

Chapter Four

SOFT SKILLS MEASUREMENT

Ballard County High School and Ballard County Career Technical Center

The Ballard County Career and Technical Center, in conjunction with Ballard Memorial High School, has worked with local and state business leaders to develop an advisory committee with the following goals: forge strong business and industry partnerships, provide industry expertise and advice to educators, and provide a focus on improving career technical education as it relates to local and state businesses.

The committee includes business leaders from the Ballard County Schools, USEC, First Community Bank, Big River Industries, Hutson Agricultural and LifeCare Associates. This group includes members of the financial sector, healthcare professionals, the transportation industry and agribusiness community.

The committee assists BCCTC in developing curriculum by identifying job skill competencies and employability skills. In 2013, the advisory committee acknowledged the success of BCCTC and BMHS to produce students who were college and career ready, but identified the need to increase student awareness of soft employability skills such as promptness, work ethic and professional dress.

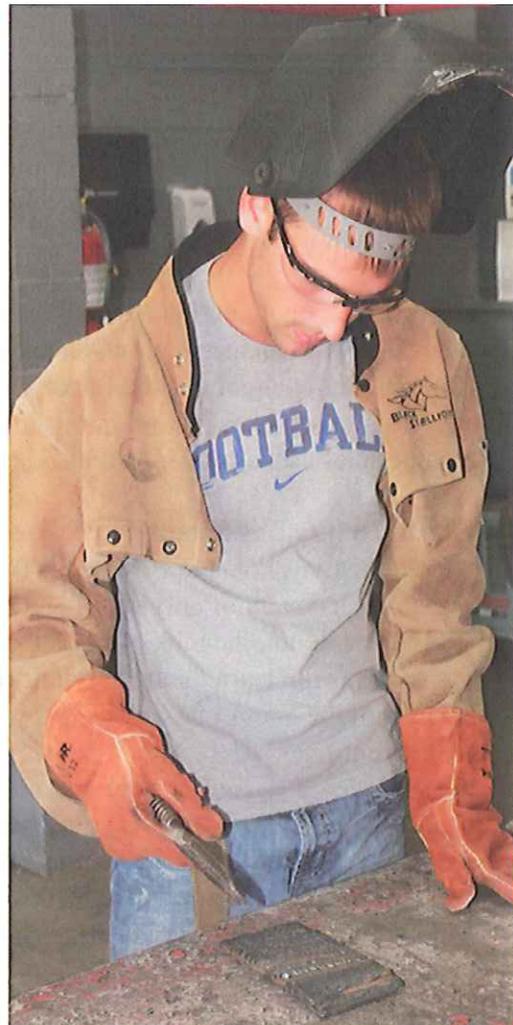
In response to the advisory committee, the BCCTC Work-Based Learning program was redesigned and aligned with industry pathways. The WBL program will expand in the 2014-15 school year to include long-term internships with local businesses. As part of the overall redesign and career readiness practicum, BCCTC will begin implementation of "Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success," a curriculum developed by the US Department of Labor focused on teaching "soft" or workforce readiness skills to youth.

The program was designed to target youth from 14 to 21, and is comprised of modular, hands-on, engaging activities that focus on six key skill areas: communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking, problem-solving and critical thinking, and professionalism (to include attendance and punctuality).

The following guidelines must be met to obtain the Soft Skills Certification:

- *No more than two unexcused absences*
- *No more than two unexcused tardies*
- *No level 2, 3, or 4 discipline referrals during the certifying year*
- *Involvement in at least one extracurricular/co-curricular activity*
- *Successful completion of the Mastering Soft Skills for the Workplace curriculum*

BCCTC and BMHS will work in conjunction with the Ballard County Chamber of Commerce and BCCTC advisory committee to validate the program and develop Key Performance Indicators. The Ballard Chamber will give employers information about the certification and provide information on how to use the certification to qualify applications for hiring. In addition, employers will be asked to give preference to candidates completing the certification.



Soft skills development is integrated across the Ballard County Schools curriculum and is key to our success with college and career readiness.

Ballard County Chamber of Commerce and Ballard County Schools: Senior Leadership Ballard Program

In conjunction with the Leadership Ballard program targeting adults in the community, we will be offering qualifying high school seniors the opportunity to participate in the adult class sessions and earn a certificate of participation. We feel that this is a great opportunity for our young people to see our county from a different perspective, to make connections with the adult participants, and to learn skills that will help them as they graduate and move on to the next chapter of their lives.

The goal is to plant the seeds of leadership in high school seniors, along with the expectation that they will see the opportunities that are available to them after they finish their academic careers and are ready to join the work force. Our purpose is to retain our young people by showing them that there are opportunities in Ballard County to be leaders, have good jobs and live fulfilling lives.

Seniors will apply to participate and must commit to attending a pre-determined number of field trips and leadership classes that will enhance their understanding of the community and leadership principles. Representatives of Ballard Memorial High School and the Leadership Ballard Committee will determine which field trips and leadership classes students will attend. Participation in this program requires commitment from the students. They will be expected to follow the same rules as the adults. At the end of the nine-month session, certificates will be awarded to all participants.

Ballard County Boy Scouts

Ballard County is home to Boy Scout Troop 66, sponsored by the Barlow United Methodist Church continuously since 1972. From a county of only about 8,000 people, the Troop has produced 61 young men who have achieved Scouting's highest honor, the rank of Eagle Scouts. In addition to those exemplary youth, there have been hundreds of Ballard County boys who learn the three points of the Scout Oath (Duty to God, Duty to Others and Duty to Self) as well as the 12 points of the Scout Law (trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.)

The Boy Scout program serves youth between the ages of 11 and 18. While attaining the rank of Eagle Scout is a goal, the boys are taught that living the Scout Oath and Scout Law are a way of life. This leads to strong leadership and work ethic. The Patrol method teaches youth teamwork, group problem-solving and getting along with people you don't like, as well as taking turns in leadership roles. Such an active Boy Scout Troop in any county would strongly contribute to the future of a Work Ready Community.

The Scouting program learning process is based on 130 merit badges available to youth who wants to learn/explore sports, crafts, science, trades, business and also future careers. Many of those badges are directly applicable to STEM subjects. As it says on the scouting.org website: "From archery to welding, Scouts can't help but enjoy the wide range of STEM-related activities. Many professionals and educators say our young people need strong STEM skills to compete in the world market. We must work together to cultivate the next generation of critical thinkers and innovators."



Troop 66 has produced 61 young men who have achieved Scouting's highest honor, the rank of Eagle Scouts. A list of all the Merit Badges they've earned in 2014 is provided in the appendix, on pages 51 -55.

Ballard County 4-H Youth Development and Ballard County Schools: BMHS Ambassadors

Ballard Memorial High School, Ballard County Family Resource Youth Services Center, and Ballard County 4-H collaborate on the BMHS Ambassadors. FRYSC director Kelly Wray leads this project, which has established a program for identifying and refining leadership abilities and skills in our students.

BMHS students apply for acceptance into the school's Ambassadors group. Students accepted into the program work with Kelly Wray to identify and complete 4-H service learning projects in the community. They are offered the opportunity to attend various leadership training programs both within and outside the community as they are available. Students involved in this program also are identified as potential candidates to serve as legislative pages in Frankfort.

Participation in this program supports soft-skill development by encouraging leadership development, networking and communication with various people in community leadership roles, professionalism, and a service-oriented attitude toward work in and for the community.

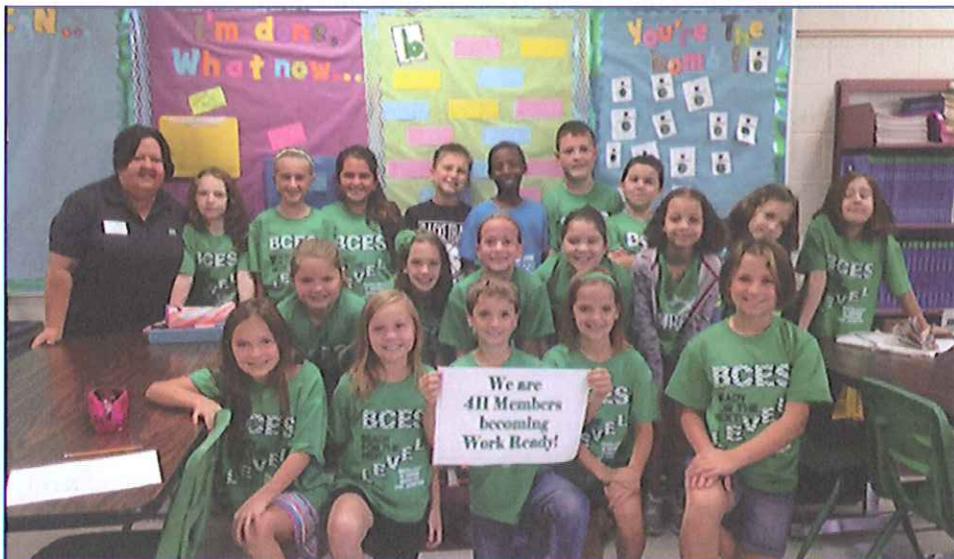
Ballard County 4-H Youth Development and Ballard County Schools: Junior Leadership

Ballard County Middle School collaborates with Ballard County 4-H on a program that identifies and expands leadership skills in sixth-grade students. Under the direction of Ballard County 4-H Extension Agent Paula Jerrell, students in sixth grade are identified as potential leaders and given opportunities and experiences that develop leadership and support soft-skill development.

Junior Leadership students participate in team-building activities to learn about working together as a group to meet common goals. They examine leadership styles and take trips to visit various community leaders as they work in their roles in the county. Their experiences with Junior Leadership help develop communication skills and give them opportunities to see and learn about community service opportunities in the district.

Ballard County 4-H Youth Development: 4-H Teens

Ballard County 4-H Youth Development, also under Jerrell's direction, includes the 4-H Teens program. Students in this program experience opportunities to complete service learning projects to build a connection to the community and a positive attitude; in addition, involved students develop communication and teamwork skills in completing the tasks. Students in 4-H Teens also are given the opportunity to attend leadership conferences and are candidates for opportunities to page in the state legislature. Participation in these activities supports communication and leadership skills, networking with other leaders, and supports a positive attitude with a focus on service learning.



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