

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Every two years, the district develops goals as focus for improvement. One of the current district goals is: "Soft Skills Development will be implemented K-12 as part of our career-awareness program with emphasis on workforce development." The specific soft skills being focused on districtwide are: setting and accomplishing goals, interpersonal skills, organization skills, time management, and conflict resolution. This goal was developed following feedback from a district advisory board that meets to discuss career initiatives and the school counseling plan that is a part of Chapter 339. The members of the advisory board, which includes local employers, expressed concern that students are graduating from high school and seeking employment without the soft skills needed to obtain and maintain a job.

In an article by Aricia E. LaFrance titled "Helping Students Cultivate Soft Skills," soft skills are defined as "a complex system of traits and habits commonly sought by employers." The article goes on to elaborate that "soft skills are habits that have been cultivated over time more than they are innate traits. Students who possess these skills have the potential of performing well at work while paving the way to good relationships in all areas of their life. When compared to hard skills (reading, writing, science, math, etc.), soft skills are highly valued by employers because they are hard to find." Our local employers verified the idea that soft skills are hard to find during the advisory board meetings. As soft skills take time to develop and are important to developing our students into successful contributors to our society, the district decided to make this goal a K-12 initiative.

At the elementary level, teachers will be reviewing the soft skills of setting and accomplishing goals, interpersonal skills, organization skills, time management, and conflict resolution throughout the school year. Once per semester the teachers will be completing the attached rubric to provide feedback to students on how effectively they are displaying these soft skills during a project completed in class. The rubric will not be graded but can be shared with students and parents as a resource to help the student grow. The rubrics will be copied and stored in career folders that are kept for all students K-12 as a way to provide evidence and feedback for students on the Pennsylvania Career Education and Work standards being taught.

If you have any questions in regards to the rubric or soft skills in general, please contact your school's principal or school counselor.

Thank you!

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*Penn-Trafford Elementary Principals and School Counselors*