

Instruction Planning and Focus on the Essential Skills

A Historical Foundation for Skill-Based Planning

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was appointed by the Secretary of Labor to determine the skills young people need to succeed in the world of work. The Commission's fundamental purpose was to encourage a high-performance economy characterized by high-skill, high-wage employment. The following information from the [SCANS Report](#) should provide a blueprint for general related-instruction.

Three-Part Foundation

1. Basic Skills: Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks.
 - Reading—locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, graphs, and schedules
 - Writing—communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing; and creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts
 - Arithmetic/Mathematics—performs basic computations and approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques
 - Listening—receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues
 - Speaking—organizes ideas and communicates orally
2. Thinking Skills: Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reasons.
 - Creative Thinking—generates new ideas
 - Decision Making—specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternative
 - Problem Solving—recognizes problems and devises and implements plan of action
 - Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye—organizes, and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information

- Knowing How to Learn—uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills
 - Reasoning—discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or objects and applies it when solving a problem
3. Personal Qualities: Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self management, and integrity and honesty.
- Responsibility—exerts a high level of effort and perseveres towards goal attainment
 - Self-Esteem—believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self
 - Sociability—demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and
 - Self-Management—assesses self accurately, sets personal goals, monitors progress, and exhibits self-control e. Integrity/Honesty—chooses ethical courses of action

Five Workplace Competencies

1. Resources: Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources.
- Time—selects goal-relevant activities, ranks them, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules
 - Money—uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes adjustments to meet objectives
 - Material and Facilities—acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or space efficiently
 - Human Resources—assesses skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance and provides feedback
2. Interpersonal: Works with others.
- Participates as a Member of a Team—contributes to group effort
 - Teaches Others New Skills
 - Serves Clients/Customers—works to satisfy customers' expectations

- Exercises Leadership—communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies
 - Negotiates—works toward agreements involving exchange of resources, resolves divergent interests
 - Works with Diversity—works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds
3. Information: Acquires and uses information
- Acquires and Evaluates Information
 - Organizes and Maintains Information
 - Interprets and Communicates Information
 - Uses Computers to Process Information
4. Systems: Understands complex inter-relationships
- Understands Systems—knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them
 - Monitors and Corrects Performance—distinguishes trends, predicts impacts on systems operations, diagnoses deviations in systems' performance and corrects malfunctions
 - Improves or Designs Systems—suggests modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance
5. Technology: Works with a variety of technologies.
- Selects Technology—chooses procedures, tools or equipment including computers and related technologies
 - Applies Technology to Task—understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment
 - Maintains and Troubleshoots Equipment—prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies

Incorporating The Essential Skills into Work-Based Learning Planning

When planning Work-Based Learning instruction, one of the first things that must be decided is what should be learned. General related instruction could include topics such as:

- Orientation to Work-Based Learning, entering the world of work
- Safety at-work
- Understanding the business/industry where you work
- Developing human relation skills
- Developing communication skills
- Understanding the law
- Developing individual potential
- Coping with stress and conflict
- Meeting adult responsibilities
- Youth organization
- Using job-related math
- Understanding taxation
- Preparing for post-secondary education
- Analyzing employment possibilities
- Understanding the economic system.

As these general topics are being taught, connection and incorporation of the Essential Skills should be a focus. Thinking of the Essential Skills in the four broader categories helps with planning and making connections to existing curriculum.

As a reminder, the four broad groupings of the Essential Skills are:

- Working With Others
- The Thought Process
- Self-Regulation
- Entrepreneurial Skills

The tables below indicate which of the Essential Skills fall into each of the broader categories.

Working with Others

- Teamwork/Conflict Resolution
 - Students can use their understanding of working cooperatively with others to complete work assignments and achieve mutual goals.
- Adaptability/Flexibility
 - Students can use their understanding of workplace change and variety to be open to new ideas and handle ambiguity.
- Cultural Competence
 - Students can use their understanding of diversity and inclusion to communicate and work effectively across a multitude of abilities, cultures, and backgrounds.
- Communication
 - Verbal: Students can use their understanding of English grammar and public speaking, listening, and responding, convey an idea, express information, and be understood by others.
 - Written: Students can use their understanding of standard business English to ensure that written work is clear, direct, courteous, and grammatically correct.
 - Digital: Students can use their understanding of email, keyboarding, word processing, and digital media to convey work that is clear, direct, courteous, and grammatically correct.

The Thought Process

- Problem Solving
 - Students can use their critical thinking skills to generate and evaluate solutions as they relate to the needs of the team, customer, and company.
- Decision Making
 - Students can use their understanding of problem solving to implement and communicate solutions.

- Critical Thinking
 - Students can use their understanding of logic and reasoning to analyze and address problems.

Self-Regulation

- Initiative & Self-Drive
 - Students can use their understanding of goal setting and personal impact to achieve professional goals and understand personal impact.
- Reliability & Accountability
 - Students can use their understanding of commitment, time management, and follow through to ensure that a professional team functions properly and meets collective goals.
- Planning & Organizing
 - Students can use their understanding of time management to plan effectively and accomplish assigned tasks.

Entrepreneurial Skills

- Principles of Entrepreneurship
 - Students can apply their understanding of the process and characteristics of business development and promotion in order to apply strategies of innovation to personal and professional business pursuits.
- Innovation & Invention
 - Students can use their understanding of idea generation, design thinking, product and business development in order to introduce and process new and effective ideas.
- Growth Mindset
 - Students can use their understanding of learning from challenges, set-backs, and failure in order to adapt strategies and continue efforts to achieve personal goals