

Narrative 5: Soft Skills Program

Discuss your community program or programs to address work ethic/soft skills development and credentialing for both the secondary school and post secondary adult populations. The programs must meet the following minimum standards:

- provide evidence of employer engagement in the program development process, including representation of the county's most prolific businesses and industries,
- provide evidence that employers recognize achievement of work ethic or soft skills credential in their hiring/advancement processes,
- programs must include measurable goals for annual improvement in the raw number and percentage of workforce credentialed,
- plans must include a strategy to assure employers of the sustainability of the programs, and
- programs must address, at a minimum, the following topical areas: attendance/punctuality, communication, teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking.

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Narrative 5: Soft Skills Program

Madison County has already implemented the initial steps of creating a relationship between the business community and students on soft skills development. The chamber partnership is designing a survey for the industrial and business community that will evaluate current employee make-up with regard to current Madison County residents and those who were educated within the county. It is this information that will assist us in learning more about the current challenges and future solutions.

Upon the results of this survey, a group of community leaders and critical stakeholders will come together as a strategic group that will evaluate survey results, emphasize new initiatives and develop a plan of action that will be implemented in 2012.

Below you will find a number of examples of soft skills development programs available in Madison County. The Committee submitting this application will ensure that employers continue to be made aware of the programs and the value of the programs. It is the plan of the committee to bring about better awareness of soft skills programs offered in Madison County. Success will be measured by the level of awareness created. The examples of Madison County soft skills programs are as follows:

Annual Career Fair

The Madison County Business and Education Partnership hosts an annual career fair for high school juniors. The most recent career fair was November 21, 2011 at Eastern Kentucky University. Among employment sectors represented at the career fair were health science, information technology, manufacturing, and transportation. Presenters from the sectors were encouraged to provide information on the types of work available, the level of education/training required, and the specific skills needed. Presenters were also encouraged to discuss how the soft skills areas of attendance/punctuality, communication, teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking affect employability.

High School Soft Skills Courses

The Madison County high schools offered a variety of courses that directly and indirectly encourages and develops soft skills. The courses are available for high school students to take in addition to their normal course load. These courses have been included in the curriculum to provide students with some of the soft skills they will need as they begin to look for employment beyond high school. Examples of the courses can be seen below:

Careers Course

A careers course offered in the high school curriculum covers the following topics:

- What makes a good employee and employer
- Finding your ideal career
- Job hunting
- The interview and the follow up
- Resume writing and filling out applications
- Community service, references, and other involvements

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- Social aspects of the workplace

Life Skills Course

Similarly, a life skills course offered in the high school curriculum to both high school 9th & 10th graders has students work on a career project in which they are required to create a resume, write a cover letter, fill out a job application, and come dressed for a mock interview.

Physical Education Course

Physical education courses offered throughout the high school curriculum emphasize sportsmanship and how important it can be not only in sports but in life. It is discussed in terms of how it applies to all areas of life including school, work, relationships, and sports. Also addressed in the curriculum is:

- Attendance/punctuality
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Leadership

English Course

One of the English courses in the high school curriculum includes writing assignments that require critical thinking skills. Also, students will have group projects each semester which require teamwork, communication, leadership, and public speaking. A separate project includes resume writing, job research, creating a letter of application, and simulated interview.

Student Employability Training (SET)

Student Employability Training (SET) will be offered at Berea Community High School, Madison Central High School, and Madison Southern High School. SET provides a 50-55 minute session to all seniors on the importance of soft skills and making the right impression before the interview in order to achieve success in the workplace. The sessions will be offered to groups of 15-25 students. Subjects will include:

- Dressing for Success
- Social Media
- Networking
- Job Applications

Adult Education

Among post secondary soft skills programs in Madison County is Eastern Kentucky University's Adult Education. Students qualifying for assistance receive assistance with the following soft skills in addition to academic work:

- Building and writing a resume
- Writing and resume cover letter/letter of interest
- Writing business letters/follow-up
- Importance of attendance and punctuality
- Interview skills
- Dressing for success
- Organizational skills
- Planning

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Education Pays Center

Eastern Kentucky University also offers the Education Pays Center. The Education Pays Center offers qualified students benefits including tutoring, computer labs, cultural enrichment, work experience, and career counseling. It is a program designed to provide academic support, employment training, resource referral, and general counseling to K-TAP recipients who are seeking post secondary education at Eastern Kentucky University. Some other key benefits include:

- Academic advising
- Mentoring
- Job search assistance
- Job shadowing placement
- Training workshops
- Positive study environment
- Peer support groups

New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW)

The offices for the New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW) in Berea offers a variety of program options for women from Appalachian who are low income and undereducated including a three week residential program twice a year, regional workshops and career/education counseling throughout the year.

The three week residential programs have a dual focus: elevating individual self esteem while increasing math, writing, computer, job skills, and providing internships in a variety of local businesses where the academic competencies can be applied. Students also receive a "work ready" makeover including a business suit, proper make-up and hairstyle. Participation is determined through application, and there is no cost to the selected participants.

Regional workshops are offered throughout the year focusing on a variety of topics including the following:

- Job search skills
- Leadership development
- Returning to school
- Self-esteem
- Journaling
- Computer basics

The NOSW Career/Education Counselor works with women on an individual basis in the following areas:

- Resume writing
- Interview coaching
- Skills identification
- Job search assistance

National College

National College in Richmond holds various seminars in both written and oral communication. Students receive one on one attention prior to graduation for assistance with mock interviews and resume/cover letter writing. Quarterly assemblies are held to recognize students who have perfect attendance where guest speakers will speak on subjects such as dressing for success and interviewing.

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Mobile Career Center

The Mobile Career Center has made multiple visits to the Army Depot in Madison County where employees have received assistance with resume writing, completing on line applications, registering into Focus Career (statewide system), and work search. Basic resume writing assistance has been provided but assistance with preparing a federal resume and applying for federal employment has been provided as well.

EKU Community Education classes

EKU's Community Education Department offers a wide variety classes that are open to the general public. Courses are taught by ECU faculty and staff, community professionals and local tradespersons. Over 100 non-credit courses are offered by Community Education each semester. The courses meet a wide variety of needs and interests among all ages and skill levels. Among scheduled courses are: computers, personal growth, writing, business etiquette, small business development, and workforce education.

Financial and Relationship Peace

Kentucky River Foothills Development Council has two federal grant funded programs that work with all income levels to increase relationship and personal financial skills. The Healthy Marriage and Relationship Project and Responsible Fatherhood grants offer "Financial and Relationship Peace" classes. These classes teach communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and personal finance skills – basic and advanced. Both programs also offer job coaching. Participants not only successfully search for and interview for jobs, but receive training in business relationships skills and workplace etiquette. To round out their programs the Responsible Fatherhood program offers parenting classes and the Healthy Marriage and Relationship Project offers individual financial coaching. Both of these programs allow several places for community members to increase their personal management skills both relationally and financially. The services are offered at no cost to participants and are offered throughout the community at various times and locations to allow the maximum number of people to participate.

Since becoming a Work Ready In-Progress Community we have accomplished many things in the soft skills category. To name a few:

Freshman Soft Skills Classes

This August there are 766 freshmen students in the Madison County schools who are taking Soft Skills classes for 12 weeks of the year. Gear-Up Appalachia provided the district with three full time teachers to begin this program. Our committee met several times to discuss all that we had learned from meetings we had with many of our plant managers and HR managers. We then took the time to meet with all of these teachers to share this information. We feel very confident that what is being taught can and will help these students to be better prepared for the workforce. Additionally these teachers will be utilizing several volunteers from the business community to come into the classroom to speak to their students. All teachers will be using the ILP with their students as they go through this course.

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Madison County Middle Schools College and Career Readiness Certificate

In the spring of this year there was a county-wide celebration for many of our 8th grade students from all three middle schools with a graduation ceremony as they received a Madison County Middle Schools College and Career Readiness Certificate. The criteria include academic, attendance, and behavior goals as well as goals for school involvement. These are objectives that businesses and colleges would also encourage our students to pursue.

Leader in Me

Glenn Marshall Elementary School received a grant to begin the Leader in Me program in their school. They were able to get all of the training for their faculty and staff before school ended in May and have had two additional professional development days devoted to Leader in Me. They have had community leaders come to the school and share how the Seven Habits apply to their career and how they use these habits daily. The school has a three year plan in place and they will host a Leader in Me day in March that will be open to other schools as well as community leaders to see how they are progressing with this program.

Also, Berea Community became a Leader in Me school last year and we have all watched in amazement at the improvements they have seen in their student body as well as their faculty and staff.

7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

Clark Moores Middle School's objective is to adopt The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teen's with the purpose to provide students with the skills to develop successful habits, set goals, think long-term, and build strong and positive relationships.

Proposal and overview: CMMS calls the program "Habit of the Month"...which will mean having the habits introduced to the students one per month (starting in September) for seven consecutive months and provide students with (suggested) activities associated with each of the habits that translates into "rewards" intrinsically and extrinsically (especially if linked with Renaissance as a component of the attitude requirement).

We are working to try and get 30 workbooks for one of the 8th grade teachers. She is so enthusiastic about this new program that she has contacted several businesses to help her in this quest.