE	The purpose and target audience for the Web site is clear.	The purpose and target audience for the Web site is fairly clear.	The purpose and target audience for the Web site is not clear.
USABILITY	The Web site is organized and easy to navigate. Pages load quickly.	The Web site is fairly organized and easy to navigate. Pages load slowly.	The Web site is not organized and difficult to navigate. Pages do not load.

25-20 points: I can use the Web site and I would highly recommend it to a friend.

19-15 points: I can use the Web site.

14-0 points: I can find a better Web site.

Source: Reprinted from Eastern Michigan University (n.d.).

Media literacy. The power of media to influence the behaviors and beliefs of individuals creates the need to teach media literacy. Teachers may use a current event that is available in the news and evaluate the reporting of the event using multiple media sources, such as ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox News, NBC, MSNBC, PBS, various online newspapers, and talk show programs (e.g., *The Daily Show*, *The View*, *Hannity*, and *Smerconish*).

Another lesson to teach media literacy is to assign students to create a video, podcast, or magazine article about a topic that could be considered controversial. After the projects are completed, teachers may have the class evaluate the projects for bias.

For both projects, PBS offers a variety of lesson plans that allow students to critically evaluate media as sources of information (Zill, n.d.). The complete listing of lesson plans can be found under “Resources” at <http://www.pbs.org/flashpointsusa/20030916/educators/lessonplan.html>.

Information and communication technologies. A lesson to teach ICT involves using a communications tool such as Google+ Hangout or Skype to conduct a video interview. Students prepare questions to ask the interviewee. Using the video chat tool, they contact an “expert” and interview the person about the topic. Through this format, the students learn to communicate using a webcam.

Strategies for Teaching Life and Career Skills

Tightly interwoven, the skills for life and career are difficult to separate. A flipped classroom or a quest-based learning environment provide students the opportunity to learn and practice life skills, such as flexibility, responsibility, accountability, and leadership.

A flipped classroom supports the life and career skill of responsibility. According to Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education’s (2014b) Policy Statement 94, “the flipped classroom is a student-centered, blended approach to teaching that requires students to actively engage in the learning process” (para. 3). The flipped classroom requires students to gain subject knowledge before class time through various instructional supports such as online lectures, videos, or reading assignments. Class time is used to interact with the course content using case studies, discussions, or PBL. Using a flipped classroom can seem intimidating; however, the teacher can start small by flipping one topic or unit at a time. One activity for flipping is a case study assignment in a business law or a management class. The students are required to read the course material or background information, conduct research about the topic, and come to class prepared to discuss the information. A different case study can be used for each team in the class. Each group discusses and reaches consensus about the assigned case study. The teams prepare a presentation to share with the class.

Adaptability, time management, and independence can be taught using quest-based learning or gamification. In this technique, students earn rewards for completing various learning activities. The student cannot move to the next level until they complete all of the skills at the current level. The student must set the goals and follow through on completing activities by the deadline. Both strategies teach students to become self-directed learners, a required skill for students to advance at the professional level.

SUMMARY

The literature is clear on the need to teach soft skills; however, little is provided on *how* to teach soft skills. This chapter offered a variety of ideas and instructional strategies for incorporating soft skills across the business disciplines and at all levels of the educational spectrum in three main areas. Included in this chapter are a discussion of what soft skills are and why they are important, cross-discipline strategies for teaching soft skills across business disciplines and levels of education, research studies on the importance of teaching life and career skills, information about case studies of schools teaching soft skills, resources for incorporating soft skills across the curriculum, and a link to a list of rubrics that can be used to measure student learning for a variety of soft-skill-type assignments. Teachers can incorporate one strategy at a time to build a toolbox of ideas and lessons that enhance the soft skills of tomorrow's workforce.

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