



Transferable Skills

Helping Students Identify, Develop, and Utilize Their (not so) Soft Skills

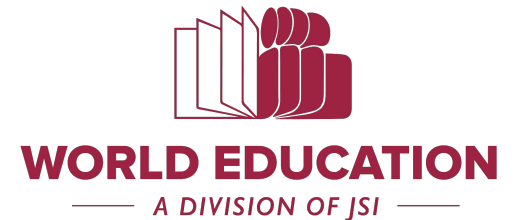
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Cynthia Peters

Editor, *The Change Agent*

World Education

(with thanks to Jen Denton at Essential Education)





the Change Agent

An Adult Education Magazine for Social Justice

Go to: <https://changeagent.nelrc.org/>

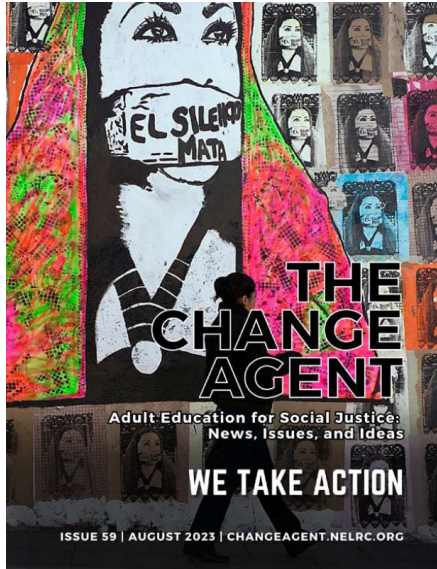
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Our current series on transferable skills



Issue 59
We Take Action



Issue 60
We Adapt & Manage



Issue 61
We Use Our Minds

Features students writing about their use of transferable skills at home, at work, and in the community.

Learning Goals & Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Explain why it is important for students to be able to identify and amplify their transferable skills.
2. Identify and use resources to help students discover and celebrate those skills.
3. Access adaptable materials to share with students.





What are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are ***portable*** -- can be used in a variety of roles or occupations.

They are:

- life skills
- abundant in the non-traditional classroom
- marketable in college and work
- power skills!

Why we say they are “not-so-soft” skills?

Though commonly used, we avoid the term soft skills because it trivializes and oversimplifies the rigor, depth, and centrality of these skills, which should not be reduced solely to workplace punctuality and etiquette.

[WorldEd, Why Personal and Workplace Skills Matter](#)





A Note About Equity

The perceived lack of “soft skills” is too often used against people of color to rationalize discrimination and bias in hiring practices. Further, workers who speak out against unacceptable and exploitative working conditions may be told they simply lack teamwork, communication, and flexibility skills, because they won’t go along with the status quo.

Wanted: Mom with experience as a...

banker, censor, chauffeur, cheerleader, chief justice, chore delegator, clock keeper, coach, concierge, confidant, crossing guard, curfew warden, diplomat, disc jockey, entertainer, expectation manager, fashion stylist, hairdresser, homework advisor, housekeeper, hygiene consultant, internet safety monitor, inventory manager, juggler, loan officer, lost and found attendant, magician, nurse, paramedic, party planner, peacekeeper, personal assistant, purchasing agent, recreation director, referee, reference librarian, relationship specialist, repair person, shipping and receiving agent, teacher, transportation coordinator, travel agent, waitress, zookeeper.



The Value of Mom's Work?

In a 2021 survey of 19,000 moms, salary.com estimated the value of a mother's work by tracking real-time market prices of all the jobs that moms perform. The result? \$184,820

Bringing it home, what are some of the “soft” skills required of an adult educator?



Parenting Skills are Work Skills

Help parents unpack their transferable skills.

This [Change Agent packet](#) includes:

- 4 student-written stories
- 2 practical worksheets

Suddenly, We Are Teachers

Fabiola Santos

BEFORE YOU READ: Tell a story (from your own experience or not) about supporting school-age children during the pandemic.

A New Full-Time Job

I am a parent of three children in grades three, five, and six. The remote school was hard for my family. We had to teach our children, and we were not prepared for it. It takes a lot of time to watch children while they are in school at home. It was a full-time job!

Tablets, the Internet, and Zoom

Each child needed their own tablet for online school. At first, we didn't have any tablets. The kids had to use my phone. But it was only one phone for three kids. The city started providing tablets to families. I filled out an application, and the city sent me three tablets.

It was good for each child to have their own tablet. However, there were other problems. I live in a basement apartment where the internet is not strong. I was sometimes running from child to child when they lost internet access.

There were other challenges too. It was hard for my son to focus on his tablet. He got distracted. I spent a lot of time trying to keep him focused on school. The little one wanted to learn her lessons, but she needed a lot of help. Fortunately, my oldest daughter didn't need much help. She is a very responsible. But sometimes, she missed school because she couldn't get on to Zoom. She felt upset. I tried to help her. I called the teacher.

Helping Other Families

Many parents had to work. Many parents did not know about how to use tablets or how to connect to the internet. They needed to buy internet access. It was even harder if they could not speak English. I tried to help them. I helped them apply



for tablets. I was a volunteer in my kids' school, so many parents knew me.

The worst thing about remote school is that, in my opinion, the children don't learn as much as they do in regular school. As a parent, I believe school is important for my children and for all the children in our community. I worked hard to make sure the children kept getting their education during the year of the pandemic.

AFTER YOU READ: Fabiola says that parenting three kids at home in remote school was a full-time job. Write a job description for someone in this role. Draw from her experience and your own if you like.

Fabiola Santos is from Mexico. She is an ESOL student at We Make the Road/New York in New York City.

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Activity:

1. Read this article.
2. Identify key transferable skills.
3. Note the activity at the end:
Fabiola says that parenting three kids at home in remote school was a fulltime job. Write a job description for someone in this role. Draw from her experience and your own if you like.

Article is available in this [Change Agent packet](#) or [Issue 53](#), p. 28.

What Can You Do If You Are Not a Citizen?

Dieuseul Camille



BEFORE YOU READ: What do you see in the picture above? What does it mean to “make things happen”? How do you make things happen?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you might think that you can’t participate in a U.S. election. Actually, you can! How?

There are various ways to get involved. You can engage in debates and discussions. You can set up little meetings with friends and talk about the issues that are important to you. You can set up meetings at school, at church, or at work.

Also, you can try to motivate your friends who are U.S. citizens to vote. At my job, I have many friends who can vote, so I will organize a meeting with them to convince them to vote for candidates that I think will do a good job. I will

Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs

Have a Criminal Record? You Can Still Find a Pathway to a Career

Lashon Amado

For those labeled as “criminals,” the path to success can seem impossible. Having a criminal record carries a stigma and there are other barriers that make it hard for ex-offenders to pursue the career of their dreams.

How do I know? I’ve been there. Growing up in Brockton, I was a product of my environment. I had adopted the street mentality and became a rebel in society. I have been stabbed, locked up, and sold drugs to survive in the streets. It was a vicious cycle that I realized had to be broken.

I discovered YouthBuild, a national organization that helps young people gain the skills and education they need to leave street life. Through the YouthBuild chapter in Brockton, I got my GED, and shortly after I gained some college credits. I was trying to make a change in my life, but my criminal background was a huge barrier. I was



In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16 to 24 work full-time for 6 to 24 months toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their communities. Photo



being turned down left and right by potential employers even after successfully passing the interview process. Once employers found out that I had a criminal record, they essentially slammed the door in my face.

Although the path to a career is more difficult for ex-offenders, it is still possible. I have found that there are three important steps you can take to build your credibility within your community and with employers: Education, Volunteer Services, and Discipline and Honesty.

Education

They can take away your freedom, in most cases temporarily, but they can never take away your education. Education has a huge impact on your ability to succeed. Most importantly, it gives you the skills you need to get a good job. Furthermore, research shows that as offenders get more education, their chance of re-offending decreases. Employers will see from your educational background that you are indeed a hard worker; they might be less judgmental of your criminal record and more likely to give you a chance.

Volunteering

Volunteering is another method to gain transferable skills and build credibility. The job market is tough even for those who do not have criminal histories. Even entry-level jobs require previous experience. The best way to get your foot in the door is to do some volunteer work in the community. Volunteering not only provides you with an opportunity to gain experience, it highlights your character. It shows that you are headed in the right direction, and it will appeal to employers.

Another packet From [Issue #53 “Extras”](#)

“Volunteering Can Help Your Career” includes:

- 5 articles
- A checklist of types of activities learners might do



Why Teach Transferable Skills?

Of displaced workers...

- 57% (20.8 million) can't identify their transferable skills with a high degree of confidence.
- 58% (21.1 million) aren't sure how to include transferable skills on their resume.
- 34% (12.4 million) can't provide good examples of how their skills would apply to another job.

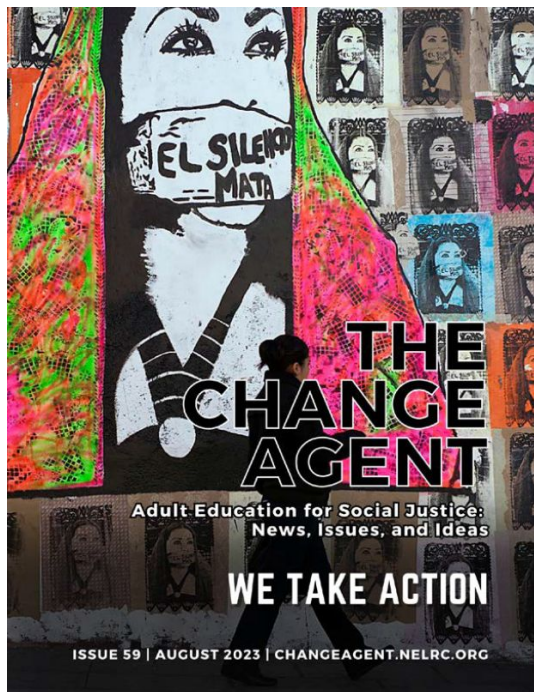


Why Teach Transferable Skills?

Adult learners have a lot of them! So this is a strengths-based approach.

- Use this [Google doc](#). (*Make a copy so you own it; then share with students.*)
- Or this [fillable PDF](#) with your students:
Change Agent Issue #55 ([pg. 27](#))

Remember: A whole series on transferable skills!



[Issue 59](#)
We Take Action



[Issue 60](#)
We Adapt & Manage



[Issue 61](#)
We Use Our Minds



Let's look together at **LEADERSHIP & INITIATIVE**

You could ask your students:

“Tell me about a time when you noticed a problem (large or small) that needed to be solved and took the lead on solving it.”

My Big Gift

Issue 59, p. 3

PDF available [here](#) and audio available [here](#).

In breakout rooms (or together), read and discuss.



We Take Action

My Big Gift

Gabriela Reyes



BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Describe a time you advocated for your child. What did you do?
2. Discuss the word *advocate*. Try using it in several sentences.

Something Was Not Right

This story is about my young son and me. He is my third child and my only son. When my son was born, he needed to stay in the hospital for a couple of days because he would not eat. That was not a good sign. During his first two years, he learned to eat and crawl the same as his sisters. But I noticed he did not speak. That was the first *red flag*. I knew something was not right with him.

When he started to walk, he fell a lot and that was the *second red flag*. His *development* wasn't right, and it was time to look for help from a specialist. In Ciudad Juarez, where we lived, there were only two *pediatric neurologists*, and the waiting list was very long.

A Diagnosis

Finally, we got an appointment with a doctor, and the *diagnosis* was *developmental delay*. My son needed speech therapy and more tests. We didn't have insurance for my son, and we needed to

God, the universe, or anyone for an answer. I needed help to figure out how to move forward. After some time, I found the answer. It was a school called CAM in Mexico City. It is a special school for students with learning *disabilities*. I met a wonderful teacher. Her name is Maritza. She taught me *strategies* and exercises to *stimulate* all the senses in my son's body and brain. It was hard work for me because I took him to therapy Monday through Friday, and I continued going to my job every day.

Joy in the Journey

This was the beginning of learning about Special Education. It is wonderful to learn about my son's condition. When I understand what he needs, then I can do more for him. It has been a beautiful journey for me and my family. I walk with other people that are going through the same thing, and we support each other. It is complicated, but there has been a lot of joy in this journey.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the article, how did Gabriela advocate for her son?
2. Note the vocabulary words in *bold italics*. If you're not sure what they mean, use context

How do we teach **LEADERSHIP** & **INITIATIVE** in the classroom?

- Coach students to advocate for themselves in the classroom; note if they are not meeting their goals; say what they need help with
- Offer peer mentoring or other classroom-based leadership opportunities
- Offer student council or other program-based leadership body





Let's look together at **COMMUNICATION**

You could ask your students:

“Tell me about a time when you had to communicate about something at work, at home, in the community, or at your place of worship?”

Reaching Out to Solve a Problem

Issue 59, pp. 18-19



We Take Action



Reaching Out to Solve a Problem

A Healthcare Center in Haiti Addresses Sexual Violence

Adesky Moise

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What does it mean to “reach out”? Share some times in your life when you have had to reach out to others to solve a problem.
2. Note that “to reach out” is a verb. The noun is “outreach.” Try using both the verb and the noun in sentences.

We Faced a Big Problem

Life is very challenging. Making life better for yourself and others helps you feel useful and alive. My community in Haiti faced a big problem with sexual violence. I worked in a healthcare center, and we decided to take action on this problem.

We Reached Out to the Community

Trying to solve this problem was very complicated, but it was worth trying. We understood that to be successful, we would need the community groups to support us. We invited the community groups to a series of meetings. Some meetings were for high-risk groups, such as young people, girls and boys ages 14 to 25. Other meetings were for parents so they could understand the problem. In addition, we reached out to community leaders: pastors, politicians, leaders of popular organizations, and lawyers.



Clinic workers conduct outreach to youth. Photo by Cara McCarthy from pixnio.com.

We Asked People to Share their Stories

One of the most important activities we did was to sponsor a writing competition about

How do we teach **COMMUNICATION** in the classroom?

- Class discussions and presentations
- Offer sentence starters for communication
- Essay prep
- Student-teacher correspondence
- Online forums or chat rooms



Let's look together at **TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION**

You could ask your students:

“Tell me about a time when you worked as part of a team or had to collaborate with others to get something done.”



My Supporters Help Me Reach My Goals

[Issue 59](#), pp. 26-27



We Take Action



My Supporters Help Me Reach My Goals

Lourdes Gloribel Perez Andrade

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Do you have supporters in your life? How have they helped you reach your goals?
2. ICE stands for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The job of ICE employees is to enforce immigration law. Share what you know about ICE.
3. What does *habit* mean? Discuss a *habit* you are trying to change. What would help you make the change?

Many Challenges

When I was 14, I came to North Carolina from El Salvador. Later, my two children were born in this country. When I was 23, my son was 8, and my daughter was 6, a police officer stopped me because my headlights were broken. The police took me to the police station and fingerprinted me. They found out that ICE was looking for me because I missed a court date in 2011. ICE picked me up and took me to a detention center in Louisiana. I called my mom, who lived with me,



my family in El Salvador, and save money for a house. Eventually, I want to have a college degree.

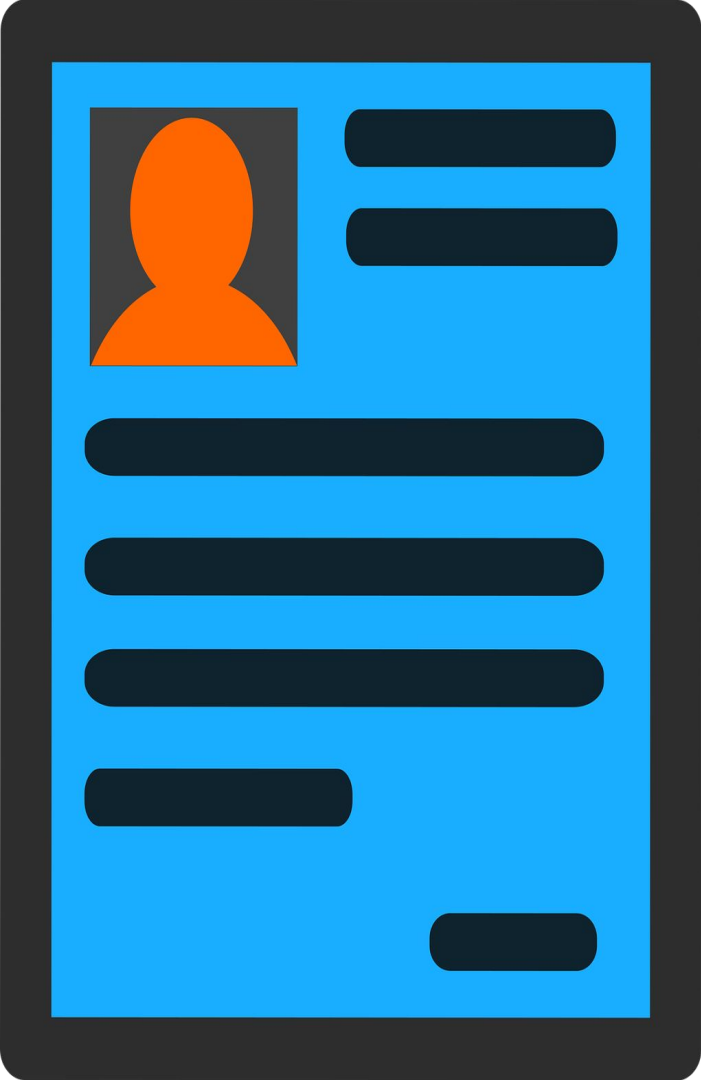
Many People Help Me

I get support from my tutors, family, and friends. My most important American friend and supporter is a teacher at my daughter's school. She supports me by helping my kids do their



How do we teach **TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION** in the classroom?

- Group projects; include a rubric so students can see what skills are explicitly teamwork and collaboration
- Students collaborate to create above rubric!
- Student-teacher progress reviews/ goal setting
- Giving feedback to the teacher and/or the program



But how do you add transferable skills to your resume?

- Analyze the job description. Note what skills align with your transferable skills.
- Use the same keywords and phrases as in the job posting to avoid rejection by Applicant Tracking Systems.
- List your major achievements or improvements on the job that help you exemplify your transferable skills

Give examples and context.

Don't just list the skills.



References & Resources

Hiring for Attitude Over Experience - Skye Schooley, Business.com

Why Personal and Workplace Skills Matter - WorldEd

Soft Skills Are Not So Soft - Prof.Dr. Ugur Zel

Parenting Skills Are Work Skills - Change Agent

Transferable Skills Are a Life-Raft - Chris Westfall, Forbes

<https://enhancv.com/resume-skills/transferable/>

Personal Workplace Skills Success Library - WorldEd

Essential Education Professional Development Series

Invite your students to write for *The Change Agent*.

- A new [Call for Articles](#) is now available.
- Deadline is May 2, 2024.
- Students whose pieces are accepted receive a \$50 gift card.



Thank you!



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With thanks to...

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