



Skills Builder *Award*

Guide for Schools and
Colleges 2020-21



Contents

- Introduction & Overview
- The Skills Builder Approach
- The Skills Builder Principles
 - Principle 1: Keep it simple
 - Principle 2: Start early, keep going
 - Principle 3: Measure it
 - Principle 4: Focus tightly
 - Principle 5: Keep practising
 - Principle 6: Bring it to life
- The Skills Builder Award
- Case Studies
 - Pioneer House High School (Special School)
 - Great Western Academy (Secondary School)
 - Windy Arbor Primary School
 - Hornsey School for Girls (Secondary School)
 - William Tyndale Primary School
- Other Resources
- Appendix: Evidence for the Gold Award

Introduction & Overview

The Skills Builder Partnership works with schools and colleges to ensure that every child and young person builds the essential skills that they need to succeed.

Over the last ten years, we have seen some incredible examples of schools and colleges who have ensured that building essential skills becomes a normal part of a good education. The Skills Builder Award works to recognise this sort of excellent practice. This Guide is designed to explain how the Award works, the principles that it is built on, and some examples of great practice to learn from.

The Skills Builder Award is achieved by schools and colleges who are demonstrating best practice through the embedding of the Skills Builder Principles. These six principles are informed by both the theory and evidence for what works in building skills, and confirmed by the practical experience of hundreds of schools and colleges over a decade. They are:



Keep it simple



Start young, keep going



Measure it



Focus tightly



Keep practising



Bring it to life

Together, these principles help to structure a comprehensive, effective approach to ensuring that every learner is able to build their essential skills to a high level during their time in education.

There are three levels of Skills Builder Award:



Skills Builder
Bronze Award

For those making a commitment to high-quality essential skills education.



Skills Builder
Silver Award

For those building on their commitment to high-quality essential skills education.



Skills Builder
Gold Award

For those modelling best practice in high-quality essential skills education.

Decisions about Skills Builder Awards are guided by the *Skills Builder Principles Matrix*. This rubric provides a framework against which schools and colleges can reflect on their practice in this area.

Along with information about the Skills Builder Principles, and how they can be put into practice, this Award Guide include case studies of five state schools and colleges, and how they put those principles into practice. For each school we have highlighted examples of good practice in relation to each of the Principles. We hope these case studies will inspire and inform leaders and teachers of other schools and colleges, as they work towards their own Awards.

Tom Ravenscroft
Founder & CEO, Skills Builder Partnership

The Skills Builder Approach

The Skills Builder Partnership was set up by a team of teachers in 2009, with a goal to ensure that one day, every child and young person would build the essential skills to succeed.

The challenge

There is a real challenge that young people are not getting the opportunities they need to build the essential skills that they need in order to thrive in the wider world. We see this framed in three broad challenges:

- *Learning in the classroom:* Often children and young people struggle to organise their work, articulate their ideas or work with others in a productive way.
- *Thriving in further or higher education:* These institutions often reflect that their students struggle without the additional support structures that schools put around them.
- *Successful transitions in the working world:* Employers frequently call for a greater focus on broad transferable skills that support employability.

The Essential Skills

Although the language and terminology in this area can often be confusing, over the last five years we have carried out a comprehensive set of reviews of essential skills. We define *essential skills* as 'those highly transferable skills that almost everyone needs to do almost every job' and which in turn support the application of knowledge and technical skills.

We found that although there is great variation in the language, there are four broad areas that fulfil that definition: communication skills, self-management skills, interpersonal skills, and creative problem solving. We balance nuance and pragmatism to focus on eight essential skills, with a pair of skills focused on each of those four broad themes. This gives us:



There is no shortage of people who care about these skills. As one example, research from the Sutton Trust found that 97% of teachers thought that these essential skills were as important as academic achievements for their students' long-term success. The challenge is that there is no common language or shared outcomes to align our efforts – or to give educators the confidence in building them effectively.

The Skills Builder Framework

Over the last decade we have focused on working closely with primary, secondary and special schools, drawing on the expertise of our team of outstanding teachers. In doing so, we developed the Skills Builder Framework. This Framework stops these essential skills being hazy, and instead breaks them down into 15 teachable, assessable steps.



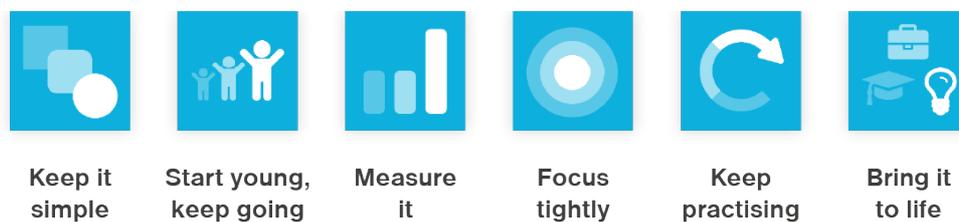
For example, Teamwork includes taking it in turns for the youngest students, then taking responsibility for tasks, decision-making approaches, conflict resolution, evaluating team members' strengths and weaknesses, and making suggestions to improve team performance.

Broken down in this way, it becomes possible to build essential skills effectively.

The Skills Builder Principles

If the Skills Builder Framework gives the 'what' when it comes to building essential skills, the Principles give the 'how'. They have been developed over a decade of research and practical application, and provide a consistent guide to what success looks like.

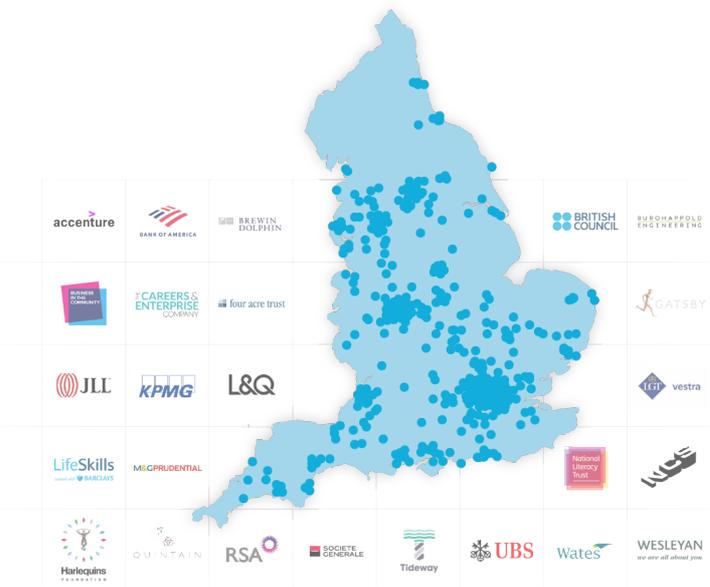
The Principles are used by schools and colleges as a guide to what an excellent and effective approach to building essential skills look like. The following section of the guides expand on these further, but briefly they are:



The Skills Builder Partnership

The Partnership brings together educators, employers and impact organisations around a collective mission to ensure that one day, everyone builds the essential skills to thrive. All of the 700+ organisations in the Partnership are committed to using the same language and shared outcomes that the Skills Builder Framework provides, and working collectively to help everyone build them.

This means that for any individual student, they are getting a joined-up approach to skills.





The Skills Builder Principles

In the last decade, we have had the privilege of working with thousands of educators across primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and colleges. Despite the huge diversity of these organisations, we have found remarkable consistency in what they do well.

In honing these Principles over the years, we have gone back and forth between the theoretical backdrop to these skills, and what we have seen and researched ourselves on the ground. If you want to dig into the background to these Principles, there are some additional resources and research reports referenced in the back of this Guide.

Briefly, schools and colleges who are building essential skills effectively are following six Principles to:



Keep it simple: They focus on a simple, consistent set of essential skills covering interpersonal skills, self-management skills, communication skills, and creative problem-solving. They make these skills as tangible and objective as possible.



Start early and keep going: They see these skills as supporting learning and students' wider development, and as something to be sustained rather than being built as a quick-fix at the point of entering employment.



Measure it: They take care to really understand the existing strengths and development needs of their students in relation to essential skills. They also track progress over time, to keep every student on track for success.



Focus tightly: They use their prior understanding of students' essential skills to focus on the next steps. This includes explicit and direct instruction on essential skills – not just hoping that they get picked up along the way.



Keep practising: They reinforce these essential skills in other parts of the curriculum and beyond it, including by linking up with other impact organisations with programmes that can support their learners.



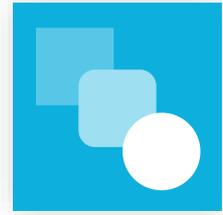
Bring it to life: They make the essential skills real by bringing the working world into the classroom, and showing learners how these skills are useful across their lives. This boosts their transferability beyond education.

The following pages explore how each of these principles can be brought to life in your school or college. Each pair of pages cover:

- What the principle is
- What the traps are to avoid
- What we should be aiming for
- How this principle is reflected in the Principles Matrix at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels
- Some reflection questions to think about

They are complemented by the case studies later on in the Guide.

Principle 1: Keep it simple



The Principle

Schools and colleges that are effective in ensuring progression in essential skills focus on a limited number of teachable skills. They express these skills in a very tangible way and are consistent in their use.

The trap

The reason why this principle is important is because this is an area that can easily become confusing: there is so much variation in language and terminology. An individual might use terms like teamwork and collaboration interchangeably, but this can quickly become confusing to a child or young person. It means that they cannot build a clear, consistent mental map of what their skills look like.

We also need to avoid the risk of abstraction – that is, trying to work on or too readily claim progress against, broad student dispositions like “confidence” or terms that are ill-defined like “charismatic communication”.

What we should be aiming for

The most important thing is to try to make the language around the essential skills as simple and consistent as possible. This is essential because we all need to have a shared mental map of what building the essential skills looks like – and that includes teachers, parents, and the students themselves. The essential skills should be a consistent thread through a student’s learning – but they will not be able to follow that thread if the way it is described keeps changing.

The other part of keeping it simple is to focus on skills at their most tangible. That’s why in the Skills Builder Framework we avoided using intangible concepts like confidence or resilience. We set ourselves the challenge that if we would not be able to objectively assess whether a student had achieved a particular step then the step was not defined with enough clarity.

Putting it into practice

Schools and colleges who are putting this into use effectively often do some of the following things:

- *Build awareness of the essential skills:* For example, by having them up on the walls of school hallways and in classrooms and by training staff on how to define and to build them.
- *Ensure students understand:* They introduce students to the Skills Builder Framework as a consistent way of thinking about how the skills are built, step by step.
- *Use the language consistently:* Avoid introducing other language and terminology around essential skills.
- *Recognise the value of essential skills:* They demonstrate that achievement in the essential skills is valued alongside academic achievement. For example, by updating parents and carers on their children’s progress in reports or update meetings or through other awards.

The Skills Builder Award descriptors

Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
The language of essential skills is used in some aspects of school or college life and among some members of the community, including: students, teachers and leaders. Some events such as assemblies also begin to reference the essential skills.	Development of essential skills forms part of strategic planning and policy development, with the result that the language of essential skills is used across many areas of school or college life and among many members of the community. Assemblies and other events often reference the skills.	The essential skills are embedded within teaching and learning policies and curriculum plans across the school or college with the result that the language of essential skills is used extensively across all areas of school or college life and among all members of its community. Assemblies, staff meetings, parent meetings and other events regularly reference the skills.
Some teachers recognise and reward student effort and achievement in relation to essential skills.	A majority of teachers recognise and reward student effort and achievement in relation to essential skills.	The school or college's policy and approach to rewarding and recognising effort and achievement reflects and builds essential skills. All teachers follow this.
Some classrooms and other spaces where the essential skills are taught have visual cues and reminders of the skills (such as posters) on display.	Many classrooms and other spaces have visual cues and reminders of the skills (such as posters) on display.	Most or all classrooms and other spaces have visual cues and reminders of the skills (such as posters) on display.

Some reflection questions to think about

- Does everyone know which essential skills you focus on in your school or college?
- Do all staff and students use a consistent language when referring to the skills?
- Do all staff receive training and support on these skills?

Principle 2: Start early, keep going



The Principle

Schools and colleges that are excelling in this area are introducing essential skills from the youngest students and working with them throughout their education – setting them up to learn effectively and then to be successful thereafter.

The trap

There are three traps that we see schools and colleges sometimes fall into when it comes to this principle:

- In some cases they link essential skills too closely with employability – and so think about these skills as being only relevant when students are close to leaving education. In these cases, they sometimes introduce essential skills teaching too late.
- In other cases, essential skills are seen as being foundational – that they are relevant to children to get them started in their learning, but after that they can be left.
- Or, finally, they are seen as a nice idea, but are seen as a lower priority than examination success, and so are squeezed out as soon as exams come into view.

What we should be aiming for

Schools and colleges that are effectively building their students skills have another thing in common: they see these essential skills as being important all the way through education, and at all ages. They do not fall into the trap of assuming that essential skills are only important for employability – instead they see them as being key enablers of learning throughout childhood too.

This intuitively makes a lot of sense: we know that students who can listen effectively and articulate their ideas will get more out of class, and be able to share more too. Similarly, students who can set their own goals and plans are better able to take ownership of their own progress and take responsibility for achieving their educational goals. The ability to think critically and to problem solve also helps to explore, process and join up different concepts.

It's also important to start young because we see differences in students' essential skills open up early. There is often a real contrast on the first days of school between those students who can introduce themselves to others, cope with new routines, and form friendships quickly and those who struggle. Starting early helps to address those imbalances.

At the same time, it is important to keep going. The essential skills are complex. Against the Skills Builder Framework we anticipate that most students will get to between Steps 8-12 during their time in school – so there is still plenty more to learn to really master those skills.

The Skills Builder Framework supports schools and colleges to create an appropriate structured learning programme because the different steps can be adopted as learning outcomes to provide a sequenced programme over many years.

Putting it into practice

Schools and colleges who are doing this effectively are doing some of the following things:

- They talk about the long-term picture of where they want their students to get to in terms of their essential skills, creating a shared sense of aspiration and intention.
- They might then break this down into what they want students to be able to do at each age, using the Skills Builder Framework as a way of having clear statements to work towards. An important part of this is to think about what children and young people in the school need to do at different ages in order to really access learning and thrive in their wider lives.
- They set the expectation with teachers, students, parents and carers that the development of these essential skills is a goal of the education system.

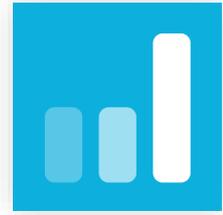
The Skills Builder Award descriptors

Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
Some year groups or classes have regular opportunities for the learning and practising of essential skills.	Most year groups or classes have regular and planned opportunities for the learning and practising of essential skills.	All year groups and classes have regular and planned opportunities for the learning and practising of essential skills.

Some reflection questions to think about:

- Do you think about these skills for all the students you work with?
- Could you introduce these skills earlier on?
- Are there opportunities for students to build the skills further as they grow up?

Principle 3: Measure it



The Principle

Leading schools and colleges bring rigour to the essential skills through consistent measurement and formative assessment.

The trap

There are several traps we see school systems fall into when it comes to measuring essential skills:

- Sometimes it is assumed that these skills are too difficult to measure, and so their measurement is ignored.
- On occasion, schools go too far the other way, and try to introduce an examination method to measuring essential skills.
- Other times, schools assume that those students who are the most amenable, easy to teach, or talkative must be the highest performing in their essential skills. In fact, a closer, more objective assessment of their essential skills might reveal a very different picture.

What we should be aiming for:

It is impossible to see progression without a clear understanding of where an individual started from and then where they got to. In this sense, measurement is critical.

Critically, this is absolutely not saying that we need any sort of examination in essential skills. There are other ways that can be effective in assessing essential skills that help to provide the insights that we need to ensure progression:

- *Individual assessment by a teacher:* The most intensive option is for a teacher to make an assessment of each student individually, reviewing the steps they are secure on, and what they need to be able to do next. This gives the most detailed view, but is quite time-intensive and needs a good level of understanding of each individual.
- *Group-level assessment by a teacher:* In a classroom setting, it often works well for a teacher to reflect on the skills of their group as a whole: what proportion of the students have achieved each step. This takes much less time, and gives insights into the needs of the class as a whole.
- *Individual self- or peer-assessment:* A further option is that individual students can self-assess their own skills, or potentially work with a peer or with a parent or mentor to complete the individual assessment themselves. This works best with older students, although it can work with younger ones if they have a lot of support.

In this way, teachers and students can generate an insight into which steps have already been achieved on the Skills Builder Framework, and what therefore should be the next focus.

Putting it into practice

At a school or college level it can be challenging to introduce a new type of assessment. We find that those who are doing this well take a thoughtful approach to measuring essential skills:

- *Focus on how the data can be used:* The assessment is only worthwhile if it is actually used. This means that teachers have to have some training to understand the Skills Builder Framework and why progress against it matters for their students.
- *Lowering the stakes:* There is more teacher judgement needed in some of these assessments – they cannot be traditional examinations – so it is important not to make clear that this is a low-stakes, formative assessment. It should be used to help the teacher plan learning, not to make a judgement of them or their class.
- *Repeating:* As a formative tool, it is important that this assessment is not just completed once. As teachers return to it, they will become more confident, and will be able to see progress.

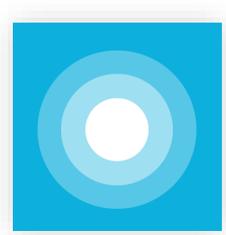
The Skills Builder Award descriptors

Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
Some teachers regularly use formative assessment to prioritise and inform their teaching of essential skills.	A majority of teachers regularly use formative assessment to prioritise and inform the teaching of essential skills.	All teachers regularly use formative assessment to prioritise and inform the teaching of essential skills.

Some reflection questions to think about

- Are you using a consistent skills framework and assessment tool like Skills Builder?
- Does your framework reflect quantifiable progress over time?
- Do you check in on progress regularly?

Principle 4: Focus tightly



The Principle

When building essential skills, the best schools and colleges are making focused time available to directly build the skills and to allow for deliberate practice. This means drawing on the insights from measurement to pitch learning at the correct level.

The trap

There are a few traps that schools and colleges can fall into with regards to this principle:

- Sometimes they focus too much on doing as many activities as possible that use the essential skills, rather than thinking about what students are getting out of those activities and whether they are pitched at the right level.
- Sometimes essential skills activities are designed without thinking about learning objectives or outcomes.
- In some cases, no links are drawn between different activities to build essential skills, so students cannot make connections between them.

What we should be aiming for

The insight of what students can and cannot already do means that we can use this information to focus our efforts on the next critical step. This is a big shift away from the idea of just *using* the skills and hoping that students pick up what we need them to do from the practice.

Instead, with the understanding gained from measuring those skills we can explicitly teach what is required to make the next step of progress. That might mean teaching about three different styles of leadership, how to take it in turns with other children, how to create goals and a plan to achieve them, or how to use mind maps to generate new ideas. All of these things are better taught directly than simply hoping that students pick them up through good luck.

This direct instruction is often overlooked when it comes to essential skills, but once we have isolated the building blocks of those skills then we can be much more focused about building them.

Putting it into practice

Schools and colleges who are doing this effectively might do a few different things:

- Make dedicated time available to teach essential skills – perhaps only 15 minutes to an hour per week, but time when the sole objective is a specific step of progress in the essential skills.
- Ensure that teachers feel equipped to build skills directly and have the tools and resources available to do so.

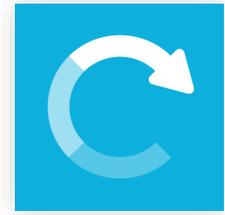
The Skills Builder Award descriptors

Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
Some teachers engage in focused and explicit teaching of essential skills.	A majority of teachers engage in focused and explicit teaching of essential skills.	Most or all teachers engage in focused and explicit teaching of essential skills.
Timetables or planning show that some teachers dedicate time to the teaching of skills, pitching teaching at an appropriate level	Timetables or planning show that a majority of teachers dedicate time to the teaching of skills, pitching teaching at an appropriate level.	Timetables or planning show that most or all teachers dedicate time to the teaching of skills, pitching teaching at an appropriate level

Some reflection questions to think about:

- Do you have different goals for what different students should be aiming to do when building their skills?
- Do you make time just to focus on explicitly developing skills?

Principle 5: Keep practising



The Principle

The best schools and colleges are supplementing focused time on building the essential skills with wider reinforcement and practise across the curriculum, and beyond it.

The trap

Some of the traps that schools and colleges can fall into in regard to this principle include:

- Presuming that the dedicated time available to build essential skills will be sufficient by itself.
- Not making the most of opportunities to apply those skills to other learning, or missing opportunities to be deliberate in applying and reflecting on those skills in other contexts.
- Seeing essential skills as being irrelevant to wider learning in the curriculum and the full range of different subject areas.

What we should be aiming for

The importance of direct instruction in the skills that was highlighted in the previous principle does not, however, mean that practising is less important. The big difference is that we are talking about *deliberate* rather than *naïve* practice.

Deliberate practice is distinguished by focused attention on a particular goal, often with the support of an expert or coach.

Schools and colleges build this deliberate practice into their curricula in different ways. Some use a specific project as a basis to apply the essential skills to a real-life challenge: for example, creating a radio show, a school performance, a community event or a sports competition. These approaches can be highly effective as the sole focus of the learning is on securing progression in the essential skills.

It can also work well though to weave chances to practice the essential skills through the curriculum without the need to make lots of additional time available. This works best by taking a view across the learning of a particular year group and spotting the natural opportunities to practice applying different steps of the Skills Builder Framework. For example, by giving the opportunity to create a presentation in English, to apply research methods in Geography or to structure problem-solving through Maths.

Of course, the most effective schools and colleges do both having the focused practice made possible by dedicated time and then regular reinforcement in other subject areas too.

Putting it into practice

Schools and colleges who are applying this principle effectively do some of the following things:

- Ensure that the language of essential skills is being used across the whole school or college, with common shared standards.
- Include visual cues and reminders to encourage teachers to make reference to those skills in other parts of their teaching. For example, by having the essential skills posted up on the walls in the classrooms, or in the front of student planners or exercise books.
- Other visual reminders include wall displays of what students have been studying and how it links to the development of essential skills.
- Some schools and colleges also build in the expectation that essential skills will be reinforced in the design of lesson plans or curriculum planning.

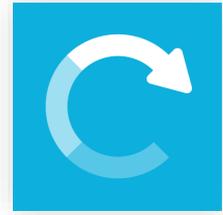
The Skills Builder Award descriptors

Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
Some teachers provide opportunities for students to practise essential skills in the wider curriculum, crossing into different subject areas.	A majority of teachers provide regular opportunities for students to practise essential skills in the wider curriculum, crossing into different subject areas.	Most or all teachers provide regular opportunities for students to practise essential skills in the wider curriculum, crossing into different subject areas.
	There are some opportunities for practising essential skills in the written curriculum.	The school or college's written curriculum makes reference to opportunities for practising essential skills across all subjects.
	Some extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to practise essential skills.	Most or all extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to practise essential skills.

Some reflection questions to think about:

- Are there regular opportunities for students to use their essential skills?
- When they do, are these opportunities highlighted clearly to them?
- Is there regular opportunity to actively reflect on the skills and how they have been developed?

Principle 6: Bring it to life



The Principle

Schools and colleges who are transforming their students' essential skills are using links to the working world to increase the depth and transferability of those skills. They give students opportunities to apply these skills in a much wider range of settings.

The trap

Some of the traps that schools and colleges fall into when considering this principle include:

- Lots of schools have only very limited links to employers. In some parts of the country there are a greater range of available employers and links between schools and employers are better facilitated than others.
- Seeing employer events being separated or isolated from wider learning.
- Teachers struggle to make links between the curriculum as it is taught and how the skills and content could have real-life applications.
- There can be a nervousness about engaging the broader community with what is happening in schools or colleges.

What we should be aiming for

The final principle that we have consistently seen made a big impact is linking the essential skills not just to classroom learning, but also to wider life, including the world of work. This is particularly important because we want the skills to be transferable beyond education.

Employers often cite the importance of these essential skills in the workplace too – but then worry that the young people joining them at the end of their education have not built them to the standard that they expect or require. Sometimes this is a challenge of *articulation* – that young people have actually built the skills but that they struggle to talk about them in a way that is convincing to employers. In this case, it is important that students have a strong conceptual framework of their own skills that they can communicate with others.

Other times, it is that they do not have the skills built in such a way that they can effectively use them in a workplace. To build this transferability, it's important that students have the chance to apply their skills in lots of different settings so that they can see that the building blocks of being able to share an idea are the same in a classroom or a workplace or on the football pitch even though the setting looks quite different.

Putting it into practice

There are several approaches that schools and colleges use to put this principle into practice effectively:

- One approach that can be very effective is to use a project-based learning methodology. This is helpful because the project can be focused on a real challenge or problem – either faced by the local community, within the school, or set by an employer. For example, the creation of a radio show to inform students about an upcoming festival which allowed students to apply their listening and speaking skills, as well as creativity to write an

interesting show. This radio show was then shared with parents and other community members, giving a real life application of the skills.

- The effective components of Project-Based Learning we have found are:
 - Starting by sharing the existing knowledge in the team
 - Using that to highlight what students will need to learn or be able to do in order to complete the project
 - Researching and seeking out that information
 - Applying their skills and knowledge to complete the task
 - Redrafting and improving their work
 - Sharing what they have achieved, with a final product
 - Celebrating their successes and reflecting on what they have learnt

- Another approach which can be helpful is to work with external partners. This might mean bringing in a volunteer or representative of an employer or the local community to talk about their role and the relevance of essential skills to them and their work.

- Alternatively, depending on the context of the school, it might mean taking students out of the classroom to visit employers or other community sites. In such instances, a well-facilitated activity and discussion can help students to connect the essential skills as they are being built in the classroom and their application in the wider world.

The Skills Builder Award descriptors

Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
<p>The school or college makes some provision of experiences to apply essential skills. These might include project-based learning, off-timetable days, employer encounters, workplace visits and enterprise challenges.</p>	<p>The school or college makes provision for the majority of students to have experiences to apply essential skills. These might include project-based learning, off-timetable days, employer encounters, workplace visits and enterprise challenges.</p>	<p>The school or college makes provision for all students to have experiences to apply essential skills. These might include project-based learning, off-timetable days, employer encounters, workplace visits and enterprise challenges.</p>
	<p>Some students use opportunities to apply and develop their skills outside school, for example in volunteering or work experience. <i>(Secondary and college only)</i></p>	<p>Many students use opportunities to apply and develop their essential skills outside school, for example in volunteering or work experience. <i>(Secondary and college only)</i></p>

Some reflection questions to think about

- Are the skills framed in terms of their usefulness for education, employment and wider life?
- Are there opportunities for students to use their skills in different settings?
- Do you use links to employers to support building these skills?



The Skills Builder Award

Achieving the Skills Builder Award should be the culmination of your year on the Skills Builder Accelerator programme. The Award is designed to recognise best practice in building essential skills in education, and will be valid for three years upon completion.

Different levels of Award

The level of Award that you achieve will depend on how fully your school or college has been able to embed the Skills Builder Principles over the year:



Skills Builder Bronze Award

For those making a commitment to high-quality essential skills education.

- Started embedding the Skills Builder Principles
- Some teachers will be using a common language for essential skills
- Plans for further development will be in place



Skills Builder Silver Award

For those building on their commitment to high-quality essential skills education.

- Made good progress towards embedding the Skills Builder Principles
- Majority of teachers will be using a common language for essential skills
- Policies and procedures will have begun to reflect the approach



Skills Builder Gold Award

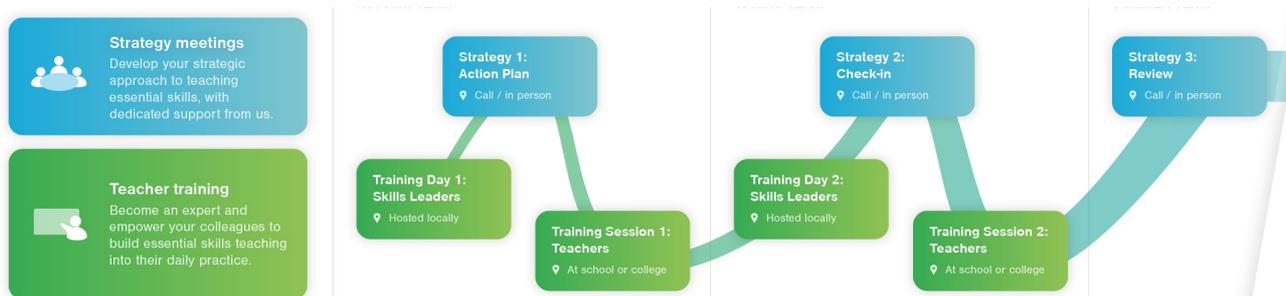
For those modelling best practice in high-quality essential skills education.

- Fully embedded the Skills Builder Principles
- All teachers will be confident educators of essential skills
- Essential skills education will be fully integrated into daily practice

How the Award fits into the Accelerator programme

Over the year, you will have opportunities to reflect on progress and make plans with the support of your Education Associate to work towards achieving the Award. Initially, the first Skills Leader Training Day will support with creating an action plan for your school or college, which will then be confirmed in your first Strategy Meeting, including a member of your school senior leadership team. These goals will be shared with teachers in the first Teacher Training Session.

The Spring Term starts with the second Skills Leader Training Day which will give a chance to reflect on progress so far, and to set priorities in the second Strategy Meeting. These can be reinforced in the second Teacher Training Session. The third Strategy Session should be focused on reviewing progress over the year, and will give a chance to review the Award level that has been achieved.



The Skills Builder Principles Matrix

Progression across the Principles Matrix reflects how fully the Skills Builder Principles have been embedded into teaching and learning in school. In order to achieve the Award level, there will need to be evidence of the following descriptors having been achieved.

Principle	Bronze	Silver	Gold
 <p>Keep it simple</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> A consistent focus on the essential skills helps ensure everyone's shared understanding and makes building skills a tangible process.</p>	<p>The language of essential skills is used in some aspects of school or college life and among some members of the community, including: students, teachers and leaders. Some events such as assemblies also begin to reference the essential skills.</p>	<p>Development of essential skills forms part of strategic planning and policy development, with the result that the language of essential skills is used across many areas of school or college life and among many members of the community. Assemblies and other events often reference the skills.</p>	<p>The essential skills are embedded within teaching and learning policies and curriculum plans across the school or college with the result that the language of essential skills is used extensively across all areas of school or college life and among all members of its community. Assemblies, staff meetings, parent meetings and other events regularly reference the skills</p>
	<p>Some teachers recognise and reward student effort and achievement in relation to essential skills.</p>	<p>A majority of teachers recognise and reward student effort and achievement in relation to essential skills.</p>	<p>The school or college's policy and approach to rewarding and recognising effort and achievement reflects and builds essential skills. All teachers follow this.</p>
	<p>Some classrooms and other spaces where the essential skills are taught have visual cues and reminders of the skills (such as posters) on display.</p>	<p>Many classrooms and other spaces have visual cues and reminders of the skills (such as posters) on display.</p>	<p>Most or all classrooms and other spaces have visual cues and reminders of the skills (such as posters) on display.</p>
 <p>Start early, keep going</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> Starting as young as possible allows more time for the skills to be developed, allowing for age appropriate teaching.</p>	<p>Some year groups or classes have regular opportunities for the learning and practising of essential skills.</p>	<p>Most year groups or classes have regular and planned opportunities for the learning and practising of essential skills.</p>	<p>All year groups and classes have regular and planned opportunities for the learning and practising of essential skills.</p>
 <p>Measure it</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> A balanced understanding of strengths and weaknesses in relation</p>	<p>Some teachers regularly use formative assessment to prioritise and inform their teaching of essential skills.</p>	<p>A majority of teachers regularly use formative assessment to prioritise and inform the teaching of essential skills.</p>	<p>All teachers regularly use formative assessment to prioritise and inform the teaching of essential skills.</p>

Principle	Bronze	Silver	Gold
to essential skills, highlights progress and informs next steps.			
 <p>Focus tightly:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> Building essential skills should build upon students' previous learning and skill attainment. It should allow dedicated time for the explicit teaching of skills.</p>	Some teachers engage in focused and explicit teaching of essential skills	A majority of teachers engage in focused and explicit teaching of essential skills.	Most or all teachers engage in focused and explicit teaching of essential skills.
	Timetables or planning show that some teachers dedicate time to the teaching of skills, pitching teaching at an appropriate level	Timetables or planning show that a majority of teachers dedicate time to the teaching of skills, pitching teaching at an appropriate level.	Timetables or planning show that most or all teachers dedicate time to the teaching of skills, pitching teaching at an appropriate level
 <p>Keep practising:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> Using & reinforcing skills as often as possible accelerates progress and embeds learning.</p>	Some teachers provide opportunities for students to practise essential skills in the wider curriculum, crossing into different subject areas.	A majority of teachers provide regular opportunities for students to practise essential skills in the wider curriculum, crossing into different subject areas.	Most or all teachers provide regular opportunities for students to practise essential skills in the wider curriculum, crossing into different subject areas.
		There are some opportunities for practising essential skills in the written curriculum.	The school or college's written curriculum makes reference to opportunities for practising essential skills across all subjects.
		Some extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to practise essential skills.	Most or all extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to practise essential skills.
 <p>Bring it to life:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> The linking of skills with real world experiences, problems and challenges, ensures students see the relevance and importance of essential skills.</p>	The school or college makes some provision of experiences to apply essential skills. These might include project-based learning, off-timetable days, employer encounters, workplace visits and enterprise challenges.	The school or college makes provision for the majority of students to have experiences to apply essential skills. These might include project-based learning, off-timetable days, employer encounters, workplace visits and enterprise challenges.	The school or college makes provision for all students to have experiences to apply essential skills. These might include project-based learning, off-timetable days, employer encounters, workplace visits and enterprise challenges.
		Some students use opportunities to apply and develop their skills outside school, for example in volunteering or work experience. <i>Secondary and college only</i>	Many students use opportunities to apply and develop their essential skills outside school, for example in volunteering or work experience. <i>Secondary and college only</i>

How Award decisions are made

The awarding process depends on the level of Award that is being sought. In order to achieve the Award, the criteria is that all of the descriptors for that level of Award will have been achieved.

Bronze:

- At the third Strategy Meeting, the Education Associate will facilitate a reflective discussion focused by Principles Matrix, the objective of which is to reach a consensus as to whether the criteria for a Bronze award have been met.
- To achieve a Bronze Award, all of the Bronze level descriptors need to be achieved.
- Most of the evidence for this level of Award can be drawn from things like data showing usage of the Skills Builder Hub by teachers, and examples that can be brought to the meeting.

Silver:

- Prior to the third Strategy Meeting, the Skills Leader will submit a portfolio of evidence related to Silver level criteria (informed by checklist of examples).
- To achieve a Silver Award, all of the Bronze level descriptors and at least 9 of the 12 Silver level descriptors should have been achieved.
- At the third Strategy Meeting, the Education Associate will facilitate a reflective discussion focused by Principles Matrix, the objective of which is to reach a consensus as to whether the criteria for a Silver Award have been met.

Gold:

- Prior to Gold level school or college visit, the Skills Leader should submit a portfolio of evidence related to Gold level criteria (informed by checklist of examples, see *Appendix*).
- Gold level school visit takes place before final strategy meeting. The Education Associate undertakes learning walk with Skills Leader and gathers further evidence, guided by observation checklist.
- To achieve a Gold Award, all of the Bronze and Silver level descriptors and at least 9 of the 12 Gold level descriptors should have been achieved.
- At the third strategy meeting, the Education Associate facilitates a reflective discussion focused by Principles Matrix, the objective of which is to reach a consensus as to whether the criteria for a Gold level award have been met.

Case Studies

This Guide to the Skills Builder Award has shared what good practice looks like when it comes to building essential skills in education.

To bring it to life, we are pleased to share five examples of great schools and colleges who worked with us in piloting the Skills Builder Award over the last year. They demonstrate what it looks like to build the essential skills of every child and young person – setting them up to thrive.

As you read the case studies, we'd encourage you to think about what ideas and examples might be a good fit for your school or college context.

Pioneer House High School

Skills Builder Silver Award 2020



Context

Pioneer House High School in Manchester is a special school providing education for students with Complex Cognitive Difficulties. At Pioneer House High School the outcomes for pupils after school and college really matter and they are committed to developing the skills of each child so that they become the most effective citizens they can be.

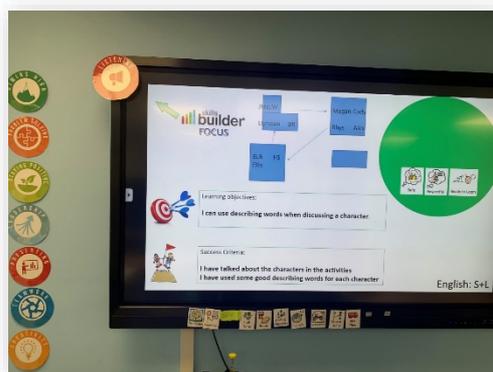
Pioneer House is a great example of a school that is fully committed to offering a comprehensive essential skills education to its students. There are examples across the school of innovative and effective practice and extensive plans are in place to build on this and to further embed the Principles. Senior Leadership have identified essential skills education as a strategic priority and the school will be working towards a Gold Award in 2020-21 by further embedding the wide range of initiatives described here.

Principle 1: Keep it simple

At Pioneer House, the school have built the language of essential skills across learning. This includes seeing the language as a normal part of their lessons.

*“Senior Leaders expect to see the language being used in our lessons, it is part of what we do.”
(Diane – Teacher)*

Students are also set targets for skills which are included in their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Students are rewarded for working on these target skills through collecting stickers which they can add to their sticker books.



As a special school, Pioneers House are mindful to keep the environment low stimulus, but they try to ensure that all the learning objectives on the screen link to the essential skills.

Principle 2: Start early, keep going

Essential Skills are taught in Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 at Pioneer House. The launch of the whole school Skills Builder programme outlined the following statements of intent:

- For curriculum content to provide students with opportunities to prepare for their future and next steps.
- For staff to have the skills, knowledge and resources to deliver teaching and learning based around the Skills Builder skills.
- For the review process for Education, Health and Care Plans to be more meaningful and strengthen the links between aspirations, provision and outcomes.
- For skills and knowledge to be built up sequentially, building on prior learning.
- For work given to pupils over time and across the school to contribute towards delivering the curriculum intent and support students towards positive outcomes.

Context

Great Western Academy (GWA) was opened in September 2018 in Swindon, Wiltshire. Alongside a first-rate academic curriculum, GWA is committed to teaching, nurturing and developing the essential skills valued by employers and Higher Education providers alike, enabling students to thrive as active citizens of the 21st Century world, full of initiative.

As a newly established academy, GWA wrote skills development into its development plan from the very beginning and continues to strive to embed the Skills Builder Principles into its approach. The academy achieved a Silver Award for the work done in the first 18 months of its existence and is now committed to building towards a Gold Award.

Principle 1: Keep it simple

GWA sought to make essential skills education central to its mission and curriculum intent from the moment it was opened. The Academy linked this focus to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework's Quality of Education judgement and identified a key governor who would include a focus on essential skills during lesson observations, book reviews and student panel discussion groups. Before the Academy opened, Skills Builder training and resources were provided to teachers to ensure the language was being used from the start.

"As a new teacher it was really helpful coming to the school and hearing the teachers consistently using the language of the skills." (Polly – Teacher)

"Right from the start we gave teachers packs of posters and resources to help them embed the language." (David – Assistant Principal)

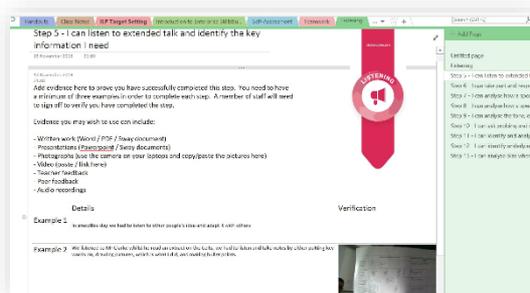
Principle 2: Start early, keep going

The Academy opened with a Year 7 class, adding a Year 8 and Year 12 class in 2019. A decision was taken to begin the implementation of the programme in Key Stage 3 both through tutor time and links to subject teaching. Year 12 also have some opportunities for essential skills learning, mainly through work experience and enrichment. The programme will continue to be rolled out as additional year groups start.

Principle 3: Measure it

GWA has made skills progress central to its approach to student assessment

"The framework was mapped for each student on One Note and displayed in school. ILP (Individual Learning Plan) conversations with every student during tutor time addressed which step was applicable to each student, exploring early evidence of meeting the requirements and mapping a way forward. This allowed staff to make a 'baseline' assessment of each student's

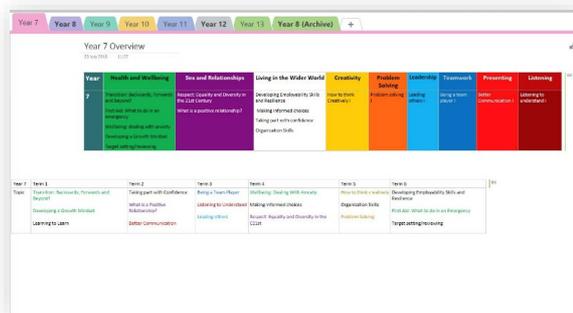


starting point, grew familiarity with the steps and ensured easy subsequent referencing of progress. I could then track overall progress, individual progress, progress of special interest groups (those eligible for Pupil Premium funding, or with Special Educational Needs, etc.) and compare progress against the Skills Builder Framework with other whole school data, such as attitude to learning, attendance and academic success against GCSE success criteria.” (David - Assistant Principal)

Principle 4: Focus Tightly

At GWA there is an expectation that all departments include teaching of essential skills in their Schemes of Learning and Curriculum Statements. The example below is taken from the English Department’s Curriculum Impact Statement.

“In line with the whole school drive into enterprise, English will explicitly teach creative and listening skills. Students will track their progress and as such should leave the department with skills that equip them for life.”



The screen shot shows an overview of the Academy’s bespoke ‘Successful Lives’ course, which includes a focus on the teaching of essential skills.

Principle 5: Keep Practising

All GWA students are expected to be involved in enrichment activities from Monday to Thursday every week. Sessions are planned in such a way as to ensure there are multiple opportunities for students to practise their essential skills. Each student has an Enrichment Booklet, which references those skills.

“Enrichment can help you develop your essential skills as well. Across the year you will be working in teams, using your problem solving and creativity skills, listening, presenting and, in some cases, leading others.” (GWA Enrichment Booklet)

Principle 6: Bring it to life

Student reports at GWA require all students to set skills related ‘Excellence Targets’ for activities they are involved in outside school. By ensuring that non-school activities such as sports clubs, arts groups and volunteering are included in the type of target setting that goes on in school, the Academy is making clear that it values students’ application and use of the essential skills in a range of contexts.

Windy Arbor Primary School

Skills Builder Gold Award 2020



Context

Windy Arbor Primary School is a caring and inclusive school located in *Widely*. The school's aim is to encourage everyone to become lifelong learners and to 'REACH for the stars' by focusing on *Respect, Enterprise, Ambition, Confidence and Happiness*. This is achieved through the promotion of these values across the whole school community, as well as the embedding of essential skills into the curriculum.

Windy Arbor has fully embraced the Skills Builder programme and in a short time has progressed to a Gold Award level. The school is clear that the next steps to enhance their already excellent provision are to further develop documentation around essential skills.

Principle 1: Keep it simple

Essential skills displays feature across the school – in classrooms and the main hall. Teachers have found that this raises awareness of the skills and their importance. The children are encouraged to take ownership of the displays and they interact independently with them, labelling their use of skills. Some year groups have included 'Skill Steps' in their displays and Early Years have trialled the use of stickers to celebrate 'skill use'.



The school diary details a fortnightly focus skill for staff, which is then represented visually on each classroom display. A fortnightly assembly led by the Head and Deputy Head provides an ongoing opportunity for skill celebration, where teachers praise 'skill champions' from their class.

"The language of skills is used extensively across the school. Often when external providers come in, the children teach our visitors about essential skills!" (Natalie – Skills Leader)

"We are constantly modelling and reinforcing the skills that have been demonstrated in the classroom and their meaning. We 'ring' the bell to celebrate children's use of skills. We also encourage the children to put their own name on the skills badges and talk about their skill use to provide them with independence and a sense of ownership and achievement" (Reception Teacher)

Principle 2: Start early, keep going

Windy Arbor has embedded essential skills education from Nursery to Year 6. The school also has an Autism Resource Centre, which also works with essential skills. Younger students are introduced to the language of essential skills and their learning is scaffolded through modelling and practise. By the time students reach Year 6 they are much more independent in their learning and are beginning to plan their own next steps by referring to the Skills Builder Framework.

Principle 3: Measure it

Windy Arbor teachers are encouraged to make ensure their teaching decisions are informed by the learning needs of their particular classes and individuals within those classes.

“In Year 4 we noticed that our children were at much higher levels for certain skills and at lower levels for others, so we have focused on those skills that the children found more difficult. Last term we were focusing a lot on the Speaking and Listening skill steps.” (Rachael – Teacher)

“One of my students finds listening very challenging, so I highlight steps for him to focus on and try to build his confidence.” (Sarah – Teacher)

Students are given regular opportunities to reflect on their use of skills.

Principle 4: Focus tightly

Curriculum guidance at Windy Arbor states: *‘Skills should be embedded through everyday classroom language and links should be made continuously as part of the curriculum and throughout all lessons. Projects and/or activities should be presented as ‘showcase events’ as part of each topic, rather than single opportunities to use the essential skills.’*

Curriculum planning documents highlight not only which skills should be taught within units of work but also the steps which should be focused on.

Principle 5: Keep practising

Identifying opportunities for students to practise their use of essential skills is built in to planning practice at Windy Arbor. During the early stages of implementation of Skills Builder at the school, an ‘incidental opportunities’ document was shared at a staff training session to reinforce the ample opportunities available to discuss and teach the essential skills. This informed a follow-on task carried out by staff across school where additional opportunities for highlighting skills were identified.

Principle 6: Bring it to life

Windy Arbor offers its students a rich range of project-based learning opportunities. All of these draw directly on and are framed by essential skills. One of the most recent projects that students enjoyed was to use Creativity and Teamwork to design a library for a bus the school had bought! Students were encouraged to use Creativity skills at the step level they were working at to create their ‘Dream Space’.

Welcome / Soft Start Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Staying Positive - Emotion Rating (Step 0 – Talking to children about why they feel happy/sad as they enter Nursery). ➤ Listening Carefully – Children define ‘Listening’ (i.e. listening with our ears’ and looking at the person speaking). ➤ Staying Positive - Reinforced during the register (asking if others can think of ways to make others happy if they are sad).
Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Listening Carefully – Step 0 and 1 – children were able to listen to instructions, follow instructions linked to instruments within a rhyme and listen to others presenting. ➤ Presenting – Step 0 and 1 – Talking in front of others about the sequence of the rhyme and instrumental sounds which mirrored the aspects of the rhyme (e.g. rain / sun / spider). ➤ Teamwork – Step 0 and 1 – Taking turns with presenting instrumental sounds and working together to ‘perform’.
Introduction for Maths Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aiming High – Step 1 – How can we try our best to ‘reach for the gold’? Children list ways to achieve in Nursery. ➤ Teamwork – Step 1 – Reminding children how we work as a team in Nursery – “We have to work together if we find things tricky” (defined by children).
Independent Learning Time	Adults reference the skills during ‘incidental teaching moments.’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aiming High – e.g. ‘trying my best and not giving up’ during learning. ➤ Staying Positive – e.g. resolving a conflict and identifying when it went wrong and why others might be upset (arguing over resources). ➤ Listening Carefully – e.g. praising listening and following an instruction. ➤ Teamwork – e.g. praising working together in shared learning. ➤ Presenting – e.g. performing/singing or sharing ideas to initiate role play. ➤ Problem Solving – e.g. sharing.
Transitions (e.g. Tidy Up)	Adults encourage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Listening Carefully – Step 0 and 1 – i.e. listening and following instructions. ➤ Teamwork – Step 1 – e.g. working together for a collective outcome.
Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Listening Carefully – Step 0 and 1 ➤ Problem Solving and Teamwork – Step 0 and 1 – within the story read, there was an opportunity to ‘solve a problem’ which the adult modelled and encouraged the children to work together to think of the best solution. ➤ Creativity – Step 0 – “use your imagination to think of a solution” – linking skills within the story.
Getting Ready for Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aiming High – Step 1 – encouraging children to ‘try their best’ to get dressed independently. Adults praise independence.
Song and Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Presenting – Step 0 – encouraging a selected child to stand up and speak clearly to the others to say the prayer.

Hornsey School for Girls

Skills Builder Silver Award 2020



Context

Situated in East London, Hornsey School for Girls is a secondary school which fosters a passion for learning from the moment students start school to the moment they leave. The school's curriculum enables every student to acquire the knowledge, skills and personal qualities needed to open doors to life-long opportunities and to progress to both university and work beyond.

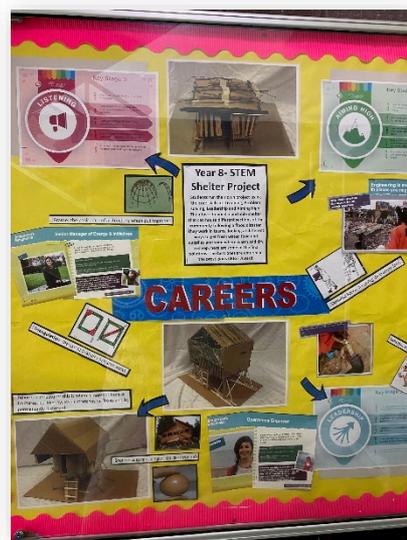
Hornsey School for Girls is a good example of a school which is implementing change by empowering a group of enthusiastic early adopters who are finding many innovative ways to teach and assess essential skills in their subjects and year groups. The school is now at a 'tipping point', whereby others are beginning to learn from this group and the good practice they exemplify is being adopted by other teachers in the school. As more teachers begin to use the programme the school will be well placed to move into a Gold Award category.

Principle 1: Keep it simple

At Hornsey School for Girls, the teaching of essential skills has been integrated into tutor time, where staff deliver aspects of the PSHE curriculum, linking these to skills. Teachers use short activities and videos from the Skills Builder Hub, which require minimal preparation and encourage reflection.

Wall displays are prominent in many areas of the school, and some teachers are beginning to highlight and reward students applying skills.

The Director of Learning leads a weekly assembly which focuses on different skills, meaning that teachers can refer to these in their classes.



Principle 2: Start early, keep going

Hornsey places a particular emphasis on essential skills at Key Stage 3. Other year groups also have opportunities to develop their skills, particularly through Enterprise experiences.

The Skills Leader at Hornsey says that a 'ripple strategy' is being deployed to encourage more teachers to teach skills across a wider range of year groups. This involves a group of 'enthusiasts' or 'early adopters' in various departments becoming flagbearers for essential skills. Through the sharing of their successes and their advocacy for the teaching of skills, it is expected that more teachers will begin to follow this group, so that, eventually, essential skills education becomes the norm throughout the school.

Principle 3: Measure it

The 'ripple strategy' is also central to Hornsey's approach to encouraging more teachers to begin assessing skills. An example of this is a project a group of teachers undertook as part of a professional qualification. Using the research question: 'Will highlighting the explicit use of essential

skills in subject specific activities enable learners to make progress in these skills?', the teachers shared the results with their colleagues.

The project focused on Year 7 Science, with students assessing themselves against the Skills Builder framework for each of the eight essential skills before undertaking a unit of work where the teaching of skills was built into all learning activities. Somewhat surprisingly, when the students reassessed themselves after this unit of work, they scored themselves at a lower level against all eight skills.

When sharing and reflecting on these results with colleagues, it became clear that the students had not in fact regressed in their skill levels, as the results may have suggested; rather the experience of explicitly focusing on essential skills had raised awareness of what was truly involved in each Skill Step and that therefore the students were assessing themselves in a more informed and accurate way. The richness of this school level reflection led to a collective agreement and commitment among Year 7 and Year 8 teachers to develop the initiatives outlined in the next section.

Principle 4: Focus tightly

Hornsey has developed generic slides with skills icons and step descriptors that have been distributed to all teachers of students in Years 7 and 8. These slides are inserted, as appropriate into lesson decks, so that subject teachers can highlight when a skill is going to be used and then teach it accordingly. The school is planning to roll this out to other year groups in the future.

Similarly Key Stage 3 Student Planners reference Essential Skills and this helps frame target setting and reflection.

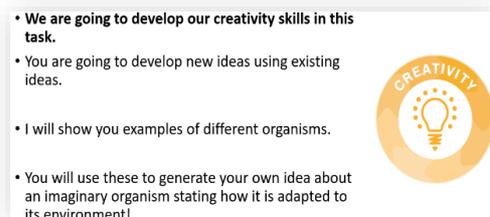
Principle 5: Keep practising

As well as seeking opportunities to practise skills in the formal curriculum, teachers at Hornsey are committed to building the skills into their extra-curricular programme, so that students can understand the skills are useful in many different contexts. This includes sporting, as well as cultural and other activities.

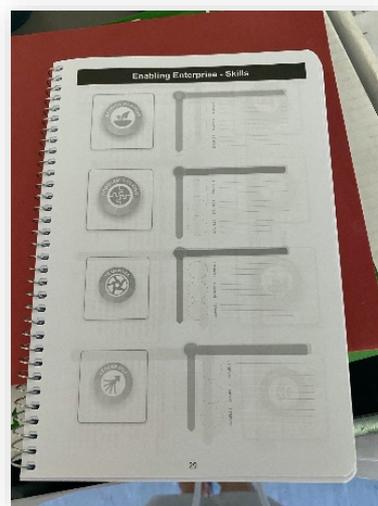
Principle 6: Bring it to life

A comprehensive and rigorous Careers education is central to Hornsey's approach. A wide and varied range of visits, special projects and school visitors related to work is provided. This is tied closely to essential skill development, as well as helping the school to excel against the Gatsby Benchmarks.

"We invite lots of organisations and interesting people to the school and we always ask them to speak about when they use the different skills. Also when we are visiting different places, the students are keen to know about how the skills are being used Consistency is key, a common language around skill development with students, teachers and external visitors." (Chimene – Skills Leader)



- We are going to develop our creativity skills in this task.
- You are going to develop new ideas using existing ideas.
- I will show you examples of different organisms.
- You will use these to generate your own idea about an imaginary organism stating how it is adapted to its environment!



Context

Located in North London, William Tyndale Primary School offers a broad and creative curriculum, and a calm, purposeful working atmosphere, in order for children to develop enthusiasm and confidence and to experience enjoyment and inspiration in their learning. The school aims to prepare pupils to take responsibility, within an academic and social context, for developing positive behaviour alongside independent learning skills, so that they may be well equipped for their future.

William Tyndale has worked with Skills Builder for a number of years and has progressed to be a true champion of essential skills education. The school's journey started when a group of teachers ran some classroom projects with their groups in order to develop their skills in key areas. The results were so good that the school decided to put in place a plan to teach the skills more widely. This led to the development of a comprehensive approach to essential skills education in the school, which has meant that, as Headteacher Tanya Watson puts it, "Skills Builder has become an inextricable part of our school's identity."

Principle 1: Keep it simple

William Tyndale has grown and developed its approach to teaching essential skills over the years. A low staff turnover has helped create an environment in which all members of the team, as well as students have embraced the language and practices of essential skills education. This was reflected in a survey in 2019, which showed that all staff agreed the approach was embedded and not limited by time constraints.

One central feature of William Tyndale's approach to teaching essential skills is their "Skill of the Month", which frames assemblies and PSHE and other lessons. Students reflect on and share their 'Thoughts for the Week' at assemblies and certificates are awarded for achievement in skills.



Principle 2: Start early, keep going

Children at William Tyndale first experience essential skills in Nursery and Reception where they become familiar with the language. In Years 1 to 6 the students undertake a comprehensive, developmental programme, which means that by the time they reach Year 6, students are knowledgeable and confident about skills and can apply them in a range of contexts.

Principle 3: Measure it

Teachers at William Tyndale are very familiar with the eight skills and the steps in the Framework and are confident in assessing their students against these and using this to inform their teaching.

Central to the school's format for reporting to parents is a section on progress in essential skills and all students receive a comment related to the following prompts : *Skills Builder – What project have they completed? What skill(s) has the child made the most progress in? How have they demonstrated these skills across the curriculum?* This comment appears on the first page of the report card and send a clear message to parents and carers about the importance of these skills, as well helping the language to cross out of school and into the home.

Principle 4: Focus tightly

“In the last two years, we conducted a curriculum review in the light of the updated Ofsted framework. Part of this involved Curriculum Leaders building in the explicit teaching of skills to all subjects.” (Rachel – Teacher)

As well as ensuring that National Curriculum planning includes opportunities to teach Essential Skills, William Tyndale ensures that other school initiatives tie in with the approach. For example, the school is a Gold level UNICEF Rights Respecting School and looks for opportunities to link this with Skills Builder. Similarly, the school has recently started using the 'Zones of Regulation' Curriculum, which is geared towards helping students gain skills in consciously regulating their actions. By supporting students to reflect on which essential skills can be used to help them when they are in a particular colour emotional zone, they are providing opportunities for students to make important connections in their learning.

William Tyndale Primary School		YEAR 6				CURRICULUM MAP	
Term	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2	
Right of the month	September: Article 28 – the right to learn and go to school October: Article 12 – the right to be listened to	November: Article 19 – the right not to be harmed and to be looked after and kept safe December: Article 12 – the right to follow your own religion	January: Article 29 – the right to become the best you can be February: Article 42 – the right to learn about your rights	March: Article 7 – the right to a name and a nationality April: Article 24 – the right to food, water and medical care	April: Article 21 – the right to food, water and medical care May: Article 20 – the right to practice your own culture, language and religion	June: Article 22 – the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee July: Article 31 – the right to play and rest	
Skills Builder	September: Teamwork October: Staying Positive Challenge Day	November: Learning Creativity December: GLOBAL GOALS	January: Aiming High February: Presenting	March: Creativity April: GLOBAL GOALS	April: GLOBAL GOALS May: Problem Solving	June: Learning July: GLOBAL GOALS Skills Builder Project	
English	Debating Non-chronological reports (Causes and consequences of WW1) Monologues (Over the top) Burnet News	Class poetry recitals Newspaper articles (outbreak of WW1) Poetry (Kindertransport) Explanations (Circulatory system) Poetry narratives (winter)	Spelling Bee Letters (Current affairs) Greek Myths (Thesaurus and the Minotaur) Burnet News live day Non-chronological reports (Artist of the lens)	World Book Day Read aloud competition Burnet News Debating (global warming) Discursive texts (British slave trade) Biographies (Darwin) Non-chronological reports (animals)	Individual poetry recitals Free writing (curiosities box) Narrative (fantasy) Promotional brochures (holiday resort) Developing portfolios	Spelling Bee Burnet News Recounts (PGL) Promotional brochures (PGL)	
Maths	Place Value 4 operations BODMAS Fractions	November: Money Sense Day Fractions, decimals & percentages Geometry 2D/3D shapes	Multiplication Bee Algebra Ratio & proportion Perimeter, area & volume Statistics	Statistics Co-ordinates Converting units of measure Revision	SATs prep	Multiplication Bee Money Sense Day Problem solving	
Science	Living things and their habitats Classification of living things including micro-organisms	Animals including Humans How nutrients and water are transported through animals. Microorganisms can cause illness, STEM Project: Stop the spread (micro-organisms)	SRE Identify important values within different types of relationships. Human reproduction in context of human life cycle.	Evolution and Inheritance Living things have changed over time, investigating fossils. Characteristics are passed from parents to offspring – i.e. breeds of dogs. Scientist of the year: Darwin	Electricity Understand brightness of bulbs in circuit linked to voltage of cells. Use recognised symbols for drawing circuits.	Light Identify where light comes from and how it travels.	
History	World War 1 To understand causes, experiences during (trenches), and impacts of the war, including Suffrage movement	World War 2 To understand causes of, experience of children in London during, and impacts of the war.					
Geography		Wonderful World week	Exploring the world: States and cities in North America. Topographical features in North America, Geographical superlatives – highest, deepest, longest.	Fair Trade Fortnight Compare and contrast: Environmental change (global warming). The impact of the slave trade (Britain vs North America)			

Principle 5: Keep practising

Essential skills are important in all areas of school life at William Tyndale. For example, at break times and lunch times. All lunch time supervisors are trained in the essential skills and are encouraged to highlight these, praising children when they excel. Similarly 'Playground Leaders' are encouraged to spot the skills being displayed during break times and to pass this on to the class teachers. By building opportunities for skills to be displayed and practised in all areas of school life, William Tyndale is helping students understand that the skills are relevant in many contexts.

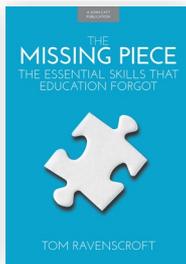
Principle 6: Bring it to life

This Principle is a particular strength and source of pride at William Tyndale. Among the numerous initiatives designed to allow students to put their skills into operation in a range of contexts are the projects that each year group undertakes, which allow them to showcase their skills. Similarly, every year group has at least one trip to a workplace or business link, where essential skills are central.

Other Resources

There are lots of resources available to support you in the journey to embed effective essential skills teaching across your school or college.

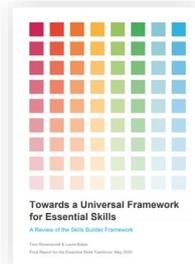
Publications and guides



The Missing Piece: The Essential Skills Education Forgot

Tom Ravenscroft details the rationale for building essential skills and evidence behind the six principles.

[skillsbuilder.org/
themissingpiece](https://skillsbuilder.org/themissingpiece)



Towards a Universal Framework for Essential Skills

Read the full report of the research behind the development of the Universal Framework.

[skillsbuilder.org/
towards-a-universal-
framework-for-essential-skills](https://skillsbuilder.org/towards-a-universal-framework-for-essential-skills)

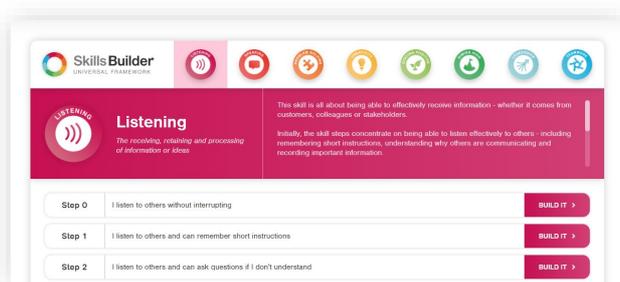


Skills Builder Universal Framework: Toolkit for Education

Get started building essential skills education into in your school or college curriculum with our free Toolkit

[skillsbuilder.org/
toolkit-education](https://skillsbuilder.org/toolkit-education)

Practical resources



Interactive Skills Builder Universal Framework

Explore the complete Universal Framework online and access detailed descriptions of how to build every skill at every step – in any context.

skillsbuilder.org/framework



Skills Builder Hub

Access a huge range of resources on our online platform for building skills – complete with a built-in assessment tool.

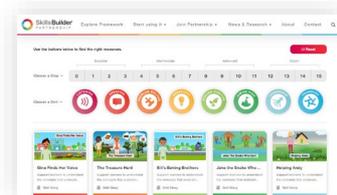
skillsbuilder.org/hub



Online Teacher Training

Check out these online courses to learn the best methods to effectively teach essential skills using the Principles.

skillsbuilder.org/online-teacher-training



Home Learning Hub

Build essential skills in a home setting with this free selection of resources for all skills, steps and ages.

skillsbuilder.org/homelearning

Thanks and acknowledgements

We would like to thank the teachers, Skills Leaders and Senior Leadership Teams at Pioneer House High School, Windy Arbor Primary School, Great Western Academy, Hornsey School for Girls and William Tyndale Primary School for their enthusiasm for and commitment to essential skills education, as well as for the willing way they gave up their time to contribute to this Guide.

The development of this Award Guide was made possible thanks to the kind support of our fantastic partners: [The Commercial Education Trust](#) and [The Worshipful Company of World Traders](#).

Appendix: Award Evidence

At Bronze and Silver levels, most evidence will be gathered through conversations as we work together over the course of the year. However, on occasions, you might be asked to provide a handful of pieces of evidence against particular descriptors as part of our quality assurance process, and these are likely to be in line with the examples below.

At Gold level, you will normally be expected to provide at least one piece of hard evidence against each descriptor from the list below. This will be built upon through conversations with teachers, students and parents, as below. The list below is not exhaustive, and you might have excellent evidence not on the list too.

Principle	Gold Descriptors	What evidence might look like
 <p>Keep it simple</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> A consistent focus on the essential skills helps ensure everyone's shared understanding and makes building skills a tangible process.</p>	<p>The essential skills are embedded within teaching and learning policies and curriculum plans across the school or college with the result that the language of essential skills is used extensively across all areas of school or college life and among all members of its community. Assemblies, staff meetings, parent meetings and other events regularly reference the skills.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching and learning policies <input type="checkbox"/> School improvement plan <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters to parents <input type="checkbox"/> Staff meeting agendas including essential skills <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with parents <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers
	<p>The school or college's policy and approach to rewarding and recognising effort and achievement reflects and builds essential skills. All teachers follow this.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rewards or recognition policies <input type="checkbox"/> Reporting to parents <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers
	<p>Most or all classrooms and other spaces have visual cues and reminders of the skills (such as posters) on display.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Photographs of display areas <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of other visual cues in use <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A learning walk around the learning areas
 <p>Start early, keep going:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> Starting as young as possible allows more time for the skills to be developed, allowing for age appropriate teaching.</p>	<p>All year groups and classes have regular and planned opportunities for the learning and practising of essential skills.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum planning for teaching essential skills <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of what each year group have been doing to build their essential skills <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers

Principle	Gold Descriptors	What evidence might look like
 <p>Measure it:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> A balanced understanding of strengths and weaknesses in relation to essential skills, highlights progress and informs next steps.</p>	<p>All teachers regularly use formative assessment to prioritise and inform the teaching of essential skills.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Data from the Skills Builder Hub showing assessment has taken place <input type="checkbox"/> Other examples of assessment data from the school <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers
 <p>Focus tightly:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> Building essential skills should build upon students' previous learning and skill attainment. It should allow dedicated time for the explicit teaching of skills.</p>	<p>Most or all teachers engage in focused and explicit teaching of essential skills.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Skills Builder Hub usage data <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum planning documents <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers
	<p>Timetables or planning show that most or all teachers dedicate time to the teaching of skills, pitching teaching at an appropriate level</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Skills Builder Hub usage data <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum planning documents <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers
 <p>Keep practising:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> Using & reinforcing skills as often as possible accelerates progress and embeds learning.</p>	<p>Most or all teachers provide regular opportunities for students to practise essential skills in the wider curriculum, crossing into different subject areas.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Skills Builder Hub usage data <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum planning documents <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of essential skills in lessons in the wider curriculum <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers
	<p>The school or college's written curriculum makes reference to opportunities for practising essential skills across all subjects.</p>	
	<p>Most or all extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to practise essential skills.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mapping of extra-curricular opportunities against the essential skills <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students
 <p>Bring it to life:</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> The linking of skills with real world experiences, problems and challenges, ensures students see the relevance and importance of essential skills.</p>	<p>The school or college makes provision for all students to have experiences to apply essential skills. These might include project-based learning, off-timetable days, employer encounters, workplace visits and enterprise challenges.</p>	<p>Evidence of this descriptor might be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum planning documents <input type="checkbox"/> Careers Plan or similar <p>It might also be supplemented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with students <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations with teachers



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