

Soft Skills Work Group Meeting

February 24, 2017



What would the future of Rockingham County look like if soft skills like work ethic, communication, teamwork, and adaptability became part of our young people's DNA? Our team took the first step in answering this question on February 24.

Present for the meeting were: Brannon Russell, Ruger; Heather Adams, Rockingham Partnership for Children; Mike Dougherty, Eden Economic Development; Steve Scott, Tri-State Steel; Holly Williamson, RCS; Amy Smith, RCS; Cecil Kemp, RCS; Portia Parris, Reidsville YMCA; and Ken Scott, RCS. The group was assembled to determine the soft skills that are critical to our the success of our young people and critical to the economic well being of Rockingham County. Our Soft Skills group is one of five Reset Rockingham work groups. Reset Rockingham's goals are to:

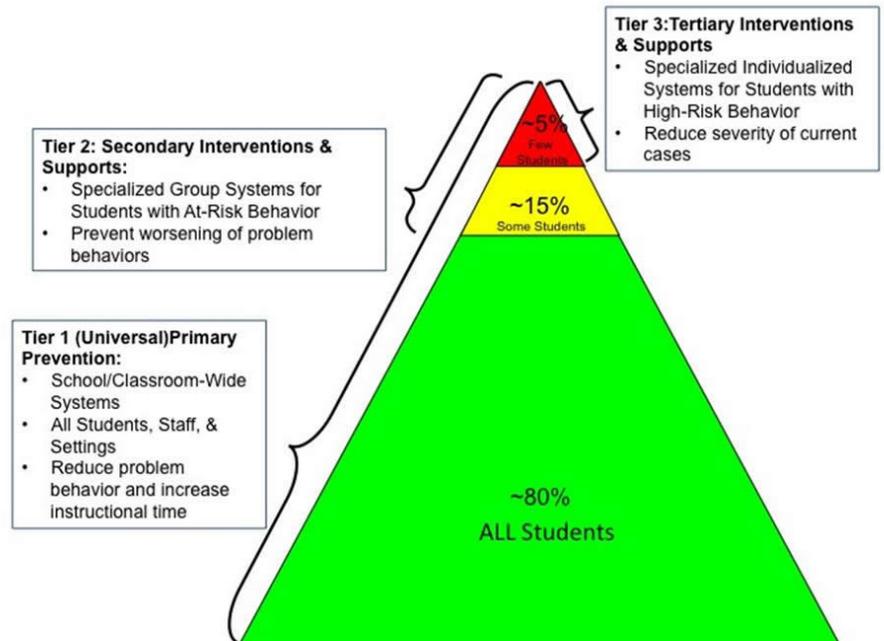
1. Create a workforce in the county that is the envy of the state.
2. Create career opportunities for all.
3. Provide a reason for businesses to locate in the county.
4. Provide a reason for young people to remain.



The Reset Rockingham work groups were also assembled to address the types technical skills, basic skills and work-based experiences that are necessary to meet these lofty goals. A work group was also assembled to coordinate the placement of our current workforce. Reset Rockingham emerged by way of the existence of scores of stakeholders who want to contribute to the economic well-being of Rockingham County but may not know how. It emerged from a realization that it will take the focused and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders if we are to realize the vision of a "workforce that is the envy of the state." The team took a few minutes to hear from individuals who represent programs within the county that already contribute to the development of certain soft skills.

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)

PBIS introduces a 3-Tiered approach to the development of social development of young people. While the immediate result of an effective PBIS program is a decrease in disciplinary referrals and an improvement in the overall school climate, the main goal is to produce civil and productive citizens. On the right is a graphic that illustrates the 3-Tiered approach of PBIS.



RCS Character Traits

Leaksville Spray Elementary School provides lessons and recognition that are associated with each month's character trait as noted below.

August – School Safety
September – Responsibility
October – Respect
November – Good Citizenship
December – Service to Others/Kindness
January – Courage
February – Self-Discipline
March – Perseverance
April- Integrity/Honesty
May – Good Judgment



Head Start

Head Start of Rockingham County currently enrolls 250 children from ages 3 through 5. Through their classroom activities teachers attempt to develop a sense of customer service, problem solving, team work and the skill of using information. Head Start stresses the importance of Parent Involvement. Such an emphasis on parental involvement may have strong implications with regard to garnering parent support for the reinforcement of critical soft skills.

Junior Achievement

Junior Achievement is presently working with the kindergarten groups in four of our districts' elementary schools: Dillard Elementary, Central Elementary, South End Elementary and Monroeton Elementary. The plan for Junior Achievement in Rockingham County is to expand the experience to 1st grade in 2017-18; and to the 2nd grade in 2018-19. The strategy that was expressed is to help students develop the capacity to make wise choices with their money and that such a capacity has to be developed at an early age. One of the main points of emphasis for the current group is differentiating between a "want" and a "need."

In addition to the actual content of the class the students gain certain "presentation skills" which the group thought should be reinforced throughout their school careers. As the students participated in the classroom activity, they practiced introducing themselves with a hand shake and stating their full name "loud and proud."

Soft Skill Activity

The group began the work of developing a list of the critical soft skills that could be developed from pre-school through our Community College and into the workforce. The group considered survey data that was compiled by Reset Rockingham in October of 2016, as well as data compiled by the NC Department of Commerce's Employer Needs Survey of 2014. On the following page you, will find an account of how the group responded to the questions of: (1) What are the attitudes and dispositions that you would want to see developed in your child? (2) And what are the attitudes and dispositions that you would want to see in your employees?



What are the attitudes and dispositions that you would want to see developed in your child?

Communication	Work Ethic	Respect	Responsibility/Civic
Team Player	Assertive	Courteous	Personal Responsibility
Articulate	Perseverance	Considerate of others	Self Control
Critical Thinker	Independent	Kindness	Adaptive/Flexible
Intuitive	Integrity	Respect	Responsible
		Empathy/Sympathy	

What are the attitudes and dispositions that you would want to see in your employees?

Teachable Skills	Characteristics of a Person
Team Player	Dependability
Coachable/Willingness to Learn and ask for help	Reliable
Flexible	Responsible/ Accountable
Attention to Detail	Ethical
Organized	Honest
On time	Empathetic
Self initiative/Good Work Ethic	Energized/Passion/Dedication/Positivity
Innovative	Patience
Self Awareness	
Problem Solving Skills	
Listening Skills	
Attention to Presentation (manners, body language verbal communication)	
Leadership	

Next Steps:

1. Convene a panel discussion at next Reset Rockingham Event to inform business leaders and community of the work that is already being done to promote soft skills.
2. Arrive at an agreement of the Soft-Skills that are most critical (and) the skills that we can most likely impact as a community.
3. Connect the dots between the programs mentioned here (and others) to send a strong and consistent message regarding the “soft skills” that we as a community intend to develop in our young people.

