Narrative 5: Soft Skills Measurement
Evidence of Programs to Build Work Ethic/Soft Skills for Secondary and Postsecondary Populations

Boyle County has existing programs at both the secondary and postsecondary levels to develop these types of skills. In addition, the Central Kentucky Career Center provides programs, and the Danville/Boyle County Chamber of Commerce's program Leadership Boyle County has produced a popular CD to promote soft skills development.

Programs Provided by Central Kentucky Career Center

With the assistance of the Workforce Investment Act staff, the local chapter of Career Center RM is able to provide training in soft skills such as the following:
- WorkKeys and Interest Inventory
- Resume Writing
- Interviewing Skillls
- Job Search Assistance
- Out-of-Area Job Search and Relocation Assistance
- Computer Classes

For a complete description, please see **Appendix I:** Programs provided by the Central Kentucky Career Center.

Programs Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce

Developed by a recent Leadership Boyle County class, a CD called "Job R.E.D.I" **(Appendix J)** was created to teach students and prospective employees about
- **R**esumes
- **E**tiquette
- **D**ress
- **I**nterview skills

This CD is now available regionally through the Teacher Academy, Community Education, and the Chamber of Commerce. Hundreds have been distributed in the region since its creation.

Programs in the Secondary Schools

Most of the schools (elementary, middle, and high school) in the Boyle County system conduct **"Reality World/Reality Store""** events for students to introduce them to life skills such as budgeting, evaluating, and making consumer choices, balancing a checkbook, etc.

At BCHS, in preparation for the "Reality World," all of the seniors participate in 2 to 3 hours of activities lead by volunteers from local business that focus on the transition to post-secondary education, job skills that employers seek, employment applications, resume preparation, and interviewing skills. The importance of soft skills (i.e. problem solving/critical thinking,

teamwork/collaboration, dealing with change, dependability/attendance/punctuality, flexibility/adaptability, and verbal communications) is emphasized in addition to math, reading and reading comprehension, and computer skills.

To illustrate the types of skills needed in every workplace setting, students complete a competitive challenge in which they must solve sample questions taken from the National Career Readiness certification tests on Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information. Other challenges illustrate problem solving and teamwork skills.

Other programs offered in the secondary schools are

- Mentoring programs in both school systems,

- Job shadowing at Boyle County High School

- The Work Ethics Seal at Boyle County High School in which students learn about Time Management, Initiative, Adaptability, Teamwork, and Collaboration to earn a seal that is added to their diploma. (See **Appendix K:** Work Seal Document.)

- DHS Intersession, enrichment classes courses offered between fall and spring sessions in which students can choose from a wide variety of classes ranging from computer skills to bread-making.

Programs in the Postsecondary Institutions

Ethics/ Diversity. Almost all college students are required to take an Orientation to College class and at least two English Composition classes. Academic honesty is an explicit part of these classes—that is, they learn how to credit fairly and completely another's ideas and words when referring to them in print or speech. This skill is further emphasized in classes in which research papers are required. Students learn to understand their opposition, to establish common ground, and to offer persuasive arguments that fairly restate and ultimately refute their positions. They are taught to base their arguments primarily on data instead of emotions and to identify false reasoning. As part of a University-wide quality enhancement program that began in 2007, EKU professors focus on issues such as these in every college class, with the ultimate goal of "developing informed, critical and creative thinkers who communicate effectively." So the emphasis on ethical and reasoned communications starts with the first class.

Acceptance of the diversity of ideas is also a "soft" skill that is increasingly emphasized by postsecondary institutions. For example, at EKU one of the six areas of the new General Education Program is "Diversity of Perspectives and Experiences." Courses in this area include foreign languages and the study of other cultures, which foster a respect of diverse

populations. The hope is that embracing differences and learning that prejudice is not only unethical but also counterproductive will foster better teamwork in the workplace and more harmony in one's life.

In addition to these two underlying currents that run through all of these college courses, the following skills are also part of every course:

1. Emphasis on excellent communication skills—written, verbal, and in print.
2. Strong technical skills—from knowledge of basic computer applications to research skills and the ability to evaluate online sources of information for relevancy and accuracy.
3. Organizational skills—from note-taking to writing.
4. Team projects.
5. Peer reviews and coaching.

As part of EKU's free student services, college students are also introduced to work-ready behaviors in a series of free workshops throughout the year. Some of the typical topics include:

- Put Your Best Foot Forward: The Job Interview
- How to Dress for Success in the Workplace
- How to Deal with Difficult People in the Workplace

In addition, BCTC's Danville Campus offers an array of general education courses that focus on strong written and oral communication skills as well as the development of problem-solving and critical thinking abilities.

BCTC also offers free career counseling services and job readiness services to its students, including:
- Career Development
- Resume Writing
- Interview Skills
- Networking
- Internships
- Career Fairs