The Impact of Teaching Soft Skills on the Ability Levels of 12th Grade Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out if teaching certain specific soft skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) increase students' ability levels in those areas. It was hypothesized that being specifically taught about and given chances to practice leadership, communication, and teamwork would increase students' skill levels in those areas. The research question that guided the study is as follows: Does specific teaching about certain soft skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) increase students' ability levels in those areas? Eighteen 12th grade students from two classes, ages 17 and 18, participated in the study for six weeks. Participants rated themselves on three skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) at the beginning and end of the study. The researcher also rated participants on those skills at the beginning and end of the study. The participants also completed a pre- and post- open-ended survey about the three skills. In addition, the researcher also used an observation checklist to monitor behaviors of the soft skills during the six weeks of the study. Each of the three skills showed gains when post scores were compared to pre scores. Communication in particular showed the highest gains (student rating, increase of 0.61; teacher rating, increase of 1.5; and observation, increase of 1.28).

Keywords: soft skills, leadership, communication, teamwork

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There is a huge discrepancy between what skills employers are looking for and what skills graduating students possess. Graduating students, of both high schools and colleges, have been taught the "hard skills" that they should need to achieve in the workplace. Hard skills are those skills which can easily be taught, learned, and measured – for example, typing speed, ability level with a software program, ability level with brick laying, etc. However, what employers are looking for are "soft skills." Soft skills are those which can still be taught and developed but are not easily measured and have more to do with personal, interpersonal, group, and organizational skills (Levasseur, 2013).

Soft skills are tied to job placement, raises, and promotions. The success of a person in their workplace is only 15-25% based upon their hard skills while 75-85% is based upon their soft skills (Klaus, 2010; Watts & Watts, 2008, as cited in John, 2009). The more soft skills that a person possesses, and the higher the levels of those soft skills, the more likely they are to be successful in the workplace. Too often, soft skills are taught as one quick chapter in a college-level textbook. Generally, they are not taught at all during high school. However, business leaders agree that people entering the workplace need to possess these skills before they get the job (MacDermott & Ortiz, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to find out if teaching certain specific soft skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) increase students' ability levels in those areas. That is, in addition to simply giving students opportunities to practice these skills as part of class, giving them instruction of those skills. The researcher used these three skills because of their importance in the workplace. Since educators have been given the task of teaching soft skills to students so that they are prepared with those skills to enter the workplace, the researcher wanted

to learn if teaching the students about the skills actually helped the students to develop those skills. The study offers educators research-based data about the effectiveness of teaching leadership, communication, and teamwork in the 12th grade consumer education classroom.

The research question that guided this study was as follows: Does specific teaching about certain soft skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) increase students' ability levels in those areas? The study hypothesized that being specifically taught about and given chances to practice leadership, communication, and teamwork would increase students' skill levels in those areas.

In the following literature review, the researcher discussed the importance of soft skills in the workplace. The most important soft skills were considered and the researcher explains why the three skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) were used in the study. Finally, why soft skills must be implemented in the classroom and ways to do that were examined.

Importance of Soft Skills

Soft skills have been at the forefront of employers' needs for many years. Hard skills, or the ability to do certain types of tasks, become less and less important in today's workforce as they can be taught relatively quickly on the job. Hard skills are the skills that can be learned. Soft skills, on the other hand, are more a measure of how a person does things. Soft skills are the skills that have to be developed. Items such as leadership, communication, positive attitude, and work ethic are included in the term "soft skills." The distinction between hard and soft skills was around to some extent in the 1950's, but it really came to the forefront in the 1970's (Parlamis & Monnot, 2018). This is due to new technologies that have changed the way we communicate, the way we produce, and the way we work in general. Levasseur (2013) classifies soft skills into four categories: personal, interpersonal, group, and organizational. For the purposes of this

paper, we will look at specific skills within three of those categories: interpersonal (skill: communication); group (skill: teamwork); and organization (skill: leadership).

While most business educators are well aware of the need for soft skills in the workplace, there seems to be a barrier between this knowledge and actually teaching the skills in the classroom. Most existing research concerns teaching soft skills at the college level. However, that is not early enough for students to really develop those skills before entering the job force. According to MacDermott and Ortiz (2017), business leaders agree that the development of these soft skills should take place in school, prior to students entering the workplace. "Soft skills have become an essential quality…irrespective of the sector" (Jain & Anjuman, 2013, p. 32). Since 34.1% of high school graduates (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) do not even attend college, it is the job of the high school teacher to ensure that students have the soft skills they need to be successful.

In recent years there has been a push to redefine or at least rename "soft skills." Part of this is due to the fact that the word "soft" can have a negative connotation whereas "hard" can be considered as more legitimate (Parlamis & Monnot, 2019). However, soft skills are at least as important than hard skills, if not more important. Parlamis and Monnot (2019) suggest renaming the skills CORE skills, standing for "Competence in Organizational and Relational Effectiveness." Hora et al. (2018) argue that culture is such an important part of soft skills that they should be considered as "Cultural Capital." Both argue that the term soft skills does not even begin to describe the complexities that are involved. Robles (2012) says that soft skills are a combination of interpersonal skills and personal attributes, or the merger or people and career skills.

Whatever they are called, soft skills are increasingly important in the workplace and therefore should be considered important in education. Some soft skills are more important than others, but there are many that are considered important to have in the workplace. Soft skills are more difficult to define and measure than hard skills but can still be taught in the classroom.

Why Soft Skills Are So Important

Soft skills are the most important qualities a graduate can have, in the eyes of recruiters (Robles, 2012). They are also important in terms of internship effectives (how likely one is to receive a job offer at the end of an internship), job placement/hiring, and promotions and raises. Additionally, they are important across all jobs.

One study found that 25% of long-term success in a job is dependent upon hard skills, while 75% is dependent upon soft skills (Klaus, 2010). Another determined that only 15% of success is due to hard skills, whereas 85% is due to soft skills (Watts & Watts, 2008, as cited in John, 2009). With three-quarters or more of success being dependent on soft skills, it is evident that they are crucial in today's workplace. According to Sharma (2018), technical expertise has taken a backseat to soft skills when it comes to climbing the job ladder.

Dabke (2015) found that 11 soft skills measured (positive attitude, communication, teamwork, time management, interpersonal skills, professionalism, courtesy, integrity, work ethics, responsibility, and flexibility) had a significant positive relationship with internship mentors' perceived internship effectiveness. In addition, each soft skill measured showed a significant positive correlation with the chance of being offered a permanent job. Two factors, professionalism and teamwork, emerged as positive predictors of being offered a permanent job.

A case study of a program that specifically taught soft skills showed that 91% of graduates had a salary increase or promotion within two years of graduating the program

(Brown, 2018). With soft skills being so crucial in terms of being successful, it is little wonder that businesses want employees to come in with those skills – they want employees who can hit the ground running. This is why it is so important that these skills are taught in high school curricula.

Most Important Soft Skills

There are so many different skills that fall under the term "soft skills." How does one know which skills to focus on? Robles (2012) completed a study among business executives. She found that communication and integrity rose to the top as the most important skills for an employee to have. However, all ten items that were rated had a mean score of 4.12 or above (on a 5-point scale), meaning that all ten items were considered to be at least "very important" by the executives. The ten items include (in this order, ranked from most to least importance): integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, interpersonal skills, professionalism, teamwork skills, flexibility, and work ethic.

Defining Specific Soft Skills

The skills focused on here are leadership, communication, and teamwork. Jones et al. (2016) found that these skills were all seen as very or extremely important to recruiters. Cooperative/team player (teamwork) scored 4.61 out of 5; good communication/interpersonal skills scored 4.6 out of 5; and leadership ability scored 4.19 out of 5. These three skills are also considered among some of the "essential" soft skills (E., 2018).

Leadership

Leadership skills include the ability to "lead, support, motivate a group for high performance; supervise and gain cooperation of team members; and introduce new ideas and implement them without distrust" (Bhagra & Sharma, 2018, p. 18). Leadership is a skill that

some think is innate, but educators agree that it can be learned (Doh, 2003). Additionally, it is a skill that is seen more and more as a competitive advantage (Holt et al., 2018).

Communication

Communication includes oral, written, presenting, and listening (Robles, 2012). Communication can also be defined with the following descriptors: delivering ideas in a clear and precise language; recognizing and interpreting verbal and nonverbal behavior of others and giving appropriate feedback; and interacting, cooperating, and collaborating with professionalism and respect (Bhagra & Sharma, 2018). According to Odine (2015), 60% of public relations work is devoted to internal communication, which shows just how important communication is within the workplace.

Teamwork

Teamwork includes traits such as cooperative, getting along with others, agreeability, supportiveness, helpfulness, and collaboration (Robles, 2012). Another way to define communication is the development of "constructive work relationships in groups demonstrating ability to work with trust and credibility with others from different disciplines, backgrounds and expertise to accomplish a task or goal" (Bhagra & Sharma, 2018, p. 17). According to Levasseur (2013), teamwork is a skill that all modern employees must have and work on. Teamwork is one of the skills included because of its importance across multiple studies: Robles (2012) found teamwork to be rated 4.12 out of 5 in level of importance among executives; Dabke (2015) found that it was a predictor of job offers; and trends have shown more and more emphasis placed on teams (Jain & Anjuman, 2013).

Why Soft Skills Must Be Implemented in the Classroom

According to Bronson (2007), 70% of high school graduates do not have enough professionalism or work ethic skills. "The existing curriculum and pedagogy do not provide sufficient scope for graduates to develop their employability skills" (Sharma, 2018, p. 29). Gewertz (2007) states that business leaders are increasingly concerned that students are graduating high school without the skills they need to be successful in college or jobs. If businesses expect employees to come in with soft skills, those skills must be taught before one hits the job market. That could be college for many, but for many it means high school as college will not be attended. Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers are in a unique position to teach these skills as they teach hands-on and real-world content. Bronson (2007) states that CTE teachers have a responsibility to teach students these transferable skills. Time spent on soft skills is time well spent, according to Bronson (2007).

Soft skills are often covered as a chapter in business textbooks (Orwig, 2020). However, that is not enough. For one thing, many students do not ever take a business class. If they do, the chapter is often skipped in favor of fitting everything else into a semester or year. The learning that takes place when the chapter is taught is simply theory – students are not necessarily given chances to practice those soft skills that they are learning about.

How to Implement Soft Skills in the Classroom

It can be difficult to tell an educator that there is yet another thing to incorporate into their curriculum, which is not only full but also competes with college visits, sports, and other school activities. How can yet another topic be added in, especially one that is more difficult than hard skills are to teach and especially to assess? According to Jones et al. (2016), schools can help to provide those skills by building them into the curriculum – as opportunities to practice rather than as replacements of other curricula. Levasseur (2013) suggests that development of

soft skills comes from constant practice and feedback (of self or from others). A class could give students chances to engage in these activities and get feedback while learning other content. Sharma (2018) recommends that the training of soft skills is incorporated from the beginning of the course and becomes part of the teaching-learning process. Ways to make sure students can practice the skills throughout the course include more project work for hands-on experience and incorporating guest speakers. According to Anthony and Garner (2016), guest speakers who speak about soft skills are a valuable contribution to curricula. Assignments should also be engaging and have practical application. Finally, students should be allowed to fail so that they can learn how the lack of these skills can affect them (Sharma, 2018).

Or, if the teacher wanted to focus on soft skills specifically in the curriculum without focusing on other content for a while, there are avenues for that as well. According to Evenson (1999),

> But it can be as easy as four steps spread throughout a grading period. The first step is introducing students to basic people skills. Once they understand what it takes to get along with people you can segue to the second step, teaching essential customer service skills. Third, foster your students' understanding by facilitating a problem-solving discussion based on real-life situations. Finally, your students will demonstrate the skills they've learned through a series of role-play exercises in a mock business setting. (p. 29)

These steps might help educators get a grasp on how they want to incorporate soft skills into their classroom.

Conclusion

While incorporating soft skills in the classroom will be a paradigm shift for many, it will "contribute to strengthen connections between institution and industry" (E., 2018, p. 53). It is something that educators must take on as business leaders need employees who are ready to start jobs with these skills, and the skills are needed across industry and sector so they are applicable to every student in the high school classroom. The skills can be introduced specifically in the classroom with time devoted to them, or they can be integrated as part of the learning process. Either way, it is crucial to each student so they can be successful in the workplace.

Methods

The research conducted used a mixed-methods approach. A survey was used for quantitative data and an open-ended survey as well as a checklist was used for qualitative data. The researcher collected data for a total of six weeks from 12th grade participants in the researcher's Consumer Education classroom during the spring semester of 2021. The following information details the participants, setting, data sources and research materials, and data collection procedures.

Participants

Participants in this study were 18 12th graders from two Consumer Education classes. Of the 18 participants, eight were males and 10 were females, all aged 17 or 18. All 18 participants were Caucasian, and all were expected to be able to successfully complete the course during that semester as it was their final semester of high school and the course was a graduation requirement. No students had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or any other accommodations.

Setting

The study took place in a small high school in a rural Illinois town of about 1,500. The 9th-12th grade high school had approximately 180 students. It was connected to and shared some

spaces with the local grade school which housed pre-k through 8th grade and about 350 students. Additionally, the school had two administrators, a counselor, an athletic director a nurse, three cafeteria workers and five custodians.

According to the 2020 Illinois Report Card, the school's student population of 181 was 93% White, 2% Black, and 3% two or more races. The school consisted of 52% females and 48% males. Approximately 43% of students were low-income and 7% had an individualized education plan. The average class size was 11.

Data Source and Research Materials

Data for this study were collected using four sources (Appendices A-D). The first, a qualitative pre- and post- open-ended survey, provided insight into what the students believed about leadership, communication, and teamwork. The second, a self-pre- and post- rating of ability levels of leadership, communication, and teamwork consisted of three rating questions and was used during the first and last weeks of the study. The third instrument was a pre- and post- ability rating done by the teacher during the first and last week of the study and provided quantitative data to show differences between weeks one and six. Finally, an observation checklist was used daily to provide qualitative data about usage of the three skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork). The leadership section consisted of eight items, the communication section six items, and the teamwork section six items.

Procedures and Data Collection

The study was conducted over a period of six weeks. Participants were given the open-ended survey on days one and two of the study. They were also given the brief survey for them to rate themselves in their ability levels of the three soft skills in the same days. The teacher rated each student in their ability levels of the three soft skills on day one. The participants and the

teacher repeated these tasks on the last day of the study. The observation checklist was used daily but broken into skills by week: leadership was tracked in weeks one and four, communication was tracked in weeks two and five, and teamwork was tracked in weeks three and six.

In week one of the study, students completed the open-ended survey about leadership, communication, and teamwork. They also rated themselves on those three soft skills using the rating scale shown that can found in Appendix B. The teacher also rated each student on each of the three soft skills on the same rating scale, which is also shown in Appendix C. In addition, during this week instruction of the leadership skill began. The leadership checklist was also used during this week (see Appendix D for details on the items in the checklist).

During week two, soft skill instruction continued. Communication was the focus for this week. In addition to instruction about communication, mainly in the form of class discussion, the communication checklist was used (Appendix D). For week three, instruction focused on teamwork. Participants were exposed to instruction in the area of teamwork as well as provided with opportunities to practice teamwork during class. During this week, the teamwork checklist was used (Appendix D).

In week four, the focus went back to leadership. Instruction of leadership qualities took place again mainly through class discussion and opportunity to practice. The leadership checklist was utilized again for this week. During week five, instruction and went back to being focused on communication. Again, instruction was mainly through class discussion and opportunities to practice. The communication checklist was used for this week.

Finally, during week six, the instruction returned to teamwork as the study was coming to an end. The teamwork checklist was once again used. In addition, during this week students

retook the open-ended survey about leadership, communication, and teamwork (Appendix A). They also rated themselves once again on those three skills (Appendix B). The teacher also rated each student again on each of the three skills (Appendix C). In the next section, the data analysis and results will be reported.

Data Analysis and Results

Data was analyzed descriptively for quantitative data and themes for qualitative data. The researcher collected data in a variety of ways.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data was collected from pre- and post-study ratings scales in which participants rated themselves and teachers rated participants. This quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using mean. A checklist of behaviors collected quantitative data that was also analyzed descriptively using mean. Leadership data was collected in weeks one and four, communication data was collected in weeks two and five, and teamwork data was collected in weeks three and six. Each of the 18 participants in the study completed the pre- and post-study surveys so all participants were included.

The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the quantitative data. In weeks one and six, the researcher collected data from pre- and post-self-ratings and teacher ratings. All of the data collected from these ratings was organized and reported as raw scores in two tables. The first table shows each participant's pre-study and post-study rating and their differences. The second table shows each participant's pre-study and post-study teacher rating and those differences.

It was hypothesized that being specifically taught about and given chances to practice leadership, communication, and teamwork would increase students' skill levels in those areas.

As such, six charts were created to compare the mean pre- and post-survey scores. The first, third, and fifth charts compare the mean scores from the self-ratings. The second, fourth, and sixth charts compare the mean scores from the teacher ratings.

The remaining quantitative data, the behavior data from the observation checklists, was also analyzed with descriptive statistics. Three tables were created to compare differences. The first table shows the difference between the leadership behaviors tallied in weeks one and four. The second table shows the difference between the communication behaviors tallied in weeks two and five. Finally, the third table shows the difference between the teamwork behaviors tallied in weeks three and six.

To compare results to the hypothesis, the researcher created three more charts. The first shows the means of the leadership behaviors in weeks one and four. The second chart shows the means of the communication behaviors in weeks two and five. The third shows the means of the teamwork behaviors in weeks three and six.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data was collected in an open-ended pre- and post-study survey which asked about leadership, communication, and teamwork. This qualitative data was coded into themes by skill. Leadership was coded into 10 themes; communication, 6 themes; and teamwork, 8 themes. The themes are as follow:

The leadership themes: In Charge, Other-Oriented, Participation, Bossiness, Communication, Selfishness, Accomplishes a Goal, Helpful, Motivation, and Role Model.

The communication themes: Talking, Listening, Comprehension, Clarity, Yelling, and Open Mind.

The teamwork themes: Working Together, Accomplish a Task, Selfish, Helpful, Participating, Communication, Takes Others' Ideas, and Encouraging.

Three tables were created to show the data, broken into the three categories of leadership, communication, and teamwork.

In order to discuss the results based on the hypothesis, the researcher created a table to compare the number of times the themes came up in the first week of observation versus the second week of observation (for leadership, this was weeks one and four; for communication, two and five; and for teamwork, weeks three and six). In addition, example comments for each theme were provided to give insight. Following is a discussion of the results of the study based on the research question. For each of the skills, quantitative data will be reported first follow by qualitative data.

Results

Overall results from the study indicate that teaching the three soft skills, leadership, communication, and teamwork, did influence the participants' ability levels of those skills. All three skills showed increases in average participant self-ratings, average teacher ratings, and average observations. The communication skill showed the largest increase in all three of the aforementioned data collection methods.

Quantitative Data

Leadership

Of the 18 participants, exactly half rated themselves with a higher score in leadership in the post-rating than they did the pre-rating. The mean pre-rating was 7.5 while the mean post-rating was 7.72. The teacher ratings were a little lower, though 12 participants received a higher rating at the end of the study than they did at the beginning. The mean teacher pre-rating was

6.06 and the mean post-rating was 6.5. Finally, the observation checklist data showed the greatest increase with a week one mean score of 4 and a week four mean score of 4.9. Thirteen participants received equal or higher scores in week four. Table 1 shows the participant pre- and post- self-ratings as well as the teacher pre- and post- ratings.

Table 1

Leadership: Participant and Teacher Pre- and Post- Ratings

Participant	Pre		Post	
	P	T	P	T
1	7	7	8	8
2	7	8	7	7
3	10	8	10	9
4	6	7	5	8
5	10	7	10	8
6	6	8	7	9
7	7	5	8	6
8	6	5	7	7
9	6	5	7	4
10	8	4	9	3
11	5	9	7	8
12	10	6	8	7
13	8	7	7	8
14	9	3	8	4
15	9	3	10	4
16	8	7	8	7
17	7	5	6	4
18	6	5	7	6
Mean	7.5	6.06	7.72	6.5

Note. P= Participant, T=Teacher

Table 2 shows the differences between weeks one and four of observations. The mean increased from week one to week four by 0.89. The three highest scores in week one were participant 1 (8), participant 2 (7), and participant 5 (7). In week four, participant 1 received the same score. The participant with the highest score was participant 3 (9) and four participants received a score of eight (participants 1, 5, 6, and 8). The three lowest scores from week one were all scores of one (participants 10, 14, and 15). The lowest scores in week four were ones and twos, from participants 7, 11, 14, 15, and 17.

Table 2

Leadership: Observation Checklist

Participant	Week 1	Week 4
1	8	8
2	7	6
3	5	9
4	4	6
5	7	8
6	5	8
7	3	1
8	5	8
9	2	3
10	1	3
11	2	2
12	5	4
13	5	6
14	1	1
15	1	2
16	6	7
17	2	2
18	3	4
Mean	4	4.89

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the differences of the means for the participant self-ratings, the teacher ratings, and the checklist data. All three increased. This shows that there was growth in participants' leadership skill abilities.

Figure 1

Leadership: Mean Self-Rating Scores
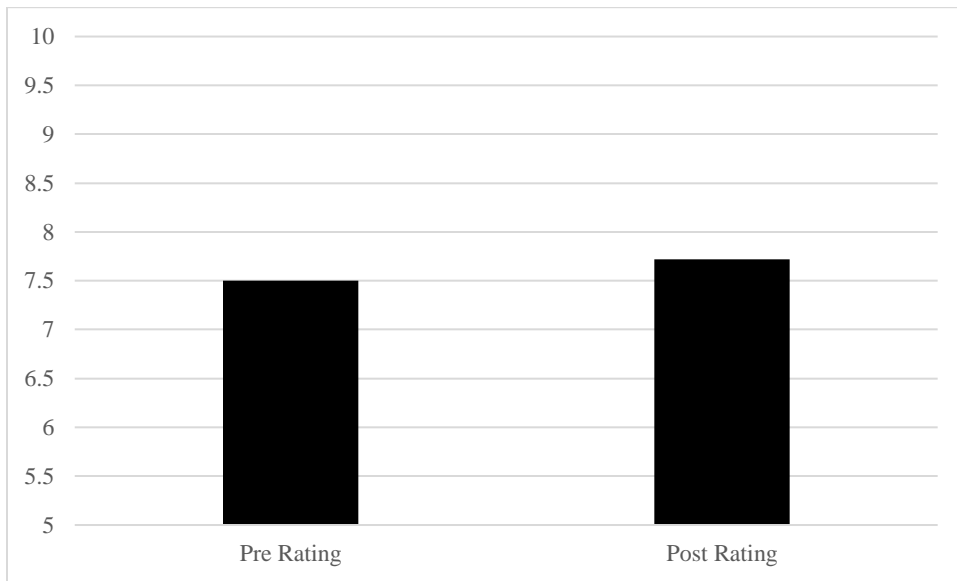
Figure 2

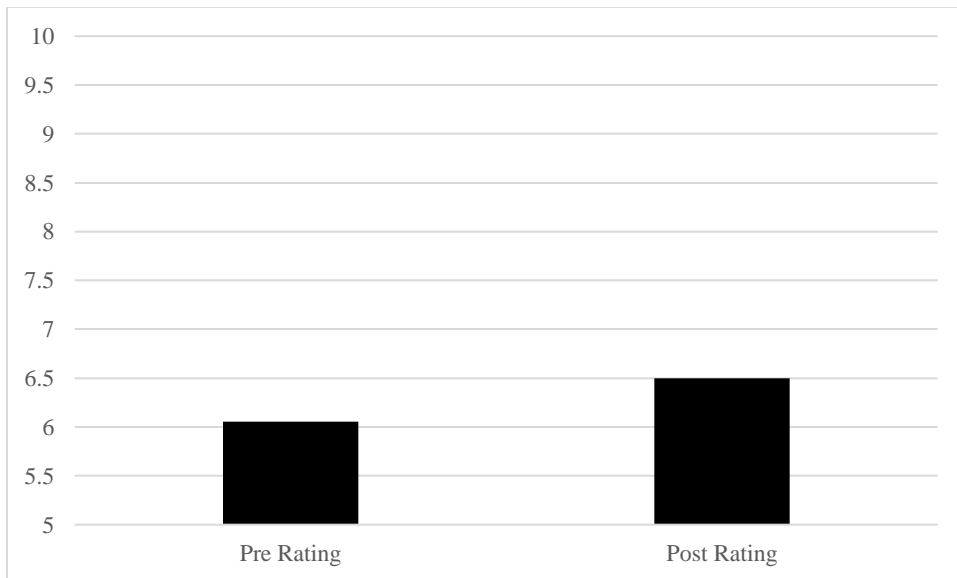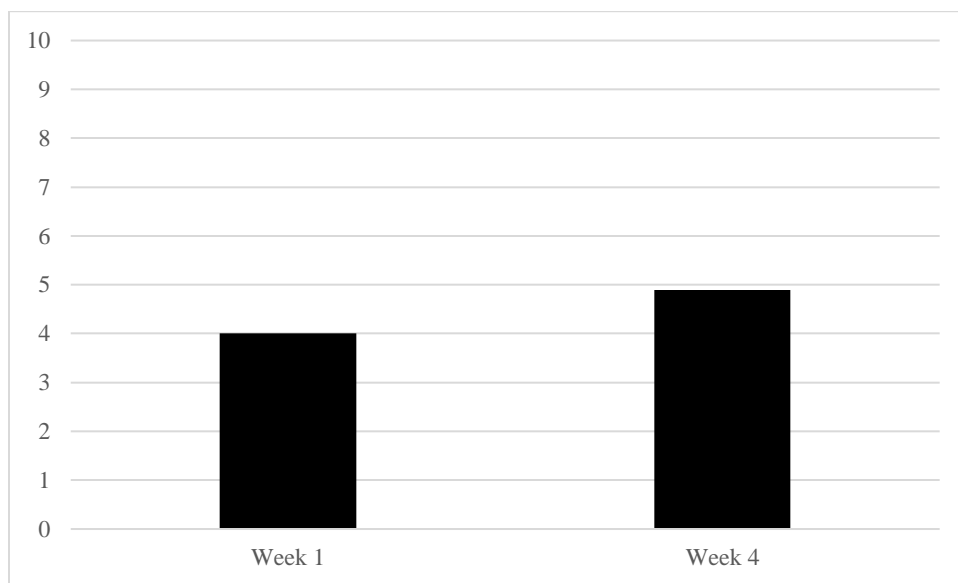*Leadership: Mean Teacher Rating Scores*

Figure 3

Leadership: Mean Observation Scores

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data from open-ended survey administered at the beginning and end of the study also showed some insight into what participants believed leadership meant. The themes that emerged through coding were in charge, other-oriented, participation, bossiness, communication, selfishness, accomplishes a goal, helpful, motivation, and role model. Being in charge and other-oriented were common across both the pre- and post-survey, but a couple of themes changed. For example, bossiness was prominent in week one but not a factor in week six, while communication was a small factor in week one but mentioned many times in week six.

Table 3 shows themes that emerged from the open-ended survey for leadership skills. The three themes that scored the most in the pre-survey were in charge, other-oriented, and participation. Bossiness, communication, and selfishness scored the least while still having mentions. In the post-survey, communication, in charge, and other-oriented had the most

mentions while participation, selfishness, helpful, and motivation scored the least while still having mentions.

Table 3

Leadership: Open-Ended Survey Coded Themes

Theme	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
In Charge	21	15
Other-Oriented	16	14
Participation	8	3
Bossiness	7	0
Communication	6	18
Selfishness	6	4
Accomplishes a Goal	0	5
Helpful	0	4
Motivation	0	4
Role Model	0	7

The results show that participants focus from the beginning to the end of the study shifted to communication and being a role model, among other things. An example verbatim of communication is "A good leader is someone who has good communication and can be decisive in times of need." Another participant who mentioned communication as well as some of the other coded items said that "Leadership is when you take charge of a group of people. You have to lead them to do and complete a certain task. The leader has to listen to the group members and

make sure that everyone understands the task so that the group can accomplish said task together."

Communication

Quantitative Data

Fourteen of the 18 participants gave themselves higher or equal ratings in the post-rating than in the pre-rating in terms of communication. The mean pre-rating was 6.72 while the mean post-rating was 7.33. The teacher ratings had an even larger increase. The teacher mean pre-rating was 5.56 and the post-rating was 7.06. In this case, 13 students received higher scored in the post-rating. Finally, the observation checklist also showed gains. The mean score in week two was 3.22 while the mean score in week five was 4.5. Eleven participants received higher ratings in week five. Table 4 and table 5 show the data collected.

Table 4

Communication: Participant and Teacher Pre- and Post- Ratings

Participant	Pre			Post	
	P	T		P	T
1	5	7		8	10
2	10	5		8	8
3	7	7		8	9
4	9	5		4	7
5	9	6		9	8
6	8	7		8	9
7	3	4		7	7
8	8	6		8	8
9	6	3		8	6
10	8	4		8	5
11	5	7		5	7
12	4	5		8	8
13	5	6		6	7
14	8	4		7	3
15	8	4		10	4
16	6	8		8	8
17	7	5		6	5
18	5	7		6	8
Mean	6.72	5.56		7.33	7.06

Note. P= Participant, T=Teacher

Table 5 shows the differences between weeks two and five of observations. The mean increased from week two to week five by 1.28. The three highest scores in week two were six (participants 1 and 4) and five (participants 3, 5, 6, and 16). The highest scores in week five were eight (participants 1 and 6) and seven (participants 4 and 12). The lowest scores in week two

were zero (participants 7 and 15) and two (participants 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 17). The lowest scores

in week five were zero (participant 15) and two (participants 10 and 17).

Table 5

Communication: Observation Checklist

Participant	Week 2	Week 5
1	6	8
2	2	6
3	5	6
4	6	7
5	5	6
6	5	8
7	0	5
8	2	3
9	2	4
10	2	2
11	2	3
12	4	7
13	4	4
14	3	3
15	0	0
16	5	4
17	2	2
18	3	3
Mean	3.22	4.5

Figures 4, 5, and 6 show the differences of the means for the participant self-ratings, the

teacher ratings, and the checklist data. All three increased. This shows that there was growth in

participants' communication skill abilities.

Figure 4

Communication: Mean Self-Rating Scores
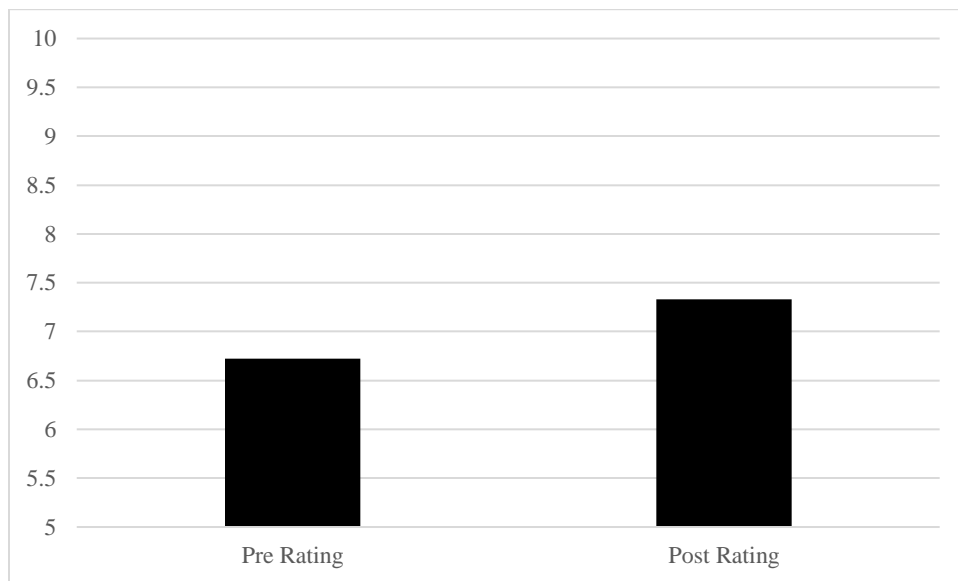
Figure 5

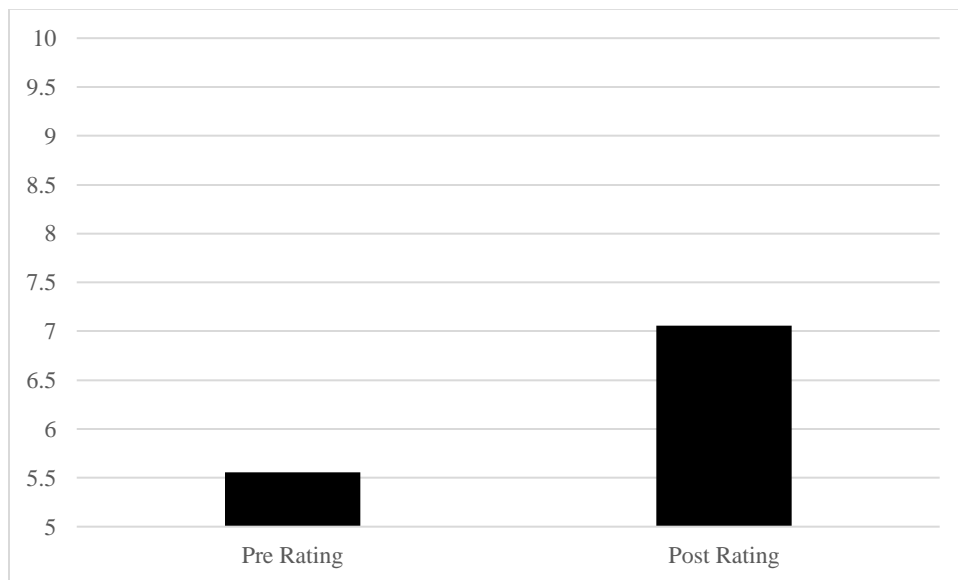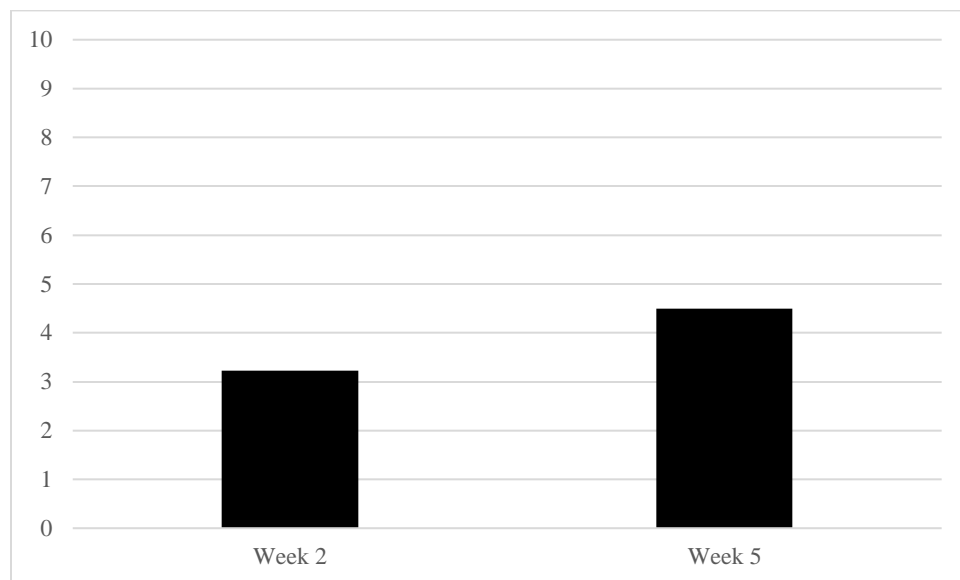*Communication: Mean Teacher Rating Scores*

Figure 6

Communication: Mean Observation Scores

Qualitative Data

The open-ended survey provided insight into the participants' beliefs about communication. The six themes that came out in the coding of communication were talking, listening, comprehension, clarity, yelling, and open mind. While most of the responses centered around talking and listening, keeping an open mind became a factor in week six.

Table 6 shows themes that emerged from the open-ended survey for communication skills. The three themes that scored the most in the pre-survey were in talking, listening, and comprehension. Clarity and yelling scored the least while still having mentions. In the post-survey, the same top three themes emerged (talking, listening, and comprehension) with the most mentions while open minded scored the least while still having mentions.

Table 6

Communication: Open-Ended Survey Coded Themes

Theme	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Talking	26	25
Listening	14	12
Comprehension	7	9
Clarity	4	0
Yelling	4	0
Open Mind	0	6

The results show that participants focused on largely the same things at the beginning and end of the study, though open-mind did come out instead of clarity or yelling during the post-survey. An example verbatim of open-mind is "Good communication is taking others opinions into consideration and having an open mind. You need to understand where someone is coming from in order to have a good conversation." An example of talking is "Talking back and forth with others and helping others understand different situations."

Teamwork

Quantitative Data

Teamwork also showed gains in all three quantitative data collection procedures. As in leadership, half of the eighteen participants showed increased self-ratings between the first and last weeks of the study. The mean pre-rating was 7.83 while the mean post-rating was 8.17. Similarly, nine participants had increased teacher ratings for teamwork. The mean teacher pre-rating was 6.83 and the mean teacher post-rating was 7.5. As with the previous

ratings, exactly half of the participants received higher scores in terms of the observation checklist for teamwork. The mean score in week three was 3.94 and the mean score in week six was 4.17. See Table 7 for details.

Table 7

Teamwork: Participant and Teacher Pre- and Post- Ratings

Participant	Pre			Post	
	P	T		P	T
1	8	8		7	9
2	8	7		8	8
3	7	8		10	10
4	6	5		7	8
5	10	7		9	9
6	8	8		8	10
7	6	5		6	6
8	7	8		8	8
9	8	6		9	6
10	7	7		6	6
11	8	7		9	7
12	7	7		10	8
13	8	7		9	9
14	7	6		4	6
15	10	7		10	5
16	9	7		10	7
17	10	6		9	6
18	7	7		8	7
Mean	7.83	6.83		8.17	7.5

Note. P= Participant, T=Teacher

Table 8 shows the differences between weeks three and six of observations. The mean increased from week three to week six by 0.22. The three highest scores in week three were seven (participant 1) and six (participants 4 and 5). The highest scores in week six were also seven (participants 1, 3, 4, and 5) and six (participants 2 and 6). The lowest scores in week three were one (participant 17) and two (participant 15). The lowest scores in week six were also one (participant 15) and two (participants 9, 10, and 17).

Table 8

Teamwork: Observation Checklist

Participant	Week 3	Week 6
1	7	7
2	5	6
3	4	7
4	6	7
5	6	7
6	5	6
7	4	3
8	4	3
9	3	2
10	3	2
11	3	3
12	4	5
13	2	3
14	3	4
15	2	1
16	5	4
17	1	2
18	4	3
Mean	3.94	4.17

Figures 7, 8, and 9 show the differences of the means for the participant self-ratings, the teacher ratings, and the checklist data. All three increased. This shows that there was growth in participants' teamwork skill abilities.

Figure 7

Teamwork: Mean Self-Rating Scores
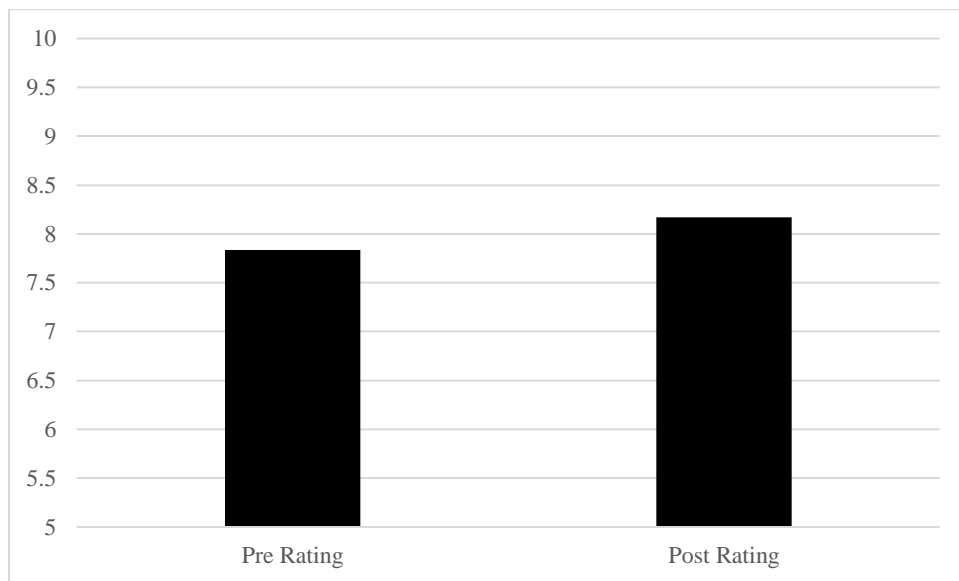
Figure 8
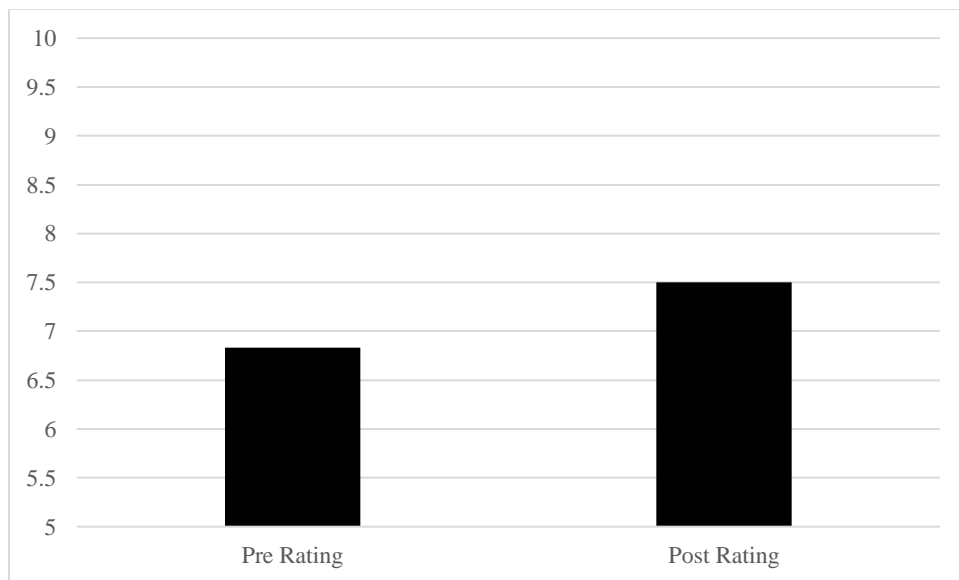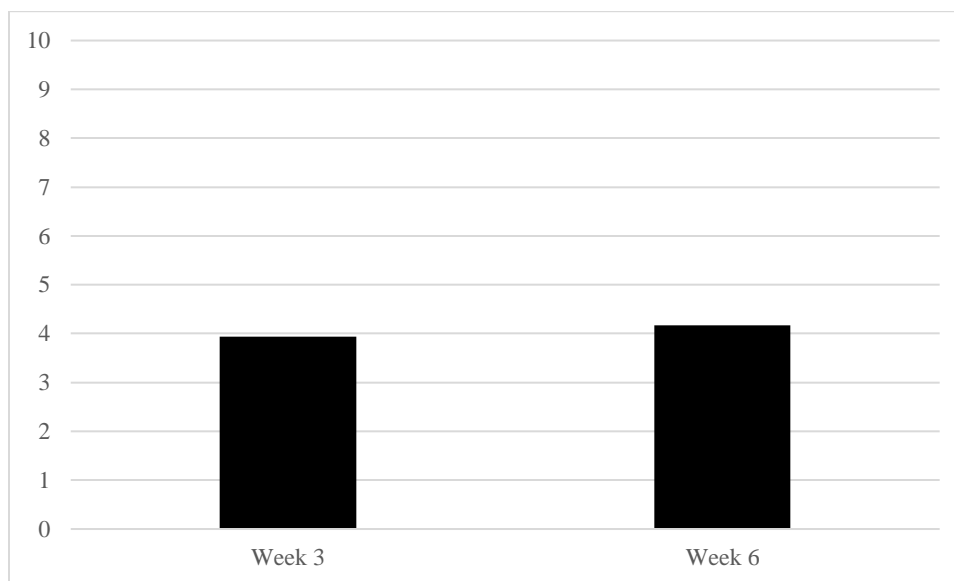
Teamwork: Mean Teacher Rating Scores

Figure 9

Teamwork: Mean Observation Scores

Qualitative Data

The open-ended survey data gave insight into the participants' beliefs about teamwork. The responses were coded into the following themes: working together, accomplish a task, selfish, helpful, participating, communication, takes others' ideas, and encouraging. These were fairly consistent over the pre- and post-survey, though "encouraging" did only emerge in the post-survey.

Table 9 shows themes that emerged from the open-ended survey for teamwork skills. The three themes that scored the most in the pre-survey were working together, accomplish a task, and selfish. Communication and takes others' ideas scored the least while still having mentions. In the post-survey, the same top three themes emerged (working together, accomplish a task, and selfish) with the most mentions while takes others' ideas and encouraging scored the least while still having mentions.

Table 9

Teamwork: Open-Ended Survey Coded Themes

Theme	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Working Together	18	18
Accomplish a task	13	13
Selfish	11	13
Helpful	7	5
Participating	7	8
Communication	6	9
Takes Others' Ideas	4	3
Encouraging	0	4

The results show that participants focused on largely the same things at the beginning and end of the study. An example verbatim from this section of the study is: "Working together with a group of people to achieve a goal as quickly and efficiently as possible." Another that captures some of the themes is "Working as a whole towards a common goal. Working together with others, sharing ideas, doing what has to be done, only without branching off to be independent."

Findings

The purpose of this study was to find out if teaching certain specific soft skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) increase students' ability levels in those areas. The results of the study show that teaching the skills may have some impact upon students' ability levels in leadership, communication, and teamwork. While there were individual participants who saw rating or score decreases, as shown in tables 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8, the majority of students

either had the same ratings and/or scores or higher. Also, those increases were enough to offset any decreases in an individual participant, as shown in the increased averages across the three skills. Mean student ratings increased by an average of 0.38 across the three skills; teacher ratings, by 0.67; and observations, by 0.8.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study was designed so as to answer the following research question: Does specific teaching about certain soft skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) increase students' ability levels in those areas? The researcher hypothesized that being specifically taught about and given chances to practice leadership, communication, and teamwork would increase students' skill levels in those areas. It was found that teaching these skills did impact the student skill levels, at least in terms of self-ratings, teacher ratings, and observations.

The study proved the researcher's hypothesis that teaching about and giving chances to practice certain soft skills (leadership, communication, and teamwork) increased participants' ability levels in those areas. In addition, it helped participants to develop soft skills. While more than just these three skills are needed for success in the workplace, this provides a good starting point.

Implications

The implication of this study is that certain soft skills can be taught and developed at the high school level. Leadership, communication, and teamwork can all be taught and practiced in the high school classroom to help students develop those skills which will help them later in life as they enter the job market. High school educators should take this into account when planning curriculum and classroom activities by planning to incorporate the three skills. Students need many other skills to be successful as well, and though this study only explored and studied the

impact of three, teachers should be cognizant that leadership, communication, and teamwork are not the only soft skills that are important in the workplace.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the nature of the participants' mental involvement with school during the six-week time period. The study began a week before the students had two days off (Presidents Day and a snow day) and ended after four full weeks of school. When the weather is bad and there are few days off and/or many regular weeks in a row, students sometimes fall into a sort of slump. The researcher noticed that the participants became a little distant in class in the last 2 weeks of the study. Had they been more involved, the research may have looked a little different (possibly larger differences in means, and more positive growth in the three skill areas).

Another limitation was student absences. Over the six-week period, there were 25 total absences between 14 participants (out of 18 total). Of those, seven participants were gone more than one day. These 14 participants missed opportunities to learn and practice the soft skills that were worked on during the days that they were absent.

Reflection

The researcher believes that given the chance to do the study over, she might choose just 1 or 2 soft skills to focus on over the 6 weeks. Three skills took a lot of class work and practice time, and also caused a crunch when there was an unexpected day off (snow day). In addition, through discussion and the open-ended survey one can see that students see the interconnectivity of the three skills chosen for focus. Due to this, it was difficult for them to focus on one skill at a time without considering the other skills.

The researcher found the study rewarding as she was able to see students grow. The skills that are so needed in the workforce, as shown in the literature review, were given focus in class over a period of time rather than just the normal quick brush-up. Instead, the researcher was able to help students increase their knowledge and ability levels in leadership, communication, and teamwork.

Action Plan

The researcher plans to present and share the data in a couple of venues. First, she plans to present the data to her school during a school improvement day. She also plans to present and share the data in a business educator conference setting as soft skills are often a topic of discussion but what to do with them is usually left unanswered. Finally, the researcher plans to continue incorporating soft skill teaching in the classroom. Leadership, communication, and teamwork will be taught in the classroom as well as other soft skills that are at the forefront of importance.

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Appendix A

Open-Ended Survey

1. What is leadership?

2. What makes a good leader?

3. What makes a poor leader?

4. What is communication?

5. What comes to mind when you think of good communication?

6. What comes to mind when you think of poor communication?

7. What is teamwork?

8. What makes a good team player?

9. What makes a poor team player?

Appendix B

Student Self-Rating Scale

Please rate your skill level in each of the following on a scale of one to ten.

Leadership									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am a poor leader									I am a great leader
Communication									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am a poor communicator									I am a great communicator
Teamwork									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am a poor team player									I am a great team player

Appendix C

Teacher Rating Scale

Please rate your skill level in each of the following on a scale of one to ten.

Leadership									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am a poor leader									I am a great leader
Communication									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am a poor communicator									I am a great communicator
Teamwork									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am a poor team player									I am a great team player

Appendix D

Observation Checklist

Tally the number of times student displays behavior

Student Name:_____ Week:_____

Leadership
Took charge in group setting
Asked clarifying question
Helped with classroom management
Displayed good organization
Volunteered answers or help
Worked independently
Helped other student with classwork
Delegated work

Communication
Asked clarifying question
Sent appropriate email
Used appropriate vocabulary
Made eye contact with teacher
Displayed appropriate body language
Restated appropriately

Teamwork
Participated in group discussion
Completed group work as assigned
Delegated work
Encouraged others
Involved others
Helped another student with classwork

Appendix E

Open-Ended Data

	Participant	What is leadership?	What makes a good leader?	What makes a poor leader?
Pre-Survey	196403	leadership is something that comes inside of everyone. It is a characteristic that makes someone an individual. It helps make everyone their own person	Making sure everyone is okay, and that everyone is able to do what is needed to be done. Someone that is kind and is always open for new ideas.	someone who never helps others and is always acting like it is a one person things. Someone who is rude and always makes it about themselves.
Pre-Survey	196714	Leadership is being able to take charge of a situation and guide other's to the ultimate goal of fixing the situation or completing a task.	A good leader is someone who will stand up and get to work but not act rude and super bossy when they speak to others.	acting as if they 100% control the group, yelling a people, harassing someone for not doing it a certain, and not being open to new ideas and suggestions from their fellow crewmates.
Pre-Survey	196715	Leadership is being able to help others do the right thing or being a role model for other people.	Being a leader isn't about bossing people around. You need to be personable and kind to other people so they respond in the ways you want them to.	A poor leader is someone who cares more about power than the end goal. Someone who just yells and gets mad isn't a good leader.
Pre-Survey	196719	Taking charge and leading people in an activity. Guiding others towards a goal.	They communicate well, take everyone's ideas into consideration when leading a group, they have patience, and they're able to keep the attention of those they are trying to lead.	Bad communication, trying to rush everything, not taking others into consideration, and trying to boss others around rather than guiding them.
Pre-Survey	196728	Leadership is the ability to take charge in a certain situation (positivity) and help lead to a better outcome.	I would say confidence. I say this because if you keep guessing yourself then it's probably not a good game plan you have. I would also add that this person is level headed meaning that if there are different options given to solve a problem, he/she doesn't favor one over the other until all of the options are discussed.	Someone who doesn't listen to his/her group. Only ordering people to do things rather than doing the things with them.
Pre-Survey	196729	Leadership is the action of leading people to complete goals and tasks.	A good leader is someone who can make everyone feel successful in a group and take ideas from everyone.	A poor leader is someone who has a toxic outlook on the task and makes everyone else feel worse
Pre-Survey	196741	Leadership is being able to convince people of having a shared goal.	A good leader rules with logic and doesn't force people into doing something they're uncomfortable doing unless it is absolutely necessary.	A poor leader doesn't bring the group together and forces people to do things they want, typically not a common goal.
Pre-Survey	196798	Being able to control a group of people or take charge.	A good leader knows how to get the most out of the people they are leading. A good leader can	A poor leader is someone who doesn't think about anyone, but themself. A poor

			do a job well and be helpful instead of just bossing people around	leader doesn't know how to get people to listen.
Pre-Survey	196920	When someone is in charge or a group	The leader helping other people and showing them what to do	The leader not showing them what to do and not helping
Pre-Survey	196921	When someone takes charge and leads a group.	Someone that makes decisions based on what they think the outcome of the group will be.	Someone who makes decisions selfishly without thinking of the group.
Pre-Survey	197014	leading people	Knowing what things to say to motivate people and also doing the things that you are telling your people to do	Being too bossy and not doing any of the work
Pre-Survey	197207	taking head or lead over/with a group in a helpful way to get everyone to reach a common goal	listening, patience, staying calm, taking everyone's thoughts into consideration, being kind and open-minded	being bossy, mean, impatient, thinking you know everything, thinking you're better than everyone else
Pre-Survey	197297	Leadership is the act of driving people to reach something or a certain goal	the leader must lead by example and practice what they preach	not working as hard as the people they are motivating or bad attitude
Pre-Survey	197444	having the qualities of an alpha	critical thinking and smart moves	bad decisions
Pre-Survey	197457	Leadership is taking control and being in charge of a situation or thing	A good leader is someone who is confident in who they are and have a big voice to speak up for things that they believe in	A quiet person who doesn't do or say much
Pre-Survey	197631	Leadership is when you step up and take change of a situation	the ability to compromise so everyone wins	The leader is selfish and doesn't care what others need of want.
Pre-Survey	2100003	Someone who people listen too, Bring people in the right direction which doesn't happen all the time. A person who leads a group or is sometimes the person who isn't shy	They are able to help their peers outs. They have respect for everyone that is in there group, they continue to grow as a whole	Tells people the wrong thing to do, pretending like it is a good thing, They are not humble and only care for themselves "that's why their leading". They don't have respect.
Pre-Survey	2100004	leading groups of people in a specific fashion	Teaching their group to make good decisions	Making bad decisions when leading their group
Post-Survey	196403	leadership is working together to reach the final goal or accomplishment.	A good leader is something who considers everyone and puts everyone's ideas into the project or group. They don't just take control and make themselves the only source of information.	A poor leader is something who takes complete control and doesn't let anyone else assist in the work.
Post-Survey	196714	Leadership is being able to take charge and lead a group to completing a common goal amongst themselves.	A good leader is someone who can make quick decisions based off of the information they have and not exclude and one idea based off of what is described.	A poor leader is a leader that wants everything done their way and won't take the input of other people in the group.
Post-Survey	196715	Leadership is being a role model and helping others to become the best person they	A good leader is kind. A leader also has patience. If someone isn't understanding something	A poor leader is someone who gets frustrated easily and has a poor work ethic. You

		can be. You are leading others in the right direction for the future.	then you need to hear them out and work through it in a calm manner.	need to work hard to be the best version of you before you help someone become the best version of themself.
Post-Survey	196719	Taking charge and guiding others. Taking control of a situation and bringing your team to the end goal.	Communication, open-mindedness, caring, being able to help others	No communication, taking over the entire thing, not letting others share their opinions
Post-Survey	196728	The ability to bring a group together and accomplish a goal or something that everyone wants to achieve.	The ability to be level heading meaning that don't think of yourself any higher than what you are and being an overall good person.	Poor communication and don't take anyone else's ideas in consideration.
Post-Survey	196729	Leadership is leading others in different settings.	A good leader is someone who has good communication and can be decisive in times of need.	A poor leader is someone who puts their own interests first and only thinks of one person's ideas.
Post-Survey	196741	Leader ship is being able to communicate and put together puzzle pieces that your group presents.	You have to be a quick thinker and you need to be able to take criticism.	Someone who thinks they're always right.
Post-Survey	196798	Leadership is being able to make the people around you better. It's about being able to step up when the people around you can't.	A good leader can listen well to others. A good leader can motivate you to do something even when you feel like you can't. A good leader can guide people through stuff that they might not understand.	A poor leader is someone that doesn't care about others around them. A poor leader won't do any work themselves and will become more of a boss than a leader. A poor leader will get angry with others around them if they don't understand how something works.
Post-Survey	196920	Showing others what to do while also helping them do it.	Listening to everyone else trying to help as best as you can.	Doing things on your own and not listening to what others have to say.
Post-Survey	196921	Leadership is when you take charge of a group of people. You have to lead them to do and complete a certain task. The leader has to listen to the group members and make sure that everyone understands the task so that the group can accomplish said task together.	A good leader is a leader who listens to their group. They must listen to any concerns that any of the group members have and then do their best to resolve the problem. The leader has to be able to keep a good attitude so that the rest of the group has good energy, and then lead the group through the task, while also trying to eliminate any problems that may or may not occur.	A poor leader is someone who doesn't listen to the group members and is selfish. They do what they want and they yell at the group members in order to get their point across. They don't listen to any of the concerns, and just do whatever without care.
Post-Survey	197014	Getting people to do what they need to while motivating them	integrity and not being afraid to lead by example	bossy narcissistic does not contribute
Post-Survey	197207	being the head of a situation or circumstance of a group of people	kindness, compassion, empathy, patience, assurance	rushing things, being impatient, being inconsiderate

				or annoyed when problems or questions arise, belittling
Post-Survey	197297	Leadership is taking charge and setting an example	If you don't expect anything in return and you are leading people not controlling them.	Having a negative attitude and not following what they're leading.
Post-Survey	197444	Being able to tell people what to do and how to do it in a orderly way	showing you are a nice person and only enforce thing when you need to	not giving any guidance or direction
Post-Survey	197457	Leadership is being someone that others can look up to and being able to take charge of things in a good manner.	Someone who is confident and someone who knows how to take charge	Someone who doesn't care or just sits back and does nothing
Post-Survey	197631	Leadership is the ability to show people right and wrong. Willing to be teacherable to others and willing to show others how people should be treated	a good leader communicates, Is determined and is willing to work hard for the good of other people. Not everyone is a good leader but everyone had the potential to be a good leader.	A poor leader is selfish,. They don't care about the good of the team and are not willing to put other people first. They do not help other people and are poor with communicating to others.
Post-Survey	2100003	Motovater that encourages the group to speak out, get going and they take control	Leads the group in the right direction, shows respect, doesn't pick favorites.	A poor leader would consist of bad decision making, communication isn't very good.
Post-Survey	2100004	Leadership is when someone takes charge of a situation and leads their team through it.	They listen to people on their team and make compromises between proposed methods or strategies. They also can keep the team motivated throughout the project.	A poor leader does not listen to their team and makes everyone do the project their way.
	Participant	**What is communication?**	**What comes to mind when you think of good communication?**	**What comes to mind when you think of bad communication?**
Pre-Survey	196403	communication is the key to life. There always needs to be communication whether it is in a relationship or at school. It is the thing that holds everything together. If there wasn't communication then there wouldn't be a way to express what you need to express.	a good relationship, a good understanding of things	not expressing yourself
Pre-Survey	196714	Communication is being able to effectively and clearly state your point to a person while also listening to them.	I think of eye contact, only one person talking at a time, clear and concise talk between said individuals.	Yelling and not listening and hearing the other side, little to no eye contact, and a lack of all around regard for what the other person is trying to say about the situation.
Pre-Survey	196715	Communication is making sure everyone is on the same page and being able to perform tasks together.	I think of a successful basketball team or any sports team for that matter. Any good sports team	Bad communication would be people not getting along because they don't listen to other people's points of view.

		When everyone is on the same page things just flow together.	has great communication. Communication is key.	When you are in a dilemma, take other peoples advice. There are so many different ways to do things. Your way may not work the best.
Pre-Survey	196719	Openly conversing, talking face to face with someone in a respectable manner, sharing your opinions and taking others' opinions into consideration.	Discussions, eye contact, respectful with your words, open with your opinions, and open minded.	Never sharing, keeping your thoughts to yourself when they are important for the conversation, being disrespectful, and hiding things.
Pre-Survey	196728	Communication is the ability to talk to other people.	I would say everyone knows what everyone is doing. For example, in football if you don't communicate to the D-line, they won't be in a good spot in order to make the tackle but if you told them to move one gap over, then that tackle could potentially save the ball game.	No one talks to each other and no one listens to each other.
Pre-Survey	196729	Communication is talking to other people.	I think of me and my friends when we play video games	I think of someone with headphones in while others are trying to talk to them
Pre-Survey	196741	Being able to speak your mind and ideas freely.	Everyone sharing their answers and coming to a compromise.	Yelling over each other and interrupting.
Pre-Survey	196798	Communication is getting a message across to someone or something else.	Being able to talk, listen, and understand someone else.	Not understanding another person's point and just thinking you're right, so you just yell back and forth.
Pre-Survey	196920	Talking to people	Saying what you have to say and having a reasonable answer by the end of it	Not telling the other person what you wanted to
Pre-Survey	196921	People speaking and listening to one another to get points across.	Listening and not arguing when someone says their point.	Yelling, arguing, and being closed minded.
Pre-Survey	197014	talking to people	well though out questions and answers and effortless and good flow	dry questions and answers
Pre-Survey	197207	listening and talking	listening before responding then nicely and considerately talking and having a conversation	being impatient, listening only to think of what to say next instead of listening to be helpful
Pre-Survey	197297	the act of talking and sharing feelings or details	people understanding each other	disasters
Pre-Survey	197444	that ability to coordinate well with your group	speaking clearly and explaining clearly	the exact opposite of what I just said
Pre-Survey	197457	Talking or using signals well to communicate through people or things	A person who you can clearly understand when they speak	Quiet

Pre-Survey	197631	the ability to talk to another person	when you talk and everyone understands what you are trying to say.	Not talking, ignoring or leaving stuff alone that should be addressed
Pre-Survey	2100003	A connection between you and a person to where you guys are able to understand each other without getting frustrated or angry with each other.	You are able to communicate well because you enjoy being by that person.	When someone is nervous to talk to the other person, Or if someone's kid doesn't give their parents a text telling them where they are.
Pre-Survey	2100004	Talking to people and sharing feelings with them	listening to the other person, reaching out when you need help	not being a good listener, thinking that you have the only way to do something
Post-Survey	196403	Good communication is when everyone is heard and not only one person is throwing their viewpoints into the issue.	When I think of good communication I think of like a meeting or something where everyone is throwing ideas out and discussing them together.	When I think about bad communication I think of like a lecture where one person is talking the whole time and not letting anyone else converse in what the topic is.
Post-Survey	196714	Communication is being able not only talk but listen and understand what another person is trying to say and take their ideas into consideration.	I think of a Call of Duty game when it is a 1v5 situation on search and destroy and your team is telling you where people are so you can get them and win the round and possibly the match.	I also think of 2000-2010 Call of Duty lobbies where it was mostly incoherent screaming and calling racial slurs to each other.
Post-Survey	196715	Communication is talking to others and hearing what they have to say.	Good communication is taking others opinions into consideration and having an open mind. You need to understand where someone is coming from in order to have a good conversation.	Bad communication is never taking what others say into account and thinking you're always right. Having a closed mind when it comes to other people isn't a good way to communicate.
Post-Survey	196719	Being able to talk and listen without judging. Talking about your feelings and your thoughts/opinions.	Having an open mind. Being able to converse for long periods of time. Being able to elaborate on what others are saying. Being open about how you are feeling.	Not listening to someone when they are talking. Keeping your emotions hidden. Being rude or upset but unwilling to talk through it.
Post-Survey	196728	Talking to others about something.	Over communication meaning that everyone in a group will know exactly what everyone else is doing because you guys have talked about it so much.	Nothing is said and no one knows what is going on.
Post-Survey	196729	Communication is talking with others so everyone is on the same page.	I think of everyone knowing what is going on and talking in turns so they don't interrupt each other.	I think of people talking over each other and not being clear of what they want to do.
Post-Survey	196741	Being able to present your ideas to open minded groups.	My classmates, I usually do well with communicating with them.	Someone who tells others to shut up and that they're wrong.

	Participant	What is teamwork?	What makes a good team player?	What makes a bad team player?
Post-Survey	196798	Communication is the ability to talk to other people and send a message.	I think of solving problems by talking them out. Being able to talk to someone about something while keeping calm and getting the message across.	I think of arguing and insults being thrown at each other. I think of nothing getting accomplished and people hating each other because they don't agree on something.
Post-Survey	196920	Being about to talk to others.	Having come up with and answer or made progress.	One person doing all the talking and someone else just listening.
Post-Survey	196921	Communication is when at least two people speak to each other, while the other person(s) is listening and trying to understand what the other is saying. You should not interrupt one another, and should keep an open mind about what the other is trying to say.	Good communication is when the other person(s) is listening intently, not interrupting, and trying to understand the situation fully. They must keep an open mind, and be open to change on their opinion on some views if necessary. There should be no yelling, and it should not result in anger.	Yelling and not listening. People that are not trying to understand the other and are just yelling to try and get their point across. No one is listening, everyone gets angry, and people will probably get hurt in the process.
Post-Survey	197014	talking to other people	Clear talking well thought out questions and answers	short choppy responses and questions
Post-Survey	197207	having an open conversation about a topic	waiting to answer, listening, paying attention, attentiveness, being intentional with answers	rushing, being annoyed, impatience, not giving someone else a chance to talk
Post-Survey	197297	Talking	Things flowing smoothly	Misunderstandings
Post-Survey	197444	The ability to speak and signal people clearly	well organized speech	silence, distant, and horrible effort towards trying to communicate
Post-Survey	197457	Talking back and forth with others and helping others understand different situations	A good speakers	a quiet person who doesn't give instructions well
Post-Survey	197631	Communication is the ability to talk to others so everyone understand what is happening or going on.	They are always thinking on what other people need to hear so they understand they want to tell other people and they are willing to work to help other people understand them.	They just thinking about themselves and are not willing to try and communicate with others. They word things the way the want and do not care.
Post-Survey	2100003	The act of 2 people talking to each other and or having a connection	People liking each other, People agreeing on like a sports game, Mom and dad know where you're going	Couples when they start to fight, Player quits the team because the coach doesn't believe in him.
Post-Survey	2100004	Talking to people and sharing ideas, while also listening to others' ideas.	A person that listens to other people and does not only talk about themself or their opinions. They also care about what the other person has to say.	People that only talk and never listen. Those that have "closed ears."
	Participant	**What is teamwork?**	**What makes a good team player?**	**What makes a bad team player?**

Pre-Survey	196403	teamwork is something that is needed with anything that can be done. Whether it is a relationship or a school project there always needs to be teamwork.	a good team player makes sure everyone is involved, and that there is enough to go around for everyone.	someone who doesn't help, or someone that doesn't care about the outcome
Pre-Survey	196714	Teamwork is being able to complete a task meant for a team with good communication and strong leadership.	A good team player is a person who listens and also gives suggestions to solve the problem not just sitting to the side and doing nothing to help out the team.	They sit to the side and don't get involved, they are quite down on most ideas and if it is not their idea they don't care, and they often try to take control of the group even though the leader was already chosen for the task/situation.
Pre-Survey	196715	getting something done with other people and getting along with other people.	A good team player is able to work well with anyone they are paired with. No matter the circumstance.	A bad team player is someone who refuses to do what the coach or the other people are saying. When you roll your eyes and have a bad attitude you're a bad team player.
Pre-Survey	196719	Working together with a group of people to achieve a goal.	Works together with the others, listens to everyone else, respects everyone else, does what's best for the team rather than what's best for themself, and puts forth their best effort.	Not communicating, refusing to work with others, closing your mind to others' opinions, being disrespectful to the teammates, going off and doing your own thing, and getting a bad attitude towards what you are doing and eventually giving up.
Pre-Survey	196728	The ability to work in a group and getting a certain task done.	Someone who may not play all the time but still keeps his/her head up and stays positive even though you have to go through the grueling practices.	When someone throws a fit on how they may not be playing even though their team is very successful.
Pre-Survey	196729	Teamwork is the act of working together in a team.	A good team player is someone who is willing to make sacrifices in the team as well as push their wants to the bottom of the list so the team can overall be better.	A bad team player is someone who wants to focus only on themselves during the team activities and not look to enhance the team's abilities.
Pre-Survey	196741	Being able to share the same goal.	Being able to make compromise.	Your way or the highway.
Pre-Survey	196798	working with another person or group to get something done.	A good team player is not selfish and will do stuff for the team that will benefit even if it hurts them.	A bad team player is someone who gets upset with teammates easily and is selfish with everything they do.
Pre-Survey	196920	everyone working together to accomplish something	Letting other people do stuff while also participating	Either doing everything themself or doing nothing to help the team
Pre-Survey	196921	A group of people working together to achieve a common goal.	Someone who looks out for their team and helps others out.	Someone who is only focused on themselves and doesn't care about their team.

Pre-Survey	197014	working together	doing their part and not doing anything to hurt the team also not being selfish	not contributing
Pre-Survey	197207	working with the people around you instead of against them, to complete a task or goal	paying attention to everyone, not starting or participating in drama, being patient and working together	being rude or unkind, pushing peoples thoughts/ideas away for your own
Pre-Survey	197297	working together as one to achieve something	helping and motivating others	bad attitude and getting upset when someone makes a mistake
Pre-Survey	197444	being able to complete a task together not just one person	getting everyone involved	doing it all by yourself
Pre-Survey	197457	Working together to form or create something that can be good or done by working together and using your resources.	a leader who does well but owns up to their mistakes and does a good job at what they do	Bad attitude and poor communication.
Pre-Survey	197631	the ability to work together to complete a task	you are willing to do anything that needs to be done to help your team move forward.	You don't listen to your teammates and could care less about their opinions
Pre-Survey	2100003	Where a team comes together and plays very well, they show passion for their teammates and don't care about scoring	Someone who passes, gives compliments, tries to help other players	Someone who isn't a ball hog and they don't respect anyone else they are playing with
Pre-Survey	2100004	a group of people working together to reach similar goals	a person that goes with other members and helps with projects	a person that does little for the team or thinks that their way to do the project is always the best
Post-Survey	196403	teamwork is when there are multiple people helping to achieve the end result of something.	a good team player helps others and doesn't always make themselves the center of attention.	a bad team player is someone that sometimes never helps and is sometimes the person that takes complete control not letting anyone else help
Post-Survey	196714	Working together with a group of people to achieve a goal as quickly and efficiently as possible.	Someone who listens to the leader and will help anyone that is in need to get there section done of what they are doing.	A person that stands to the side and does nothing to further the progress of the group in their endeavors.
Post-Survey	196715	Teamwork is knowing how to get along with others and work well and efficiently with others.	A good team player is someone who understands everyone's role and makes sure everyone knows what is going on. They are also the person to make sure everyone is helping and not just having one person do it on their own.	A bad team player is someone who wants to take all the credit and not do any of the work.
Post-Survey	196719	Working as a whole towards a common goal. Working together with others, sharing ideas, doing what has to be done, only without	Positive attitude, working with the others, keeping your anger in check, not blaming others for something that went wrong	Wanting to do everything, not taking others ideas into consideration, blaming everyone else for problems.

		branching off to be independent.		
Post-Survey	196728	People working together for one goal.	A person who may not get to play as much he/she wants to but understands what his/her role is.	Constantly being negative no matter how the team is doing and is always putting him/herself first before others.
Post-Survey	196729	Teamwork is working together with others.	A good team player is someone who is willing to put their teams interests before their own.	A bad team player is someone who is not willing to cooperate and only wants themselves to be successful.
Post-Survey	196741	Putting your differences aside to obtain one goal.	Someone who is willing to admit that their idea might not be the best idea.	Someone who refuses to work with others.
Post-Survey	196798	teamwork is working together with other people to get something done.	A good team player is unselfish and put themself on the line for the team. A good team player is someone who picks teammates up when they're down and does whatever it takes to get something done.	A bad team player only cares about themself and will only do things for their own good.
Post-Survey	196920	Everyone working together to get something done and listing to each other.	Letting everyone do there fail share and also contributing.	Not doing any of the work of talking all of it and doing it yourself.
Post-Survey	196921	Teamwork is when a group of people come together to work on a task with the help of one another, usually with a leader and good communication skills.	Someone who is trying to do as much work as they can and help others when they need it. They listen to others and go out of their way to make sure that whatever task they are trying to accomplish works well.	Someone who is selfish and only works for themselves. They don't listen to the members in their group and they do whatever they want.
Post-Survey	197014	working with other people towards a common goal	does at least their fair share and is not selfish	selfish arrogant and lazy
Post-Survey	197207	working together with a group of people to get a task completed	listening, open communication, honesty, patience	being rude, rushing, being insensitive, not communicating, being impatient
Post-Survey	197297	Working together to accomplish something	Lifting your teammates up and celebrating them as well as yourself	Getting an attitude when you aren't doing well and then putting the whole team down.
Post-Survey	197444	Sticking together and figuring out a plan to overcome a challenge or make one easier	Being calm and accepting others ideas	trying to make the entire situation your own and doing it yourself
Post-Survey	197457	Working together to reach a goal	Someone who builds others up and never stops trying	Someone with a bad attitude or a person who doesn't care
Post-Survey	197631	Teamwork is how people work together. You need to be a team player to have a team and being a team	Being about to sacrifice you're playing time if someone else needs it more or is better than you. You just want your team to win as a whole You do not care	a bad team player doesn't care who you are or if it is better for the team to not play you still want to play and you are selfish.

		playing is how you are having good teamwork.	if you play. You are still routing for your team and you want them to win. Even though you are not playing.	
Post-Survey	2100003	Where people or your teammates come together and work	Someone who makes call outs, Is loud, Can get people hyped up	Someone who plays for themselves and a ball hog
Post-Survey	2100004	Working with a group of people trying to achieve a certain goal.	A person that will do their share of the work and also not let anyone slack off.	A person that does little to none of their allotted work; they also could be absent for most of the practices or group-work times.

Appendix F

IRB Approval

19:43

Elyse Bulla
Sham Md-Yunus
Curriculum and Instruction

Thank you for submitting the action research protocol titled, "The Impact of Teaching Soft Skills on the Ability Levels of 12th Grade Students" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The protocol was reviewed on 2/1/2021 and has been certified that it meets the federal regulations exemption criteria for human subjects research. The protocol has been given the IRB number 21-017. You are approved to proceed with your project.

The classification of this protocol as exempt is valid only for the research activities and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any proposed changes to this protocol must be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 217-581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@eiu.edu

Thank you for your cooperation, and the best of success with your research.

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