

Transitions: Life Skills for Personal Success Overview

Educators find themselves standing at a historic crossroads that will dramatically affect the lives of their students. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates are focusing major efforts to raise Math and Reading scores, even to the point that the majority of a student's curriculum is only Math and Reading, at the expense of all other curricular disciplines.

At the very same time, Corporate America is telling education that we are not preparing our students for the workforce. This is not a new message. In fact, the SCANS Commission that was ordered by the Secretary of Education under the first President George Bush released a report in 1991 that described the profound gap between what students were learning at school and what they needed to be successful in the workplace.

The report stated that the Basic Skills (The 3 R's, plus listening and speaking) were important. These are the very skills that traditional education has focused on for the past 100 years. NCLB mandates success in these areas of curriculum and it reinforces compelling reasons why we will continue to focus on examining the relationship between teachers and their students and resulting student achievement.

However, the Commission's recommendations that addressed thinking skills, communication, interpersonal skills and attitudes have been generally ignored by education. Corporate America continues to loudly cry that our youth are either incapable of getting jobs or are unable to retain jobs because they lack these essential skills and behaviors. The skills are known by a variety of names including "Soft Skills" or "21st Century Skills".

Educators are well prepared to teach Basic Skills and possess a variety of tools and resources that assist them in teaching core subject matter including textbooks, interactive computer assisted instruction, and a wide variety of supplemental resources. However, we further recognize that simply spending more time and effort using traditional educational tools and techniques developed over a century ago is not going to adequately meet our children's needs! Passing the Hi-stakes test is only an indicator of success, the goal is to help each student realize their full potential as a viable and productive citizen.

We also believe the reason that educators fail to address the critical "soft skills" is because they lack confidence in what to teach and lack necessary resources facilitating how to teach it.

In 2002, the Chicago Public School System (CPS) recognized that although their High Stakes test results were improving, their graduates were still struggling to find employment. They also concluded that those graduates that found employment were having difficulty retaining their jobs. They hired ASCL, All Students Can Learn, to write courseware that would address the "soft-skills" and they piloted the program at various CPS Schools over the past several years with great success.

The "Transitions" program consists of five comprehensive modules:

- Communication
- Interpersonal
- On the Job
- Career Preparation
- Self Improvement

The first three modules (Communication, Interpersonal, and On the Job) relate specifically to Work Place Competencies defined by SCANS. The last two modules (Career Preparation and Self Improvement) identify and enhance life long learning skills necessary in a student's or employee's career.

Education took a major step forward during the identification process of SCANS. Taking these skills, that have been identified by employers, and transitioning them into a relevant curriculum for instructors has been a very difficult task throughout the years. The "Transitions" curriculum was specifically designed for educators who have limited preparation time and need a curriculum that covers Workplace Competencies thoroughly. In addition, "Transitions" has activities for all types of learners, because we know each of us learn differently, especially when it comes to soft skills training.

At the foundation of employability skills is the social interaction of individuals in a work environment. For this reason, the "Transitions" curriculum utilizes group-based experiential lessons that are rooted in practical-real life scenarios, rather than attempting to teach these interactive social skills with extensive topical reading and multiple choice testing. "Transitions: Life Skills for Personal Success" incorporates multiple modalities of learning and we are confident that this curriculum will better prepare your students or employees with essential 21st century skills. We invite you to participate on our free demo site at <http://transitions.ascl.info> and we encourage you to contact our helpful staff for your school or organization's soft skill needs.