

1 School Counselor's Role in Facilitating the Development of  
2 Students' Soft Skills: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Attributes  
3 to Promote Career Readiness

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8 **Abstract**

9 School counselors play an instrumental role in ensuring that students are career ready and  
10 attain academic and vocational success while in school and post-graduation. Regardless of the  
11 overlapping terms that are being used in the educational community, non-academic skills have  
12 been proven to be instrumental to successful students. This manuscript will address the terms  
13 being coined, as well as the significance for school counselors to promote these attributes in  
14 our students for them to be career ready.

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16 **Index terms**— soft skills, career readiness, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, school counselor interventions.

17 **1 Introduction**

18 t the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the predominant belief in work settings was that one's cognitive abilities were  
19 the most important criteria in determining work performance and success. There had been some emphasis on  
20 the importance of personal qualities of education and the workplace (Willingham & Breland, 1982), but this  
21 was a rare acknowledgment. However, in the 1990s, psychology began to immerse out of the five-factor model  
22 of personality (Goldberg, 1990), which alluded to the theory that personality plays a large role in workplace  
23 success. Several studies showed that the big-five personality factors; most pressing 'being conscientious' (striving  
24 for being organized and working hard) predicted both workplace (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran & Judge, 2007)  
25 and academic success amongst students. In addition to conscientiousness, other non-cognitive predictors such  
26 as goal setting, showing commitment, having social support, academic self-efficacy, a positive self-concept, time  
27 management skills, and effort regulation also were important factors in producing positive outcomes for students  
28 (Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012). Further, researchers found that personality features predicted mortality,  
29 divorce, drug use, occupational attainment, job satisfaction, creativity, and performance (Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner,  
30 Caspi & Goldberg, 2007). 77% of employers indicate that "soft skills;" including communicating effectively, are  
31 just as important in the hiring process as are technical job requirements or "hard skills" (Rinker, 2014).

32 Author: Kean University. e-mail: paolinia@kean.edu These personality factors are typically comprised of a  
33 conglomerate of traits including character, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, grit, growth mindset, noncognitive traits and  
34 habits, social and emotional skills, and soft skills, which all play an instrumental role in a student's level of career  
35 readiness. In addition to possessing cognitive and technical skills and abilities, in order to be successful in the  
36 workforce students must be able to communicate effectively and express themselves, engage in teamwork and  
37 collaboration in order to work cooperatively with colleagues, demonstrate adaptability, display problem solving  
38 abilities; specifically situational awareness in regards to his or her ability to respond to a situation and resolve  
39 an issue in a constructive manner, be able to analyze and interpret data, as well as effectively engage in conflict  
40 resolution in order to overcome challenges peacefully and efficiently (Kamenetz, 2015). These soft skills refer to  
41 a cluster of personality traits, social grace, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism  
42 (Rouse, 2015) and include personal attributes that enhance a person's job performance; including one's ability  
43 to empathize with others and negotiate.

## 6 IV. GRIT

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45 Although educators are expected to teach students core academic subjects as well as elective courses, 46 they are also responsible for helping students to acquire practical skills that are necessary in order to 47 obtain employment such as confidence, flexibility, honesty, integrity, optimism, common sense, communication, 48 networking, negotiating and public speaking (Lafrance, 2009). Certain soft skills are more appealing to employers 49 than hard skills (technical skills). Similar to hard skills, soft skills are not necessarily innate and can be acquired 50 and developed over time. Through character education, classroom guidance, and school workshops, school 51 counselors play an important role in teaching students about the importance of perseverance, being courteous, 52 having integrity, being adaptable, effectively problem solve, display confidence and humility, become leaders, 53 maintain optimism, and to engage in constructive conflict resolution (Lafrance, 2009). In order to be successful 54 in college or careers, students need to be prepared for the academic rigor, as roommates and employees, and cope 55 with set backs in a healthy manner. Many experts say that students' lack soft skills are hindering their college 56 completion rates, as well as career performance . Due to the fact that many millennials have had helicopter 57 parents who protected them, they haven't had the opportunity to struggle and have not developed resiliency or 58 self-soothing skills . Therefore, school counselors today more than ever need to incorporate the teaching of 'soft 59 skills' into their counseling programs in order to help students be successful after they graduate and enter college 60 or begin their careers.

### 61 2 a) Constellation of Intrapersonal Attributes Critical for

62 Career Readiness There are several non-academic skills and characteristics that are integral for students to possess 63 in order to attain future career success. Intrapersonal skills involve the talents or abilities that reside within the 64 individual and help them in problem solving (National Research Council, 2010).

### 65 3 i. Adaptability

66 One's ability and willingness to cope with uncertain, new, and changing job conditions, including responding 67 effectively to emergency or crisis situations, learning new tasks, technologies, and procedures. Adaptability also 68 includes handling work stress, being able to work with people who have differing personalities, communication 69 styles, and cultures (Houston, 2007).

### 70 4 ii. Self-Management

71 Refers to the ability to work remotely, autonomously, to self-motivate and self-monitor. One important aspect 72 of self-management is being willing and able to ascertain new information and skills related to the job (Houston, 73 2007).

### 74 5 iii. Self-Regulation

75 Includes individuals displaying control over their behaviors and reactions. It refers to the capacity for individuals 76 to guide and monitor themselves towards achieving their stated goals through restraining impulses and exercising 77 discretion (Houston, 2007). Students who exemplify self-regulation are able to control their emotions and actions 78 and demonstrate self-discipline. At school students come to class prepared, pay attention, aren't easily distracted, 79 follow directions, and start their work right away rather than procrastinating. Students who self-regulate stay 80 calm even when criticized, do not interrupt others, are courteous to adults and peers, and keep their emotions in 81 check (Kamenetz, 2015).

### 82 6 iv. Grit

83 Refers to one's ability to persevere, display selfcontrol, persistence, and conscientiousness. Students who 84 demonstrate grit finish what they start and even if they experience failure they show resilience and overcome 85 adversity. Students who demonstrate grit have been found to be more academically and vocationally successful, 86 as they exude passion, drive, fortitude, and focus (Kamenetz, 2015).

87 v. Growth Mindset According to Dweck (2006), a growth mindset refers to people who believe that their basic 88 qualities (intelligence, talents, traits) can be developed and enhanced through dedication and hard work. Having 89 a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset (in which people document traits rather than develop them), allow 90 people to experience a love of learning, resilience, and experience a sense of accomplishment.

91 vi. Zest According to educators at Kipp Academy in Harlem, New York, students who are taught about the 92 importance of displaying zest and are encouraged to approach life with energy and enthusiasm appear to be 93 energized, enthusiastic, passionate about learning, and invigorate others (Kamenetz, 2015).

94 vii. Optimism According to Kamenetz (2015), mindset is extremely important in that students who are 95 optimistic and hopeful about their future have been shown to be more successful academically. Students who are 96 optimistic have high expectations for their future and work to achieve their goals. They rebound from frustration 97 and setbacks easily and acknowledge that applying effort and displaying perseverance during challenging times 98 are key ingredients to a positive future.

99 viii. Gratitude Students who show gratitude recognize what others have done for them, show respect, 100 thankfulness, appreciation, and do for others what has been done for them. Students who show gratitude

101 have been shown to be more successful in the workplace as they are humble, grateful, and express thanks to their  
102 colleagues for their support (Kamenetz, 2015).

## 103 **7 ix. Social Intelligence**

104 Social intelligence means that students are cognizant of the motives and feelings of other people, as well as  
105 the importance of being self-aware. If conflicts occur, students utilize effective conflict resolution skills in to  
106 determine proactive solutions. It also includes students being taught about the importance of respecting others  
107 and fostering an inclusive atmosphere (Kamenetz, 2015).

## 108 **8 x. Curiosity**

109 Students who are curious are inquisitive about the world and the people around them. They are eager to learn  
110 about new material, are engaged in the learning process, actively participate, and ask questions that catapult  
111 their understanding of material covered (Kamenetz, 2015). Their thirst for knowledge and desire to learn enables  
112 them to be more successful academically.

113 xi. Public Presentation Students who have effective public presentation skills have been shown to be more  
114 academically successful and more comfortable in social situations. Students who are able to make effective public  
115 presentations have been found to exhibit improved manners, personal hygiene, appropriate dress, and display  
116 increased self-confidence (Laker & Powell, 2011).

117 xii. Leadership Students who possess leadership qualities have been found to be more academically successful  
118 and improve their workplace performance, in that they possess effective communication skills, are motivated,  
119 delegate tasks effectively, demonstrate positivity and optimism, are trustworthy and respected, honest, creative,  
120 provide constructive feedback, are responsible, committed, and flexible in accepting changes (Laker & Powell,  
121 2011).

## 122 **9 xiii. Time Management**

123 Students who manage their time well have selfreported more positive outcomes in comparison to students who  
124 do not manage their time well. Time management allows for people to manage their time effectively via keeping  
125 check lists, staying on task, and keeping a schedule rather than procrastinating and being less efficient. Time is an  
126 asset that must be managed effectively. Many successful employees follow the RAC Method in that they record  
127 what they do during the day, analyze their notes and highlight events that they did not find productive, and  
128 change unproductive behaviors in terms of arranging tasks and daily schedules, according to prioritized activities  
129 (Soft Skills Academy, 2013).

## 130 **10 xiv. Stress Management**

131 Building a life of healthy balance is imperative for success and performance in careers and in life. Stress can  
132 prevent us from functioning effectively in that when we experience stress we feel a loss of control over events  
133 and feel overwhelmed. Therefore, stress management teaches students how to recognize the signs and symptoms  
134 of stress, as well as to explore strategies to relieve stress in order to feel more energized, calm, and focused.  
135 Managing stress enables students to gain conscious awareness, engage in positive self-talk, and helps them to  
136 relax; ultimately allowing students to be more productive (Soft Skills Academy, 2013).

## 137 **11 xv. Critical Thinking**

138 Problem solving and critical thinking refers to our ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve  
139 problems. Effective critical thinkers are able to pull together data and solve problems in a logical and systematic  
140 manner (United States Department of Labor, 2013).

141 Students who are able to think critically are able to assess problems and find solutions in a reasonable time  
142 frame; enabling them to be successful both inside and outside of the classroom. Employers seek employees who  
143 can solve problems on their own or collaboratively with other employees. People who can think critically, share  
144 thoughts and opinions, use sound judgment, make decisions, and complete tasks successfully are seen as positive  
145 assets in their work setting.

146 xvi. Creativity Creativity is a critical component in both academic and career endeavors. Creative people  
147 are able to see things from multiple perspectives, are open minded, flexible, adaptable, think of extraordinary  
148 solutions for ordinary problems, and are able to find multiple ways to resolve problems. Creative people believe  
149 that there is more than one way to accomplish a task, are innovative, and stretch beyond their normal boundaries  
150 of thought. Creativity allows people to problem solve in a non-linear manner and brainstorm alternative solutions  
151 to an obstacle (Gara, 2015).

## 152 **12 xvii. 21 st Century Skills**

153 According to the Partnership for 21 st Century Learning, there are four particular skills (the 4 C's) that assist  
154 students in achieving success including critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, as well as  
155 possessing technological literacy (Kamenetz, 2015).

156        xviii. Character Character education focuses on emphasizing the importance for students to demonstrate  
157 respect, integrity, responsibility, courage, emotion regulation, friendship making, and problem solving skills in  
158 order to be efficient in the workforce (Kamenetz, 2015).

### 159    13 b) Constellation of Interpersonal Attributes Critical for 160        Career Readiness i. Listening

161        Research shows that regardless of one's cognitive abilities and talents, possessing effective listening skills is a  
162 necessity for being successful in completing tasks. In particular, active listening is essential, as it empowers fellow  
163 employees to feel heard, validated, and understood. Active listening also allows one to communicate well with  
164 colleagues, while being able to complete a job accurately and efficiently (Soft Skills Academy, 2013).

165        ii. Verbal Communication Effective verbal communication begins with clarity. Effective communicators are  
166 able to speak slowly and thoughtfully. It is important for students and future employees to learn how to speak  
167 in an understandable, calm, and articulate manner. Students need to learn not to rush, to wait their turn to  
168 respond, to answer appropriately, and to pause when responding in order to allot themselves time to think and  
169 reflect (Gemma, 2014).

170        iii. Non-Verbal Communication According to Yaffe (2011), Professor Albert Mehrabian published a book titled  
171 Silent Messages, in which he found that 93% of our communication is nonverbal and only 7% is verbal. In the  
172 book, it stated that 55% of communication was through body language and 38% was through vocal tone, while the  
173 remaining 7% of communication referred to the words themselves. Therefore, non-verbal communication is much  
174 more revealing of one's thoughts, actions, body language than verbal discourse. Therefore, students need to  
175 learn how to communicate non-verbally by being made aware of their body language, actions, facial expressions,  
176 making eye contact, their voice, tone, and gestures as they expose one's true attitude and perceptions more so  
177 than verbal exchanges (Gemma, 2014).

### 178    14 iv. Ability to Accept Constructive Feedback

179        It is important for students, as future employees to learn to be open and accepting to constructive feedback,  
180 as humans there is always room for growth, learning, evolution, and improvement. Accepting feedback and  
181 making modifications based upon feedback speaks volumes about one's character and shows that one is open and  
182 willing to make necessary changes in order to better themselves personally and professionally (Gemma, 2014).

183        v

## 184    15 . Demonstrating a Strong Work Ethic

185        While in school, counselors need to reiterate to students the fact future employers are looking for employees that  
186 take an initiative, are reliable, and will work diligently to get the job done correctly. It is essential that students  
187 recognize the importance of working hard, taking on a leadership role, and putting in as much time as necessary  
188 to complete a task efficiently (Gemma, 2014).

189        vi. Negotiation The negotiation process accords people an opportunity to settle their differences in an  
190 amicable manner. It is a type of compromise in order to avoid an argument. Negotiation includes preparation,  
191 discussion, clarification of goals/ compromise/ flexibility, negotiating towards a win-win outcome, agreement,  
192 and implementation of a course of action. Thus, it is important for students to learn how to negotiate so when  
193 faced with an issue, they are able to communicate their concerns and viewpoints with fellow employees and  
194 employers, and to problem solve in a proactive manner, in order to come to a mutually agreeable resolution. It is  
195 inevitable that future employees may disagree. Therefore, students need to learn about the principles of fairness,  
196 relationship maintenance, and seeking a mutually beneficial outcome for all parties involved (Spiers, 2012).

197        vii. Questioning An important skill for students and employees to learn is effective questioning, as it builds  
198 upon listening and is a way to obtain information in order to ascertain more details about what a task requires.  
199 Questioning is also a way to initiate conversation as it demonstrates interest, as well as a desire to learn and  
200 listen. Counselors need to reinforce to students that it is not just about asking questions, but about asking  
201 quality questions which probe deeper and can reveal more relevant information regarding a task (Gemma, 2014).

202        viii. Manners Students need to learn the importance of etiquette and having good manners, especially in  
203 today's global economy as the understanding of good manners translates well into other cultures (Gemma, 2014).  
204 Etiquette is an important topic to learn in school, since students need to learn how to interact politely with one  
205 another, as well as be prepared for the future when interacting with colleagues and clients, as it enables them to  
206 build a positive rapport, communicate more effectively, work collaboratively as a team, and build a supportive  
207 network critical for personal and professional success.

208        ix. Problem Solving Challenges in life are a certainty and are unavoidable. Therefore, early on, students must  
209 learn how to effectively problem-solve in a collaborative manner. Counselors can teach students the importance  
210 of listening to everyone's perspectives, to be respectful, and to voice their thoughts so that everyone is heard and  
211 understood. Problem solving is a team effort. The key aspects of problem solving entail identifying the issue,  
212 dissecting the problem so it is understood, examining all options relating to solutions, discussing ways to solve

213 the problem, and putting the plan into action (Gemma, 2014). Effective problem solving allows for efficiency,  
214 improved communication, productivity, and being solution focused.

215 x. Social Awareness Being aware of others' emotions is an essential part of interpersonal communication, school,  
216 and vocational success (Gemma, 2014). It is imperative for counselors to teach students about the importance of  
217 social cognizance, being intuitive, observant, and empathetic. Although students need to recognize the importance  
218 of focusing on their own successes, they also need to know about the importance of team work, supporting  
219 colleagues, and being mindful of the way in which their actions impact others. Social awareness is crucial to  
220 identifying opportunities in building rapport, in that being perceptive to the needs of others helps to forge and  
221 strengthen interpersonal connections.

## 222 **16 xi. Self-Control**

223 Self-management is a fundamental component to leadership success in that it allows us to control our emotions  
224 when they are not reflective of what is deemed to be appropriate behavior for a certain situation (Gemma, 2014).  
225 It is essential for counselors to teach students about the importance of anger management, ways in which to  
226 diminish frustration, and the significance of displaying a calm demeanor. Conflict is unavoidable in daily life,  
227 but students need to recognize the importance of maintaining civility and composure to deescalate any conflicts  
228 rather than lashing out and escalating disagreements.

229 xii. Negotiation Negotiation is a type of compromise in order to avoid an argument. Negotiation includes  
230 preparation, discussion, clarification of goals/ compromise/ flexibility towards a win-win outcome, agreement,  
231 and implementation of a course of action.

## 232 **17 xiii. Responsibility and Accountability**

233 Taking responsibility and being accountable for one's actions are indicative of maturity (Gemma, 2014). Saying  
234 you are going to do something and following through with your actions is a sign of demonstrating responsibility,  
235 and is a way to build trust between employees and employers. Responsibility and accountability are important  
236 values to instill in students to develop as they are reflective of character, integrity, and trustworthiness. As future  
237 employees, students need to recognize that demonstrating responsibility and accountability builds rapport and  
238 reliability. Additionally, holding oneself accountable for mistakes rather than placing blame on someone else for a  
239 wrongdoing is a sign of strength and character and is crucial for conflict management (Gemma, 2014). Counselors  
240 can teach students about the importance of admitting to a mistake by admitting responsibility for their actions,  
241 as well as the significance of rectifying a mistake in order to achieve a more positive outcome personally and  
242 professionally.

## 243 **18 xiv. Assertiveness**

244 Being assertive allows one to express their thoughts and feelings in a confident and strong manner without being  
245 passive or aggressive. It is valuable for students to be given assertiveness training by counselors so that they are  
246 knowledgeable about the importance for them to voice their opinions to peers and future colleagues in order to  
247 be heard. In this competitive job market, it is critical that all stakeholders have an opportunity to share their  
248 thoughts and opinions, as that is what helps to get the job done in a team setting (Gemma, 2014). Leaders who  
249 are assertive stand up with confidence, conviction, and are able to provide instruction clearly and concretely.

250 Being assertive helps people to gain respect and is empowering.

## 251 **19 xv. Collaboration**

252 Collaboration is a skill that all students need to learn, as it will enable them to work cooperatively with others at  
253 a future workplace. There are several elements of successful collaboration including defining and agreeing upon  
254 roles, having open communication, having recognition and respect for contributing collaborators, identifying  
255 obstacles, and placing group goals above personal recognition (Doyle, 2015).

256 Successful collaboration requires mutual respect, active listening, and flexibility. Collaboration can occur  
257 between employees in the same department, interdepartmental collaboration, or collaboration between bosses  
258 and employees. Employers look for those who function as a part of a team and can balance personal achievements  
259 with group goals (Doyle, 2015).

260 xvi. Motivational Skills Motivational skills are substantial for students in school or in the workplace. There  
261 are several steps in the motivational process including assessing the personality characteristics of the group to  
262 be motivated, defining motivational strategies, conveying expectations and desired outcomes, communicating  
263 benefits, providing constructive feedback and rewards for achieving the desired goal (Doyle, 2015). Counselors  
264 can teach students about the importance of being selfmotivated to work to their potential to achieve their dreams,  
265 as well as the importance of motivating others to perform to their ability. Motivational skills elicit a desired  
266 behavior or response by a stakeholder (Doyle, 2015). Employers look for employees who have a motivating spirit,  
267 as that is a valuable asset for their company in regards to persuading, empowering, and identifying the strengths  
268 in others in order to get a task done efficiently.

**269 20 c) The Importance of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal**

**270 Attributes in Promoting Career i.**

**271 21 Readiness**

**272** Experts agree that establishing connections between teachers and students, as well as between students and their  
**273** peers is essential for the mission of education (Dodd, 2000) as well as career readiness to be successful employees.  
**274** Researchers found that a positive correlation exists between attending to students' social and emotional needs  
**275** and school success, as the academic achievement of students increase, behavioral issues decrease, and the quality  
**276** of the relationships impacting students improves. Raising Healthy Children, a social and emotional learning  
**277** project, determined that students experience enhanced mood management when they learn specific ways to  
**278** handle their emotions and increase their usage of appropriate responses automatically (Cummings & Haggerty,  
**279** 1997). A caring and respectful school environment can promote a climate more conducive for learning and  
**280** achievement (Dodd, 2000). Therefore, it is essential that students learn at a young age the importance of  
**281** developing caring relationships with others, as this will enable them to flourish and prosper throughout their  
**282** lifetime. The Carnegie Commission has urged school administrators at every level; especially the elementary  
**283** level, to develop preventative programs that emphasize the importance of teaching students communication  
**284** and other pro-social skills that are necessary to interact with others appropriately. As a result of these skills  
**285** being implemented, there are fewer behavioral issues, and the school climate allows for students to attain higher  
**286** academic achievement, enhanced career readiness, as well as decreased dropout rates (Clark, 2003). Researchers  
**287** have found that creating classrooms that are respectful and collaborative in nature provide students with a sense  
**288** of responsibility to learn and help their peers to learn (Dodd, 2000).

**289 22 d) School Counselor Interventions: Helping Students De-  
290 velop Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Attributes**

**291** School counselors can implement the following interventions in order to help students develop their interpersonal  
**292** and intrapersonal skills:

**293** i. Infusing Responsibility School counselors are in the unique position to encourage students to take  
**294** responsibility for their actions, as well as work performance . Counselors need to emphasize the importance  
**295** for students to assume ownership of their academic responsibilities and personal behaviors to apply the values  
**296** of integrity and autonomy. Counselors can conduct classroom lessons addressing goal setting, self-advocacy,  
**297** and self-regulation . Further, counselors can also collaborate with teachers and encourage them to blog daily  
**298** and post their assignments online so if students are absent they are required to complete the assignment via  
**299** the Internet. Additionally, college readiness has predominantly focused on scheduling students for honors and  
**300** Advanced Placement courses and navigating the college application process. However, today counselors need to  
**301** focus on student development to provide students with access to different post-secondary resources in order to  
**302** take an active role in the college search and application process, as doing so helps to enhance self-efficacy and  
**303** empowerment . Further, due to the fact that counselors have such a large caseload, they could develop a system  
**304** of reminders to prompt students to return their college applications, as doing so enhances student self-regulation  
**305** and motivation .

**306** ii. Advisory Groups Counselors can assign students to advisory groups which meet regularly until graduation  
**307** in order to help students set goals and hold one another accountable for achieving these goals .

**308** Implementing peer lead support groups are very important as peers are heavily influenced by one another,  
**309** can relate to each other's issues and concerns, and can motivate one another to strive to their potential. Holding  
**310** advisory groups also helps to improve students' communication skills, as they prepare to facilitate group lead  
**311** conferences about their academic progress, discuss grades with parents and fellow group members, practice their  
**312** public speaking skills, assume leadership roles, and improve their problem solving skills. In these groups, students  
**313** learn to be self-advocates. Additionally, counselors can encourage teachers to provide two sets of grades; one that  
**314** is indicative of mastery of content and the other that reflects their personal work habits and behaviors. Counselors  
**315** can also work with teachers on helping them to develop assignments that are longer and more complex which  
**316** require group work and research to prepare them for post-secondary endeavors .

**317 23 iii. Building Communication Skills**

**318** The school counselor acts as a consultant and collaborator with teachers and plays an instrumental role in teaching  
**319** and modeling effective communication skills to both teachers and students (Dodd, 2000). According to Rinker  
**320** (2014), school counselors can encourage students to build their communication skills in order to be more effective  
**321** public speakers and more effective future employees. Effective communication is the foundation for building  
**322** open and trusting relationships, as well as enabling employers to complete tasks efficiently. Counselors have the  
**323** ability to teach students about the importance of active listening, paraphrasing, questioning, using reflection,  
**324** and clarification in their exchanges with others. Counselors can also teach students about the acronym RASA  
**325** in order to improve communication skills by motivating students to receive, appreciate, summarize, and ask

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326 questions during conversations, etc. (Rinker, 2014). Both in college and in the work place setting, students will  
327 need to learn how to actively listen and work collaboratively as part of a team.

## 328 **24 iv. Develop a Strong Personal Work Ethic**

329 In a national survey conducted in 2013, over 2000 hiring managers said that they looked for employees who possess  
330 a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, and dependability (Rinker, 2014). Counselors can work with students  
331 on the importance of completing all required assignments as well as enhancing their time management skills,  
332 by providing positive reinforcement and incentives for completing assignments in a timely fashion. Moreover,  
333 counselors can encourage students to pursue volunteer opportunities to learn about their career fields of interest  
334 and the responsibilities and tasks that are entailed. Additionally, counselors can offer classroom counseling lessons  
335 addressing the importance of maintaining a positive mindset; as doing so has shown to help people to achieve  
336 their goals and be successful (Rinker, 2014).

337 v

## 338 **25 . Develop Life Long Learning Skills**

339 In order for students to be successful in today's cutting edge society, they must become lifelong learners,  
340 be knowledgeable about other cultures, seek continued education and training, and cognizant of a myriad of  
341 topics (Rinker, 2014). Counselors can motivate students to tutor or mentor peers, since tutoring provides the  
342 opportunity to teach and when teaching, they are constantly learning themselves. Students can also attend free  
343 events at libraries, museums, colleges, or browse the Internet to learn more information about a variety of topics.

344 vi. Enhancing Parental Involvement According to Rinker (2014), parents play a crucial role in helping their  
345 children to develop soft skills. Parents can talk to their children about the ways in which possessing strong soft  
346 skills have helped them in their own careers. Parents can also encourage their children to communicate with them  
347 on a daily basis about their lives and school, and assign them household chores to foster responsible behavior  
348 which enhances the importance of a strong work ethic and dependability. Parents can also motivate children  
349 to be autonomous by encouraging them to individuate, pursue their goals and dreams, do things independently,  
350 and praise children for acting in an selfgoverning manner in order to become strong, driven and self-determining  
351 individuals.

352 vii. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) One of the most proactive strategies for defining,  
353 teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors is to create positive school climates (U.S. Office of Special  
354 Education Programs, 2015).

355 Positive behavior support is an application of behaviorally based systems used to enhance the capacity of  
356 schools and communities to design healthy environments that augment the link between evidence based practices  
357 and the environment in which learning occurs (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2015). School  
358 counselors can help to implement a continuum of positive behavior supports for all students both inside and  
359 outside of the classroom setting. In the past few years, school wide discipline has focused on using punitive  
360 punishment when students misbehave including being reprimanded, getting detention, losing privileges, being  
361 suspended or expelled from schools. Research has shown that using punishment when used inconsistently or  
362 without other positive strategies is ineffective (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008). Using modeling and reinforcing  
363 positive behaviors has shown to have more positive outcomes on student success. Positive behavioral intervention  
364 systems include identifying meaningful outcomes, establishing and investing in school wide systems, selecting and  
365 implementing evidence based practices, and collecting / implementing data in order to make decisions (Simonsen  
366 et al., 2008). Counselors can set behavioral expectations in school settings, including being safe, respectful  
367 and responsible. Counselors can then create posters highlighting the expectations and create lesson plans for  
368 classroom guidance, which reinforce each of these expectations. School counselors model the expected behavior,  
369 engage students, which enables them to practice the expectation, and allows counselors to assess the degree to  
370 which students have acquired the skills taught (Simonsen, 2008). It is paramount that students learn positive  
371 behaviors and that their positive behaviors are recognized and reinforced while in school, so once they graduate  
372 they are mindful of the importance of displaying appropriate behaviors in the work place. Counselors who  
373 utilize PBIS obtain ongoing data in order to make beneficial decisions, which support staff and student behavior.  
374 Counselors have the ability to create environments that are predictable, positive, safe, and consistent, which has  
375 been shown to help prepare students to be career ready (Simonsen et al., 2008).

376 viii. Modeling One of the most effective ways to teach soft skills is to model them. Counselors, teachers, and  
377 parents can work collaboratively to help students acquire these skills as early as possible. Students who see their  
378 counselors, parents and teachers demonstrating skills helps them to understand the value of them, and encourages  
379 students to adopt and integrate the skills into their own lives (LaFrance, 2009). Instructors or counselors who  
380 discuss a controversial issue with their students teach them about the importance of compromise and negotiation.  
381 Teachers and counselors can also teach students about the importance of optimism by encouraging them to find  
382 the positive aspect of a challenging situation (LaFrance, 2009). Students who learn soft skills at a young age tend  
383 to find work in their ideal career and experience healthier and happier personal and professional relationships  
384 (LaFrance, 2009).

## 29 CONCLUSION

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385 ix. Continuous Feedback Continuous feedback that is constructive in nature is an effective intervention that  
386 counselors can utilize in order to help students to enhance their soft skills (Murphy, Putter, & Johnson, 2014).  
387 Counselors can provide students with continuous positive feedback regarding their strengths, as well as skills that  
388 they can potentially improve in order to be more academically successful and career ready.

## 389 26 II.

## 390 27 Discussion

391 This manuscript highlights the importance for school counselors to assist students in developing and strengthening  
392 their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in order to enhance their career success. The article addresses the  
393 instrumental role that soft skills and specific character traits such as a growth mindset play in students' future  
394 work place achievements. By acquiring the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, including leadership, effective  
395 communication, listening, resilience, self-management, self-regulation, work ethic, perseverance, integrity,  
396 accountability, time management, stress management, creativity, zest, gratitude, and optimism, students will have  
397 distinct advantages in their career journey and ultimate workplace accomplishments. According to employers,  
398 soft skills even more so than technical 'hard' skills, have been shown to have a profound impact on employee  
399 workplace performance. Through fostering and promoting student soft skills, school counselors are in the unique  
400 position to recognize student attributes, encourage them to build upon their strengths, identify skills and traits  
401 that need to be enhanced, and implement interventions to help students augment these skills, so that they have  
402 the opportunity to reach their potential and thrive in a globally competitive society after high school graduation  
403 or their post-secondary education.

## 404 28 III. Suggestions for Future Research

405 There are several suggestions for future research to further substantiate the stipulation that school counselors  
406 help students advance their soft skills in order to be more fruitful in the workforce. Although research has shown  
407 that soft skills play a critical role in workplace success (Kamenetz, 2015), it would be advantageous for researchers  
408 to determine which specific soft skills have the greatest impact on career readiness and work performance.

409 Further, additional research needs to be conducted in order to assess for the extent to which school counselors  
410 are currently teaching and incorporating soft skills into their comprehensive counseling programs. Thus, in the  
411 future it would be beneficial to employ a national survey to address the frequency and degree to which counselors  
412 currently teach soft skills in order to determine the extent to which soft skills are being taught, as well as  
413 raise counselor awareness about the importance of integrating soft skills into the curriculum of school counseling  
414 programs.

415 Moreover, research needs to be conducted in order to assess the extent to which graduation rates and level of  
416 career readiness amongst students differs amongst schools that utilize positive behavioral intervention and support  
417 systems (PBIS) in comparison to those schools who do not utilize these school wide interventions. If so, more  
418 schools may be motivated to implement positive behavioral intervention support systems, if it is determined that  
419 it leads to decreased behavioral referrals, increased student engagement, improved graduation rates and career  
420 readiness, and enriched overall school climate.

421 Additionally, it would be helpful for research to be conducted to determine additional strategies school  
422 counselors can use to enhance students' leadership, communication, self-regulation, and motivational skills  
423 to ensure that they possess the necessary intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to be effective students and  
424 employees.

425 Lastly, it would be efficacious for researchers to evaluate the degree to which excessive parental involvement  
426 promotes or impedes upon students' work ethic, responsibility, and autonomy as doing so will raise awareness  
427 about the impact that parental involvement has on the strengthening or weakening of students' soft skills, as well  
428 as their ability to demonstrate independence, accountability, and drive.

429 IV.

## 430 29 Conclusion

431 In addition to the myriad of duties that school counselors are accountable, teaching, instilling, modeling, and  
432 reinforcing soft skills is critical for counselors' work with students in order to ensure that their students are  
433 prepared for the competitive 21 st century workforce. Employers have indicated that they seek employees who  
434 possess strong soft skills including leadership, effective communication, responsibility, optimism, collaborative,  
435 and those who can problem solve efficiently, as these traits have been found to equate to professional success.  
436 Therefore, in addition to working with teachers, administrators, and parents to ensure consistency and to  
437 reinforce soft skills taught, school counselors need to not only work with students to help them sharpen their  
438 academic and technical prowess, but essentially need to further assist students in developing and mastering non-  
439 cognitive intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, as these essential skills are not solely innate and can be taught,  
440 rehearsed, and mastered via practice. School counselors need to ensure that the building and development of  
441 soft skills; specifically leadership, communication, listening collaboration, time management, accountability, work

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442 ethic, optimism, and problem solving are assimilated into counseling programs in order to help all students be  
443 competitive and highly sought job candidates in our demanding and dynamic society.



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