

# W H I T HEALTH SCIENCE Educator

*Tips, ideas and opinions for Health Science Education*



November 2020

## SOFT SKILLS EDITION



A free publication for professionals who choose to make a difference in the classroom – or working from a home office.

*You inspire the heroes of healthcare!*

Learning in an interactive setting as opposed to a passive one is conducive to the mix of soft and academic skills we're looking to develop in our kids.

— **Madeline Levine**

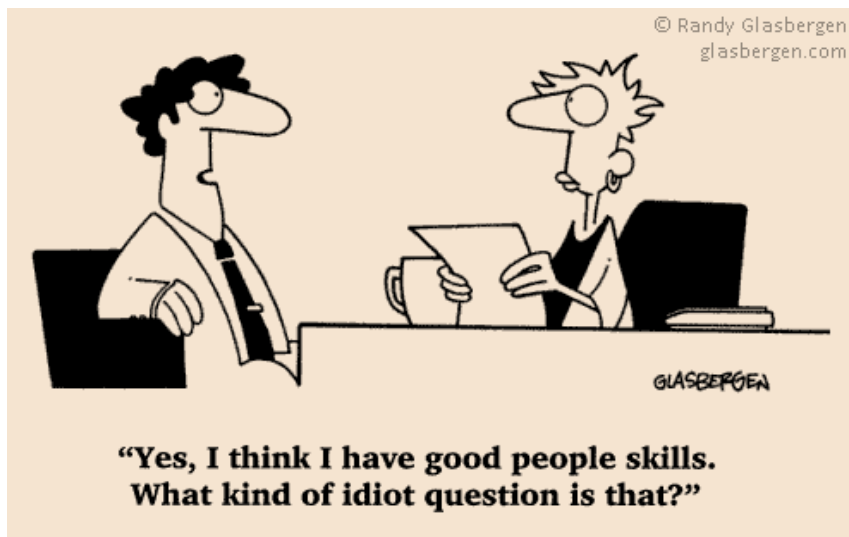
## ★ EDUCATION NEWS: **SOFT SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM**

### What's in a name?

I mentioned to a colleague that I wanted to focus a newsletter issue on soft skills, and she told me we don't use that term anymore.

We don't?

She suggested employability skills. Or work-based learning skills, or foundational skills, or job-readiness skills, or life skills, or basic skills, or interpersonal skills, or people skills...



For the purpose of this newsletter, we'll use the term soft skills, with the understanding that we are talking about the personal attributes that enable our students to interact effectively with other people, now and in their future career.

### **Soft Skills are Essential Skills in Health Science Education**

Six out of eleven National Health Science Standards include one or more objectives that include the development of soft skills. Three standards: Communication, Employability Skills, and Teamwork, are all about the development of soft skills.

The challenge is not IF we should teach it – but HOW.

How important are soft skills in the future of health care delivery?

*More important than ever.*

Lea was brushing her teeth when blood started flowing profusely from what looked like a hole in her tongue. With pressure, she was able to stop the bleeding, but every time she ate something, the bleeding started back again.

She waited a day to see if the problem would resolve itself. It did not. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day she called her family physician. The earliest appointment she could get was on the following day.



Lea stuck out her tongue and her family doctor could see the bluish-red spot on her tongue. After a quick look he told her she needed to see an ENT specialist who could cauterize the lesion. The office medical assistant gave Lea a number to call and charged her \$208 for the office visit.

By this time it was Thursday and the ENT office had no appointments until Monday. And, it had been four days since Lea had eaten anything solid.

Frustrated, she looked online and found an ENT physician with a 4.6 rating on Google and gave the office a call. After explaining her situation, she was transferred to a PA who listened, then talked to the physician, and then made her an appointment for later that afternoon.

It turns out, the treatment for a hemangioma of the tongue is surgical excision if severe, and if it doesn't resolve on its own. Lea was given the choice and chose to wait. On Monday morning she received a call from the PA to ask how she was doing, and together they decided it was time to go ahead and schedule the surgical procedure.

*So what?*

Lea wrote online reviews for her family doctor and both ENT offices. The reviews simply stated the facts. She has since found a new family doctor.

The passive consumer of the past is being replaced by the consumer who searches for and expects greater value and quality of service and a positive patient experience. When consumers feel like their needs are not being met by their current providers, they will look elsewhere. Online ratings from Google, Yelp, Healthgrades.com and others give consumers a voice AND have an impact on the choices that patients make about their healthcare.

Clinical expertise is a given – but today, so are soft skills. Soft skills are considered essential to managing and working with people, ensuring customer satisfaction, and contributing to a positive work environment.

Lea's family practice doctor and the first ENT office didn't do anything wrong, but they didn't do anything right either. They didn't make an effort to meet her needs. And as a result, she found a provider who would listen, problem-solve, and practice soft skills in the delivery of healthcare.

## Successful Practices in the Classroom: Teaching Soft Skills

*Start with a plan.*



1. Have students complete the "Personal Skills Self-Assessment" at the beginning, middle, and end of your program.

*This helps students identify the personal growth they are making as they progress through your course.*



2. Create a visual reminder in your classroom of the soft skills (personal characteristics) that will be developed in your program and refer to it often.

*Words (soft skills) on signs throughout the room works. A "soft skills" poster is also good.*



3. Identify the application of soft skills when teaching clinical skills.

*Have students practice explaining, empathizing and communicating with a patient while performing clinical skills in the classroom.*



4. Model the behaviors with your students.

*They watch everything you do. Make sure your behaviors as a teacher align with your behaviors as a healthcare provider. Think out loud so your students can learn by your example.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# PERSONAL SKILLS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Rate yourself on how well you usually practice the following skills using a 10-point scale.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Never			Sometimes				Always		

	Skill	Description	My Rating
1.	<b>People skills</b>	Communicating effectively through listening, observing, and empathizing. Do your words, expressions and gestures show that you care, one-on-one and in groups?	
2.	<b>Self-evaluation</b>	Assessing your performance, thoughts and words compared to specific goals, guidelines and norms. How clearly do you see yourself? How honest are you with yourself?	
3.	<b>Personal responsibility</b>	Taking responsibility for your actions and the outcomes of those actions. Do you control your responses in the face of factors outside your control?	
4.	<b>Positive attitude</b>	Having a positive approach in your expressions, gestures, words and tone. Do you find the good in events, situations, experiences, and others?	
5.	<b>Teamwork</b>	Playing whatever role is needed to support the goals of the group, including cooperating and collaborating with others. Do you support and celebrate the success of others?	
6.	<b>Good work habits</b>	Doing the right things to get the job done. Do you keep yourself healthy? Are you productive and organized? Do you follow through on tasks and take initiative?	
7.	<b>Open minded</b>	Suspending judgment, questioning assumptions, and seeking out information. Do you try to understand before you judge? Are you curious?	
8.	<b>Problem-solving</b>	Finding solutions to difficult or complex issues. Do you think about different ways to solve a problem? Do you look at problems as an opportunity for creative solutions?	
9.	<b>Decision-making</b>	Identifying and considering multiple options and choosing the option that is closest to the desired outcome. Do you think about the pros and cons before deciding what to do?	
10.	<b>Service</b>	Approaching relationships in terms of what you have to offer rather than what you need or want. Do you believe in respect, commitment, hard work and sacrifice for others?	

## Poster/Billboard Activity

Classroom posters can be effective reminders for your students and good marketing tools for your program. We think the best posters are student created.

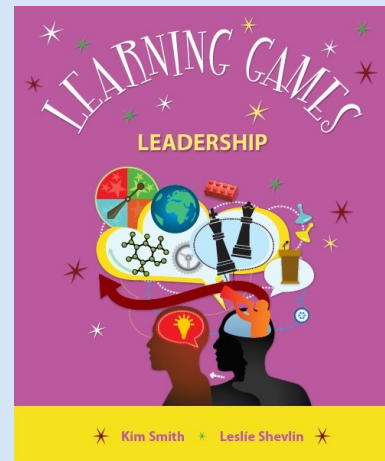
### Instructions

1. Create a poster (or billboard) to convey an important message.
2. Your poster can be drawn by hand or created on a computer.
3. Limit your poster to 50 words or fewer, or a billboard to 20 words or fewer.
4. Assure that your poster is clear, to the point, and can be easily understood.



### Options

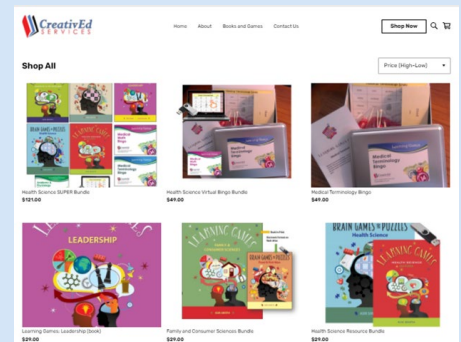
- Allow students to work in pairs – which requires them to practice soft skills while completing the assignment.
- Assign each student a different soft skill to be illustrated by the poster.
- Make it a competition. Ask an administrator, colleague, or advisory committee member to judge the posters.
- Make soft skills the topic for a local Health Poster event.
- Put the posters up around your classroom as a reminder of the importance of soft skills in the delivery of healthcare.



*Learning Games: Leadership* is an excellent resource for teaching soft skills. It includes 80 classroom activities in the following categories:

- Leadership
- Icebreakers
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Values and Ethics
- Creativity and Innovation
- Stress and Conflict Management
- Personal Leadership

Find it and other instructional planning tools at [CreativEdServices.com](http://CreativEdServices.com)



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**We'd love to hear from you!** Send us an email and share your experience with using the ideas in this newsletter or let us know what you would like to see in future issues.