

A Guide to

Linking

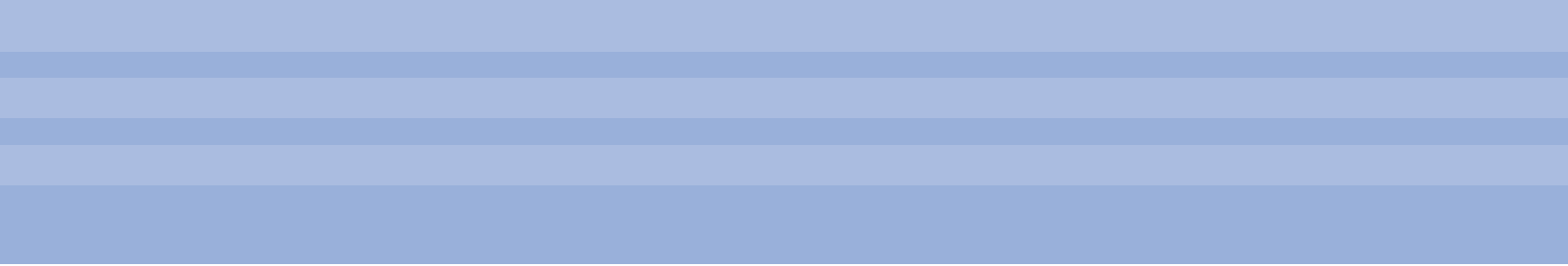
Essential Skills and the Curriculum

2009

Ontario

Skills Passport





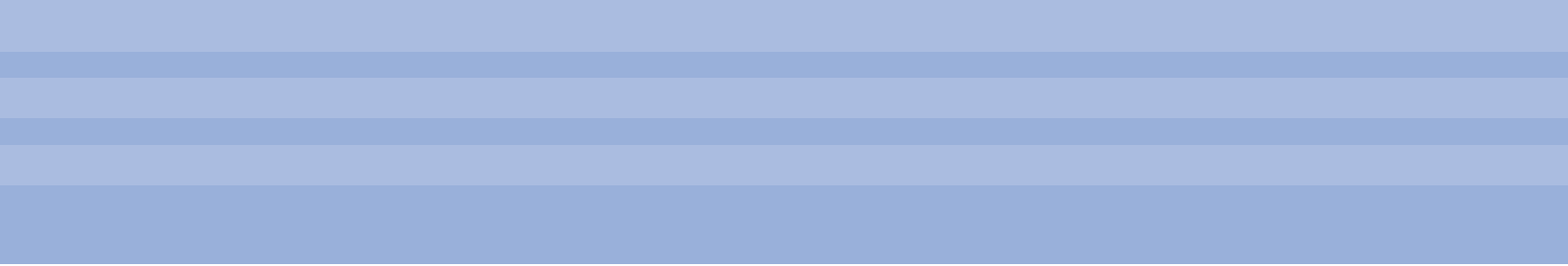
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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant :

Pour faire le lien entre les compétences essentielles et le curriculum : Guide pratique

This publication is available on the Ontario Skills Passport website, at <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca>.



Preface

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities are co-sponsoring the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) initiative to support the development and recognition of learners' acquisition and demonstration of Essential Skills and work habits in the classroom, in experiential learning opportunities, and in training programs. The OSP is being used in a wide range of educational and training contexts, including cooperative education, Specialist High Skills Majors, Discovering the Workplace and Navigating the Workplace courses, and literacy and employment programs.

This resource guide is designed to show educators how they can use the OSP to make linkages between Essential Skills and the Ontario curriculum. Essential Skills are transferable skills that enable people to perform tasks in work, learning, and life. Competence in Essential Skills is the foundation for learning other skills, such as technical skills and job/workplace-specific skills. As well, knowledge of Essential Skills helps people to adjust to change, something that is critical in today's classrooms, communities, and workplaces. Learners need to know what they are learning and why they are learning it. By making explicit reference to Essential Skills, teachers can connect classroom activities to a range of tasks in school, in the community, at home, and at work, increasing classroom relevancy and learner engagement.

The Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) is a bilingual web-based resource that provides easy-to-understand descriptions of the skills and work habits that are important in work, learning, and life. It includes the Essential Skills identified and validated by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), such as Reading Text, Writing, Document Use, Oral Communication, Money Math, and Problem Solving, as well as work habits such as working safely, teamwork, reliability, and initiative. The OSP also illustrates how people use these skills and work habits in everyday life as well as in specific occupations. It offers numerous tools and resources for use in educational, training, and workplace contexts that can help learners and job seekers assess, practise, and build their Essential Skills and work habits. Since Essential Skills and work habits are transferable from job to job and sector to sector, learners and job seekers can use them when they enter the workforce, change employment, or pursue further education or training.

One of the tools on the OSP website is the OSP Tracker, which learners and job seekers can use to help track and plan skills development over time.

For more information on the OSP, go to <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca>.



Why Use This Guide?

This guide was created with educators in mind. It can help you as teachers, literacy practitioners, adult educators, curriculum writers, and learning materials developers:

- ✓ identify the Essential Skills you are already teaching;
- ✓ make the Essential Skills explicit in your classroom teaching and assessment;
- ✓ analyse classroom activities to determine where embedded Essential Skills are;
- ✓ understand task complexity from an Essential Skills perspective.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) defines the Essential Skills as the skills needed for work, learning, and life. If this is the first time you're hearing about HRSDC's Essential Skills, take some time to familiarize yourself with the **Ontario Skills Passport (OSP)** website. On the website you will learn about the Essential Skills and work habits, and you will see examples of how workers, learners, and community members use these skills. Some knowledge of the Essential Skills will help you use this guide to its maximum advantage.

The Ontario Skills Passport offers:

- ✓ clear descriptions of Essential Skills and work habits
- ✓ resources and tools, including learning materials, assessments, and an OSP Tracker, to support its use in educational and training contexts and workplace contexts
- ✓ a method for employers to assess and record the demonstration of Essential Skills and work habits



<http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca>

Essential Skills in the Ontario Skills Passport		
Essential Skills are defined as the skills needed for work, learning, and life. They include:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Text • Writing • Document Use • Computer Use • Oral Communication 	Numeracy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money Math • Scheduling or Budgeting and Accounting • Measurement and Calculation • Data Analysis • Numerical Estimation 	Thinking Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Task Planning and Organizing • Decision Making • Problem Solving • Finding Information

Why Do Essential Skills Matter?

We use Essential Skills every day in our roles as learners, workers, and members of the community. Essential Skills tasks are real tasks used in daily life and in the workplace, such as reading a brochure to learn about a fitness class, writing a note to a co-worker, or deciding which route to take to get from one part of the city to another. A person with strong Essential Skills is like a tree with a strong root system: both allow for growth and provide protection in difficult times. Individuals with strong Essential Skills are able to learn new skills more easily and to transfer their learning from one context to another. When circumstances require, they are able to learn new skills with relative ease. This ability makes them less vulnerable to forces of change whether at work or in their lives at home.

Essential Skills in action

Watch these [videos](#) to see how Essential Skills are used in everyday life.

Understanding how to use Essential Skills within educational settings gives educators and learners a powerful tool for analysing the ways in which skills apply to real-world tasks. Equipped with this tool, educators can answer the question “Why do I need to learn this anyway?”

Essential Skills tasks have a clearly defined structure based on a well-researched and internationally recognized body of knowledge. This structure enables teachers to more easily identify Essential Skills tasks embedded in classroom learning. Making use of Essential Skills explicitly and intentionally helps learners understand the skills that they have and those that they are developing and how they can use these skills in work, life, and further education and/or training.

The Essential Skills methodology uses an internationally recognized scale – between 1 and 4 or 5 – to describe the complexity of tasks. This scale enables each Essential Skills task to be analysed for its relative difficulty. The scale for each of the Essential Skills can serve as a common “language” with which to discuss skill requirements and skill levels in a way that is meaningful for learners, educators, employers, and other community members.

Educators who understand what an Essential Skills task is are in a better position to build real learning opportunities for learners. These learning opportunities, framed as Essential Skills tasks, enable learners to make connections between what is learned in the classroom and how learning can be applied beyond the classroom. This guide will help you understand what constitutes an Essential Skills task.

All learners can be taught within an Essential Skills context, even when they are not yet at a point where they can manage Essential Skills tasks on their own. When you provide skills development opportunities and describe the connection to Essential Skills tasks, learners will be able to see that what they are learning will help them achieve their goals. We know that learners do best when they can make connections between what they do in class and what they want to do outside the classroom. And this is true whether you are working with learners with learning disabilities, learners in calculus class, or learners in a literacy program.

What's in This Guide?

This guide outlines a two-step process for identifying and analysing Essential Skills tasks embedded in classroom activities. Once learned, this process is a quick way for educators to recognize the Essential Skills in what they teach and to analyse Essential Skills tasks to determine their skill level.

Each of the two steps will be presented in the same way. First, the step is introduced and explained. Next, we illustrate how to carry out the step using real classroom activities. Then, we provide practice opportunities so you can try it out for yourself. Answers and explanations follow the practice activities so you can be sure you are on the right track. Once you've finished reading the guide, the appendices give you a quick reference sheet for future use, more practice activities, and reference materials to help you understand how to make linkages between curriculum and Essential Skills.

You can also access an inventory of classroom activities created by teachers who have already used this two-step process to analyse hundreds of classroom activities. These classroom activities can be used in a variety of grades and settings to help learners practise, build, and demonstrate their Essential Skills. They contain curriculum connections and identify the Essential Skills tasks and the skill levels of these tasks so you can easily integrate them into your lesson planning. By making explicit the Essential Skills embedded in classroom activities, teachers can give feedback to learners on their achievement of curriculum expectations as well as their demonstration of Essential Skills. The premise is that when learners satisfactorily achieve curriculum expectations through classroom activities, they also demonstrate the Essential Skills associated with these activities. Learners can be encouraged to use the **OSP Tracker** to track the Essential Skills and work habits that they demonstrate in the classroom, in experiential learning opportunities, and in volunteer and paid work. They can then use this information to create/update a résumé, prepare for a job interview, and plan further skills development.

How Can I Use This Guide?

Whether you teach math or family studies, write curriculum, instruct adult literacy learners, or develop learning activities for learners with learning disabilities, you'll be able to use this two-step process in your work. Here are just a few examples of how this guide can be used.

As an educator, you can use this guide to:

- ✓ uncover the Essential Skills you already have your learners demonstrate in the classroom. You already do it, now you can show when and how;
- ✓ understand the skill demands of classroom activities. You'll find that sometimes the demands we make of learners exceed the demands required outside the classroom. In other cases, skill demands could be increased to better prepare learners for next steps;
- ✓ assess learners' demonstration of Essential Skills while addressing curriculum expectations.

As a learning materials developer, you can use this guide to:

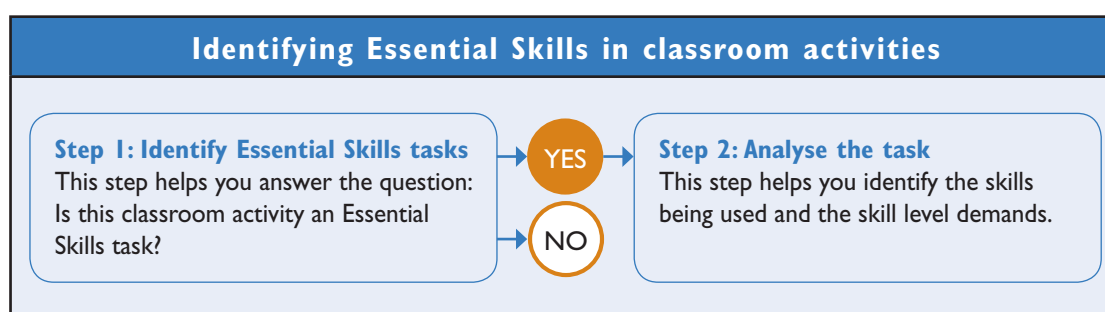
- ✓ reflect on the balance of activities included in the materials you develop. Having a balance of skill-building activities and Essential Skills tasks is a great way to link classroom activities to applications outside the classroom.

How Can I Identify Essential Skills in Classroom Activities?

Whether you teach in an elementary school, help adults upgrade their math skills, or create activities for use in physics classes, you are giving learners an opportunity to develop and practise their Essential Skills. But which Essential Skills are learners using? And how challenging are the skill demands? The following two-step process for identifying and analysing Essential Skills in classroom activities will help you uncover the Essential Skills learners are using and determine the skill demands. You already have learners use these skills, now there is a method to help you describe *how* they are being used.

The first step in the process is to figure out whether the classroom activity is an Essential Skills task. Once you know that it is, you can move to step 2 to figure out which Essential Skills are being used and what the skill demands are.

What about classroom activities that are not Essential Skills tasks? Classroom activities that are not Essential Skills tasks are skill-building activities. These skill-building activities are crucial in helping learners develop their skills and prepare to apply their skills to perform tasks. You can think of skill-building activities as the building blocks for Essential Skills tasks. It is important to understand the relationship between skill-building activities and Essential Skills tasks. Seeing the connections yourself enables you to explain to learners what they are learning, why they are learning it, and when they will use it outside the classroom. When learners understand these connections, they are more likely to see how skill-building activities are connected to real-world tasks. See Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 for more information about the relationship between Essential Skills tasks, skill-building activities, and curriculum expectations.



These two steps are described in detail on the following pages. Each step is followed by examples and opportunities to practise identifying Essential Skills tasks. You can find more opportunities to practise in Appendix 2. The Quick Reference Sheet in Appendix 1 summarizes the two-step process in a worksheet format so you can analyse other classroom activities on your own.

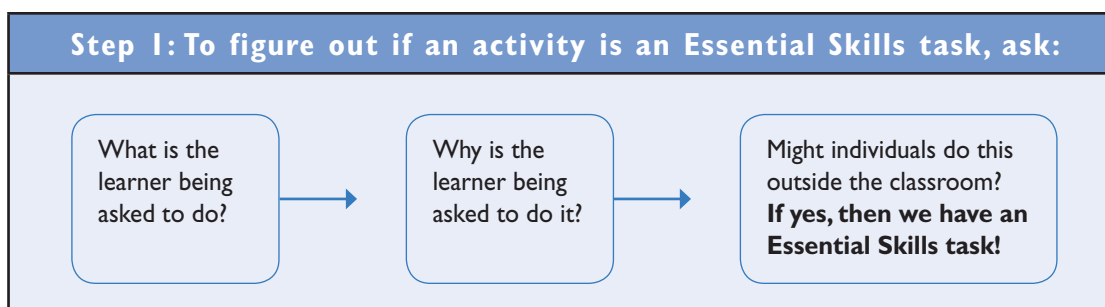
Step 1

Identifying Essential Skills tasks

Our lives are filled with Essential Skills tasks. Leaving notes to let family members know we've gone out or figuring out how much money to put in parking meters are both Essential Skills tasks. Even when we go shopping and ask a store clerk for help, we are engaged in an Essential Skills task. But what makes these tasks similar? In each case, we are using our skills to complete an activity with a purpose.

Learners carry out learning activities all the time in the classroom. Often these activities help learners develop skills so they can use them in more complex ways on their own. At other times, learners must decide which skills to use, and then use them independently to accomplish tasks much as they would outside the classroom. The first step in determining the Essential Skills demands of classroom activities is to distinguish between learning activities that are designed for building skills and learning activities that can be analysed as Essential Skills tasks. This step is important because the skill level rating scale used to describe task complexity applies *only to Essential Skills tasks*.

To figure out whether an activity is an Essential Skills task, we ask ourselves a few questions. First, we identify what the learner is being asked to do. Next, we determine why the learner is being asked to do this. Finally, we ask whether individuals would do this outside the classroom. The activity might be something that individuals do at home or at work. When we find that the activity has both a purpose and is something that individuals also do outside the classroom, we have an Essential Skills task!



This step is illustrated over the next few pages where typical classroom activities are examined to see whether they are Essential Skills tasks. Read through these examples to see whether you can distinguish the skill-building activities from the Essential Skills tasks. Then practise identifying Essential Skills tasks on your own from the classroom activities found under *Step 1: Practice* on pages 13–14.

Step 1

Examples

Over the next few pages you will have a chance to see step 1 in action. You'll recall that step 1 helps you figure out whether a learning activity is an Essential Skills task. (Note that the term "Essential Skills" is often abbreviated to "ES" in tables, charts, and similar materials in this guide.) Six classroom activities are described in the first column of the table below. For each classroom activity we answer the questions introduced on the previous page and explain why the classroom activity is, or isn't, an Essential Skills task.

Activity	Step 1: Identify the ES task		
	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
Read pamphlets and information sheets to learn about the causes of diabetes.	Read pamphlets and information sheets	To learn about the causes of diabetes	NO <u>YES</u> – we have an ES task!
	✓ Why this is an ES task: The purpose of this task is reading to learn about a topic. Individuals read to learn about topics outside the classroom, therefore it can be considered an Essential Skills task.		
Complete a page of word problems to show understanding of a recently taught unit on geometry.	Complete a page of word problems	To demonstrate understanding	<u>NO</u> YES – we have an ES task!
	✗ Why this isn't an ES task: This activity is meaningful for learners and teachers because it gives learners an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of a topic. It is not, however, something individuals are likely to do outside the classroom.		
Give a 10-minute presentation to the class on findings from Internet research about the long-term health effects of narcotics use.	Give a presentation to the class	To present findings about long-term health effects of narcotics	NO <u>YES</u> – we have an ES task!
	✓ Why this is an ES task: Giving an oral presentation to share one's findings on a topic is a task with a purpose, and one that individuals do outside the classroom setting. A parent may present findings during a school council meeting. A workplace trainer may present this kind of information to workers as part of a health and safety training module.		

(continued)

Activity	Step 1: Identify the ES task		
	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
Read a short story to identify the author's use of foreshadowing.	Read a short story	To identify the author's use of foreshadowing	<u>NO</u> YES – we have an ES task!
	✗ Why this isn't an ES task: This activity is often meant to expose learners to various styles of literature and to familiarize them with literary devices. While a worthwhile activity, it would not be considered an Essential Skills task because reading a short story <i>for this purpose</i> is not something that is likely to be done outside the classroom.		
Complete and sign a waiver acknowledging awareness of risks associated with using shop equipment.	Complete a waiver	Acknowledge awareness of risks	NO <u>YES</u> – we have an ES task!
	✓ Why this is an ES task: This activity has a clear purpose and is a task routinely carried out in everyday work and life. Given that it meets these criteria, it would be considered an Essential Skills task.		
Count money to show an understanding of denominations.	Count money	To show understanding of denominations	<u>NO</u> YES – we have an ES task!
	✗ Why this isn't an ES task: Activities like this are designed solely for the purpose of demonstrating understanding. If the task had learners counting money for a purpose common outside the classroom, such as to see if they had enough to make a purchase, that would be considered an Essential Skills task because it mirrors a real-world task.		

Sometimes you will encounter tasks whose purpose is not specified or immediately recognizable. In these cases, you will need to identify for yourself what the purpose is. This will help you decide whether the activity can be considered an Essential Skills task, or whether it is primarily designed so that learners can demonstrate knowledge and/or understanding.

Step 1

Practice

Below are six more classroom activities. Use the questions in the table to help you figure out which are Essential Skills tasks. Answers are on pages 15–16.

Activity	Step 1: Identify the ES task		
	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
1: Measure a classroom to figure out how many desks fit in the room, to show understanding of a recently taught unit on area.			NO YES – we have an ES task!
2: Respond to reading comprehension questions about Newton's third law of motion.			NO YES – we have an ES task!
3: Calculate the average temperature for each month of the year in different cities, to practise making summary calculations.			NO YES – we have an ES task!

(continued)

Activity	Step 1: Identify the ES task		
	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
4: Write a one-page proposal to the class to persuade them that a suggested guest speaker would be interesting. Conduct Internet research to decide who to invite to speak to the class.			NO YES – we have an ES task!
5: Discuss ideas with classmates to create a schedule for a term-long group project.			NO YES – we have an ES task!
6: Read a play by William Shakespeare to learn about Elizabethan courting customs.			NO YES – we have an ES task!

Step 1

Answers

- 1. Measure a classroom to figure out how many desks fit in the room, to show understanding of a recently taught unit on area.**

✓ **Why this is an ES task:**

In this case, learners are being asked to apply knowledge of area to figure out how many desks fit in a room. There are two purposes for this classroom activity: the first, to figure out how many desks will fit in a room and the second, to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Many of us measure at home and at work when figuring out options for ways to lay out rooms and offices. Because the learner is being asked to do something that we do outside the classroom, we have an Essential Skills task.

- 2. Respond to reading comprehension questions about Newton's third law of motion.**

✗ **Why this isn't an ES task:**

In this activity, learners use writing skills to answer comprehension questions. Since writing skills are not typically employed in this way outside the classroom, this cannot be analysed as an Essential Skills writing task. On the other hand, if the activity were described as reading a text to learn about Newton's third law of motion, it could be analysed as an Essential Skills reading task because we read to learn all the time.

- 3. Calculate the average temperature for each month of the year in different cities, to practise making summary calculations.**

✗ **Why this isn't an ES task:**

The primary purpose of this activity is to practise making summary calculations. Practising a math concept is not something individuals typically do at work or in their communities. On the other hand, if learners were asked to calculate average temperatures in different cities *to decide which place to visit*, then we would have an Essential Skills task.

- 4. Write a one-page proposal to the class to persuade them that a suggested guest speaker would be interesting. Conduct Internet research to decide who to invite to speak to the class.**

✓ **Why this is an ES task:**

In this case, learners are required to employ several skills over a couple of stages to accomplish the task of writing a proposal. They carry out research with the

purpose of deciding on a guest speaker, and then write a proposal with the purpose of persuading classmates that their speaker is worth inviting. Given the purpose of both activities, we can conclude that they are, in fact, activities carried out frequently outside the classroom. For example, consider workers who research and write proposals to persuade co-workers that a new initiative is worth pursuing. So this is definitely an Essential Skills task.

5. Discuss ideas with classmates to create a schedule for a term-long group project.

✓ **Why this is an ES task:**

In this activity, learners engage in discussion. The purpose of the discussion is to create a schedule. We could easily imagine individuals having a group discussion like this to achieve this very purpose. So yes, we have an Essential Skills task.

6. Read a play by William Shakespeare to learn about Elizabethan courting customs.

✓ **Why this is an ES task:**

This activity has learners reading a play. The purpose of the reading is to learn about a topic, in this case to learn about life many generations back. Reading for the purpose of learning about a topic is a common activity both within and outside educational settings. So this activity fulfils the criteria for an Essential Skills task.

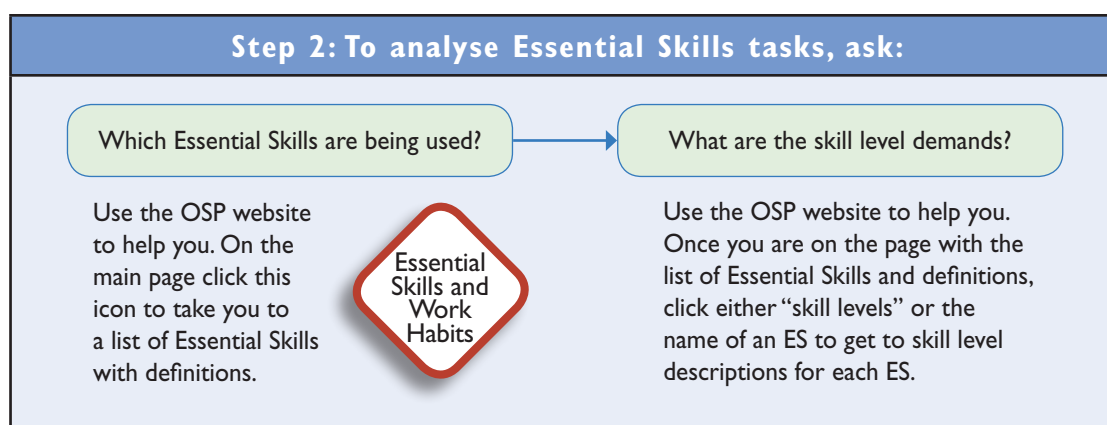
Step 2

Analysing the tasks

After completing step 1 you will know which classroom activities are Essential Skills tasks. These tasks can now be analysed to figure out which Essential Skills learners are using and the skill level demands.

So how is this done? **The Ontario Skills Passport** website can help you. You can use the resources on the website to learn about the Essential Skills and the work habits that contribute to individuals' success in work, learning, and life. The website also contains task descriptions at each skill level for each of the Essential Skills.

To analyse the Essential Skills tasks you have identified, you must first figure out which Essential Skills are being used. It is most often the case that one skill is predominant in carrying out a task, although other skills can also be identified. For example, the primary skill used to figure out how much money to put into the parking meter is money math, a numeracy skill. But document use may be required to read the label on the parking meter, and numerical estimation may be used to figure out how much time is needed to run errands. Once you know which Essential Skills are being used, the skill level descriptions can be used to assign a skill level for each of the skills. To learn about skill levels, go to the **OSP** website.



This step is illustrated over the next few pages where we analyse the Essential Skills tasks we identified using step 1. Read through these examples to see how Essential Skills tasks are analysed. Then practise identifying skills and skill levels using the Essential Skills tasks found under *Step 2: Practice* on page 19.

Step 2

Examples

Below is step 2 in action. In the ES Task column we list the three activities identified as Essential Skills tasks in step 1. Beside each task statement we answer the questions you were introduced to on the previous page and explain how we decided on Essential Skills requirements and skill level demands. Hyperlinks take you to the related content on the OSP website.

ES Task	Step 2: Analyse the task	
	Which Essential Skills are being used?	What are the skill level demands?
Read pamphlets and information sheets to learn about the causes of diabetes.	Main skill: Reading Text	1 2 ③ 4 5
	Other skills: No additional skills	n/a
	Why? The task statement itself makes it clear that the skill being used is reading . It is a level 3 reading task because the reader is integrating information from various sources.	
Give a 10-minute presentation to the class on findings from Internet research about the long-term health effects of narcotics use.	Main skill: Oral Communication	1 ② 3 4 5
	Other skills: Computer Use Finding Information	1 ② 3 4 5 1 ② 3 4 5
	Why? Giving this presentation requires the use of oral communication skills at level 2 because the content being communicated deals mostly with facts that are moderately complex and detailed. We know the task also requires computer use and finding information skills because learners need to conduct Internet research. Computer use skill demands are also level 2 because only simple software features are used. Finding information is level 2 as well because learners are consulting a specific source. <i>Note:</i> If the task included a description of the text consulted, reading text could also be rated.	
Complete and sign a waiver acknowledging awareness of risks associated with using shop equipment.	Main skill: Document Use	1 ② 3 4 5
	Other skills: No additional skills	n/a
	Why? This task requires learners to extract information from a form and sign it. Using forms is a document use task. It is a level 2 task because the document itself is simple, what the user must do with the form is straightforward, and learners do not need much knowledge of the content in order to complete it. <i>Note:</i> If the form also included explanatory text, the task could also be rated for reading text.	

Step 2

Practice

Below are the four classroom activities you identified as Essential Skills tasks in step 1. Use the list of Essential Skills and the skill level descriptions on the [OSP](#) website to help you figure out which Essential Skills are being used and the skill level demands. Level 5 is in parentheses because it is not part of every skill. Answers are on page 20.

ES Task	Step 2: Analyse the task	
	Which Essential Skills are being used?	What are the skill level demands?
1: Measure a classroom to figure out how many desks fit in the room, to show understanding of a recently taught unit on area.	Main skill:	1 2 3 4 (5)
	Other skills:	1 2 3 4 (5) 1 2 3 4 (5)
2: Write a one-page proposal to the class to persuade them that a suggested guest speaker would be interesting. Conduct Internet research to decide who to invite to speak to the class.	Main skill:	1 2 3 4 (5)
	Other skills:	1 2 3 4 (5) 1 2 3 4 (5)
3: Discuss ideas with classmates to create a schedule for a term-long group project.	Main skill:	1 2 3 4 (5)
	Other skills:	1 2 3 4 (5) 1 2 3 4 (5)
4: Read a play by William Shakespeare to learn about Elizabethan courting customs.	Main skill:	1 2 3 4 (5)
	Other skills:	1 2 3 4 (5) 1 2 3 4 (5)

Step 2

Answers

1. **Measure a classroom to figure out how many desks fit in the room, to show understanding of a recently taught unit on area.**

Main skill: Measurement and Calculation level 2

Other skills: No additional skills

Why? This task requires learners to measure the area of a classroom, and then make calculations to figure out how many specified objects will fit into the space. Measurement is captured in the Essential Skills under numeracy. It is a level 2 task because it requires learners to calculate the area of simple, familiar shapes.

2. **Write a one-page proposal to the class to persuade them that a suggested guest speaker would be interesting. Conduct Internet research to decide who to invite to speak to the class.**

Main skill: Writing level 3

Other skills: Computer Use level 2 and Decision Making level 2

Why? Several skills are employed in carrying out this task; however, it is set up primarily as a writing task. Writing a one-page text to persuade is a level 3 task because it is not routine. The computer use is at level 2 because it only requires the use of familiar software features. Decision making is at level 2 because the factors to be taken into account in making the decision are well-defined and there is a set procedure to follow.

3. **Discuss ideas with classmates to create a schedule for a term-long group project.**

Main skill: Oral Communication level 2

Other skills: Scheduling or Budgeting and Accounting level 2

Why? This is set up primarily as an oral communication task, but it also has learners create a schedule, requiring scheduling or budgeting and accounting, a numeracy skill. Oral communication demands are at level 2 because the task involves a group discussion and the context is largely predictable.

4. **Read a play by William Shakespeare to learn about Elizabethan courting customs.**

Main skill: Reading Text level 5

Other skills: No additional skills

Why? This task requires high-level reading skills, at Essential Skills level 5. This rating is justified because of the dense and complex nature of the text.

What's Next?

Now that you have been introduced to this two-step process, you are ready to apply this method in your daily work.

If you are a teacher:

- ✓ Examine the activities you have planned for your next class to figure out which ones are Essential Skills tasks.
- ✓ Point out to learners when they are using Essential Skills and when they might use those skills outside the classroom too.
- ✓ Uncover the Essential Skills embedded in classroom activities to assess learners' demonstration of the skills that will help them in life, learning, and work.
- ✓ Check out the classroom activities already analysed for you. You are sure to find some that will help you meet curriculum expectations.

If you write materials for use in the classroom:

- ✓ Check the balance of activities in the materials. Are there enough activities with a purpose that would typically be carried out outside the classroom?
- ✓ Create activities that illustrate skills that people use outside the classroom, and why they use them, to make it clear why learners are developing these skills.
- ✓ Identify the skill level demands for the Essential Skills involved to make sure learners will be appropriately challenged by your activities.

If you are an adult educator:

- ✓ Review the lessons you have planned to check that they include Essential Skills tasks.
- ✓ Analyse the tasks to make sure they are challenging enough, but not too challenging, for the learners in your class.
- ✓ Figure out which skill-building activities you can give learners to help them get ready to challenge those Essential Skills tasks.
- ✓ Illustrate why strong Essential Skills will help learners manage outside school as well as in school.

Use the appendices that follow to help you apply the contents of this guide in your work.

Appendix I: Quick Reference Sheet

Learners often ask, “Why do I need to know this?” The answer to this question lies in the Essential Skills. Much of what we teach in the classroom has real-world applications; real people out in the community and at work use the very skills taught in the classroom to complete tasks. But it may not always be easy for learners to connect what they learn in the classroom with how they will use their skills in everyday life. By choosing, using, and analysing Essential Skills tasks, educators make explicit connections for learners between classroom activities and real-world applications.

Whether developing learning materials, writing curriculum, or selecting activities for use in the classroom, this Quick Reference Sheet guides you through the process for identifying and analysing Essential Skills tasks.

Describe the activity:			
Step 1: Identify the ES task	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
			NO YES – go to step 2
Step 2: Analyse the task	Which Essential Skills are being used?	What are the skill level demands?	
	Main skill:		
	Other skills:		

Essential Skills and Work Habits

TIP: Use the Ontario Skills Passport website to help you.
<http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca>

Appendix 2: Practice Sets

Practice Activities

Practice Activity 1

Below is an example of a Grade 9 applied math classroom activity (from Ontario Ministry of Education, Targeted Implementation and Planning Supports for Revised Mathematics [TIPS4RM]). Have a look at the activity and then use the Quick Reference Sheet on the next page to identify and analyse the Essential Skills task.

4.3.1: Television Viewing

Did you know that there is an optimal distance for a person to be from a television for ideal viewing?

The ratio of the size of the television screen to the distance a person should sit from it is 1:6.

If the room is 17 feet long, can a person sit at an optimal distance from a 27-inch television? Explain your reasoning.

(continued)

Practice Activity 1

Use the Quick Reference Sheet below to identify and analyse the activity. *Tip:* Start with a clear description of what the learner is being asked to do and why the learner is being asked to do it. This will help you work through the process. Go to *Answers* on page 29 to see our analysis.

Describe the activity:			
Step 1: Identify the ES task	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
			NO YES – go to step 2
Step 2: Analyse the task	Which Essential Skills are being used?		What are the skill level demands?
	Main skill:		
	Other skills:		

Practice Activity 2

Below is a classroom activity from On the Way to Work (available at <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/OSPWayToWork.jsp>). Have a look at the activity and then use the Quick Reference Sheet on the next page to identify and analyse the Essential Skills task.

What's Missing

Jean is checking the first aid kit that the landscapers take on the truck.

The First Aid kit has:

First Aid Supplies	Qty.
Safety pins	1 card
Band-aids – regular	34
Band-aids – specialty	30
Sterile Gauze pads, 3 inches square	3
Rolls of 3 inch gauze bandage	2
Sterile surgical pads	2
Triangular bandages	2
After Bite, bug repellent, sun block	1 each
Dressing tape	1
Nail clippers, scissors, tweezers	1 each
Polysporin	0
Surgical gloves	3 pair
Travel wipes	5
Eye wash bottles	0

Compare this list with the record and order form (Hint: Look at the column marked “Min. Qty.”)

Fill in the order form for 1st Aid Supplies.

1. Check either “Enough” or “Low Stock” for each item.
2. Order items that are low stock. Use Jean Marrow’s initials to show she is ordering the item.
3. Use June 3, 2006 as the “Date Ordered”.

PPE and First Aid-Supplies

1 st Aid Supplies	Min. Qty	Enough ✓	Low Stock ✓	Ordered By	Date Ordered
Safety pins	1 card				
Band-aids-regular	100				
Band-aids-specialty	40				
Sterile gauze pads, 3 inches square	3				
Rolls of 3 inch gauze bandage	2				
Sterile surgical pads suitable for pressure dressings, individually wrapped.	2				
Triangular bandages	2				
Summer months: After bite, bug repellent, sun block.	1 each				
Dressing tape	1				
Nail clippers, scissors, tweezers	1 each				
Polysporin	1				
Surgical gloves	10 pair				
Travel wipes	10				
Eye wash bottles	1				

(continued)

Practice Activity 2

Use the Quick Reference Sheet below to identify and analyse the activity. *Tip:* Start with a clear description of what the learner is being asked to do and why the learner is being asked to do it. This will help you work through the process. Go to *Answers* on page 29 to see our analysis.

Describe the activity:			
Step 1: Identify the ES task	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
			NO YES – go to step 2
Step 2: Analyse the task	Which Essential Skills are being used?		What are the skill level demands?
	Main skill:		
	Other skills:		

Practice
Activity
3

Below is a classroom activity from The Big Picture (available at <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/OSPBIGPicture.jsp>). Have a look at the activity and then use the Quick Reference Sheet on the next page to identify and analyse the Essential Skills task.

Check Out Those Wheels! Survey Form

Think about all the different colours of vehicles. Think about all the different types of vehicles. Complete the form below before we head outside to do the survey.

VEHICLE CRITERIA	TALLYING	TOTAL
Colour		
Doors		
2-door		
4-door (vans included)		
Type of Vehicle		

Check out those Wheels!

How many red cars are in our school parking lot?
 How many people buy cars with two doors versus four doors? Do teachers prefer cars over trucks?
 Are vans still really popular? By completing this assignment we will have a pretty clear idea of what vehicles are popular with the staff at our school.

There are three parts to this assignment.

- Surveys:** Surveying the parking lot. We will be counting up all the vehicles that fit into different categories.
- Graphs:** Taking the results and creating bar graphs and pie charts.
- Postings:** Posting the Essential Skills required for this assignment on the classroom wall as part of our "Essential Skills City" project.

Check out those Wheels!

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There are three parts to this assignment.

Surveys: Surveying the parking lot. We will be adding up all the vehicles that fit into different categories.

Graphs: Taking the results and creating bar graphs and pie charts.

Postings: Posting the Essential Skills required for this assignment on the classroom wall as part of our ongoing “Essential Skills for Success WALL OF FAME.”

(continued)

Practice Activity 3

Use the Quick Reference Sheet below to identify and analyse the activity. *Tip:* Start with a clear description of what the learner is being asked to do and why the learner is being asked to do it. This will help you work through the process. Go to *Answers* on page 30 to see our analysis.

Describe the activity:			
Step 1: Identify the ES task	What is the learner being asked to do?	Why is the learner being asked to do it?	Might individuals do this outside the classroom?
			NO YES – go to step 2
Step 2: Analyse the task	Which Essential Skills are being used?		What are the skill level demands?
	Main skill:		
	Other skills:		

Answers

Practice
Activity
1

Yes, we have an ES task!

Skill requirements: **Measurement and Calculation level 3**

In this case the learner is being asked to make calculations in order to figure out if it is possible for a person to sit at an optimal distance from a 27-inch TV in a room 17 feet long. Making a calculation to figure out if an object is a suitable size is a task with a purpose that we might need to do at home or at work. This means we have an ES task.

Making calculations falls under the Essential Skills category of measurement and calculation. The skill level demands are at level 3 because the task requires a combination of operations and multiple steps. The written explanation is not rated because it is meant to have learners show how they reached their conclusion and doesn't form part of the real-life task.

Practice
Activity
2

Yes, we have an ES task!

Skill requirements: **Data Analysis level 1** and **Document Use level 2**

The learner is being asked to compare the supplies on hand with minimum quantities for the purpose of completing a form to order supplies. Comparing how much one has with how much one needs is an activity with a purpose that is carried out outside the classroom. In fact, we often complete forms to order supplies, so we definitely have an Essential Skills task.

Several Essential Skills are being used. First, learners use data analysis when they compare quantities on hand with the quantities needed. Then there is document use when they complete a form. Simple numerical comparisons require data analysis at level 1; completing simple forms or tables requires document use at level 2.

Practice
Activity
3

Yes, we have an ES task!

Skill requirements: **Data Analysis level 2;** **Document Use level 2;**
Document Creation

In this case, learners are asked to record survey results and create graphs to display results. They do this to determine which vehicles are popular with staff. Surveying and graphing to analyse trends happens all the time outside school – just think how many times you are called on to participate in surveys! We have another Essential Skills task here.

Analysing trends requires data analysis at level 2 because it involves calculating simple numerical summaries. Document use at level 2 is required because survey results are initially logged in a simple table. Creating a graph is an example of document creation. Although it is a document use skill, document creation is not rated using Essential Skills methodology.

Appendix 3: Essential Skills Tasks and Skill-Building Activities

It may not be possible for learners who are working at a very basic level (e.g., some learners with developmental disabilities) to perform Essential Skills tasks. However, for these and other learners, teachers can identify selected skill-building activities that help learners progress towards the performance of these tasks. These skill-building activities prepare learners to develop the requisite knowledge and skills required to perform Essential Skills tasks. Connecting skill-building activities and Essential Skills real-world tasks provides a focus, organizational structure, and purpose for learning and helps teachers to explain to learners what they are learning, why they are learning it, and when they will use it outside the classroom.

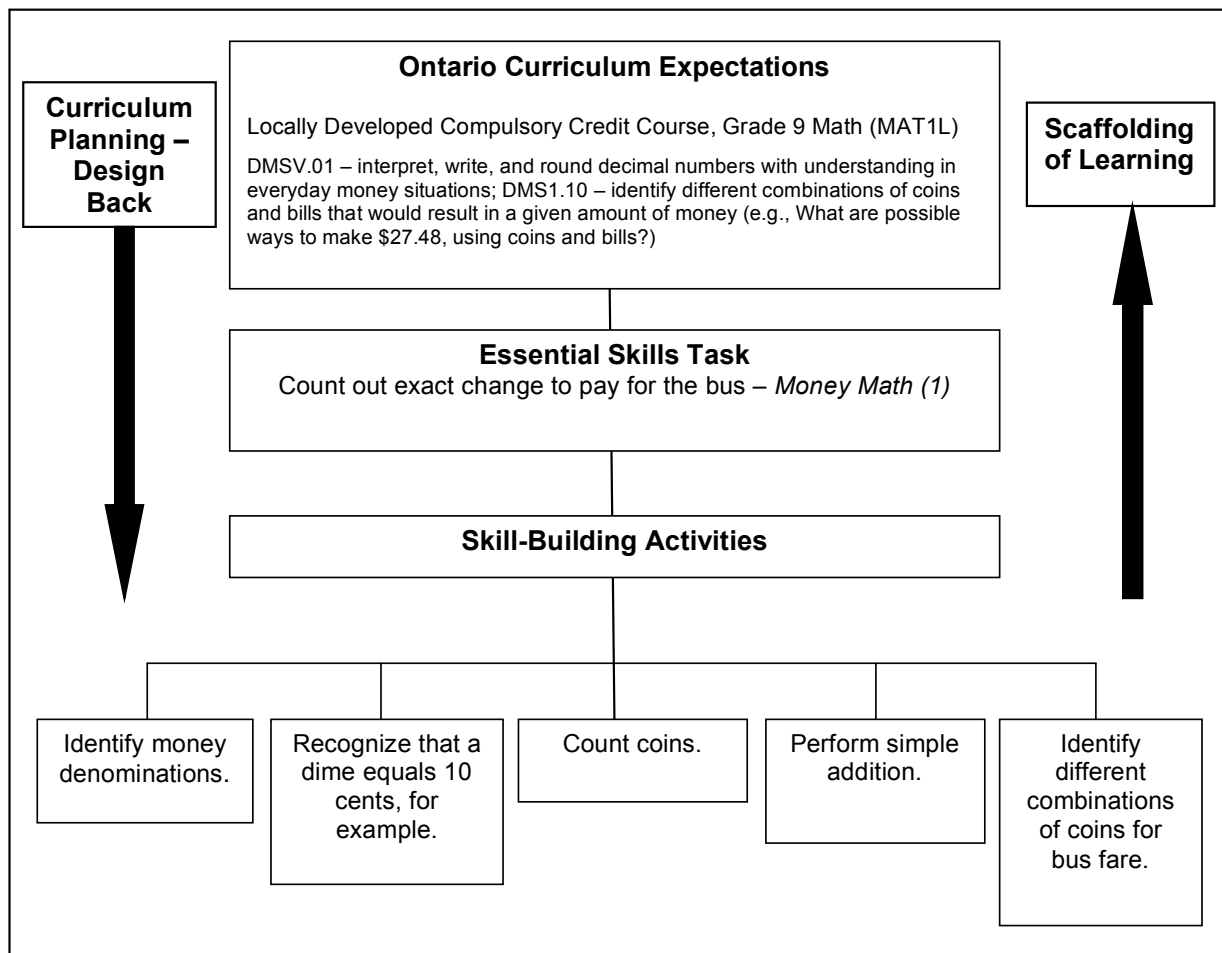
For example, “counting money” is not an Essential Skills task because there is no clear purpose or context. Counting money is, however, a skill necessary in an Essential Skills task such as “*Count out exact change to pay for the bus*”. A person cannot successfully perform the Essential Skills task without being able to count money.

See the chart on the next page for skill-building activities required for this Essential Skills task. A teacher would engage learners in practising these skill-building activities in order to scaffold learning and work towards successful performance of the Essential Skills task.

Learners With Special Needs

All learners require opportunities to learn and demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. By differentiating instruction, assessment, and evaluation, teachers address the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms and support learner achievement. Engaging in Essential Skills tasks may be particularly relevant for learners with special education needs. These learners may require an individual program that differs in content and in instruction, assessment, and evaluation strategies. In planning a program for learners with special education needs, teachers, with the support of an in-school team, begin by considering the strengths, needs, necessary accommodations, and transition plans identified in the learners’ **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**. The annual program goals, learning expectations, and skill-building activities appropriate for learners’ instructional level are also considered.

Essential Skills tasks can serve as the focus for modified or alternative learning expectations. When they do, learners should work on the tasks independently, once skill-building instruction has been provided. These demonstrations can then be documented in learners’ IEPs and learners’ progress should be reported in these terms.



Appendix 4: Integrating Essential Skills and the Ontario Curriculum

The diagram below illustrates how use of Essential Skills can be integrated into high school courses. In the centre of the diagram is a unifying theme surrounded by identifiers for courses with curriculum expectations that can be addressed using the theme. In the next ring there is a sampling of Essential Skills tasks that can be used to meet curriculum expectations. Finally, in the outside ring there are some skill-building activities that will help learners develop the skills they need to accomplish the Essential Skills tasks. Using this model, you'll be able to both meet curriculum expectations and have learners use Essential Skills.



The course, curriculum expectations, and skill-building activities that are linked with one of the Essential Skills tasks in the “Managing Your Health” unit (page 33) are shown below. Teachers can use this chart format to show curriculum linkages when creating their own units.

Course(s)	Curriculum Expectations	Essential Skills Tasks	Skill-Building Activities
Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Course, Math, Grade 9 (MAT1L)	<p>DMSV.01 – interpret, write, and round decimal numbers with understanding in everyday money situations</p> <p>DMS1.10 – identify different combinations of coins and bills that would result in a given amount of money (e.g., What are possible ways to make \$27.48, using coins and bills?)</p>	<p>Count out exact change to pay for the bus when travelling to a doctor’s appointment.</p> <p><i>Money Math (1)</i></p>	<p>Identifies money denominations.</p> <p>Knows that a dime equals 10 cents, for example.</p> <p>Counts coins.</p> <p>Performs simple addition.</p> <p>Identifies different combinations of coins for bus fare.</p>

Learners who meet the curriculum expectations shown in the chart above will also have demonstrated the Essential Skills at the level indicated. If learners do not meet the curriculum expectations, teachers can prepare learners by scaffolding learning. Scaffolded learning should begin at a level that learners can manage, using either the skill-building activities or the Essential Skills tasks from the chart above.

The Achievement Chart and Skill Level Ratings for Essential Skills

The achievement chart for each secondary school discipline in the Ontario curriculum is a standard province-wide guide that enables teachers to make judgements about learners’ work against clear performance standards. It is important to recognize that the scale used in achievement charts is distinct from the skill level rating scale for Essential Skills. The achievement charts measure learner performance in a particular grade and course, while the skill level ratings for Essential Skills describe task complexity and do not align with grade level, age, or course. The two scales are very different and serve different purposes.

Teachers use the achievement chart to find out how learners have performed against curriculum expectations. They use the skill level rating scale to find out how the tasks that learners carry out relate to practical demands outside the classroom.

The achievement chart identifies four categories of knowledge and skills: Knowledge and Understanding, Thinking, Communication, and Application. All skills require some knowledge and understanding of context, vocabulary, and concepts. Some Essential Skills can be used to address the Thinking category, others the Communication category. However, the transferability of the Essential Skills relates directly to the Application category in which learners apply knowledge and skills in familiar contexts and transfer knowledge and skills to new contexts. It makes sense that learners who are familiar with the language of Essential Skills, and with how they use these skills in other areas of their lives, can more readily apply and transfer the knowledge and skills they are demonstrating in the classroom to new contexts.

Appendix 5: Inventory of Classroom Activities

The two-step process described in this guide has been used to create an inventory of classroom activities that incorporate Essential Skills. These classroom activities can be used in a variety of grades and settings to help learners practise, build, and demonstrate their skills. They contain curriculum connections and identify the Essential Skills tasks and skill levels so teachers can easily integrate these tasks into their lesson planning.

Visit the [OSP](#) website to download these activities.

Each classroom activity listed includes:

- details about its source and course connections;
- a descriptive summary to explain what learners do in the activity;
- a statement of the Essential Skills task that learners will be carrying out;
- an analysis of the task for its Essential Skills and skill level demands;
- an indication of accompanying assessment tools;
- teacher notes.

Appendix 6: Training Others to Use This Guide

The following are some tips you can use if you find yourself in a position to train others on how to use this guide.

Begin with an introduction to the OSP and the Essential Skills

If the people being trained are new to the concept of Essential Skills, have them begin with a tour of the OSP website to learn about each of the skills. Point out how the skills can be put to use in work, learning, and life. The video vignettes make clear connections between everyday tasks and the use of Essential Skills.

Introduce the concept of skill levels

For those who are already familiar with the Essential Skills, a review of the skills should be sufficient to get started. Task complexity is a key concept to understand. Each Essential Skill has an associated skill level rating scale that describes the features of tasks that make some easier than others. It is not necessary to study the scales in detail; however, trainees will need some time to practise rating tasks in order to feel comfortable with the scales.

Have trainees experience increasing complexity

The following card game is one activity trainees may find useful as they learn about complexity. The “Why is this so hard?” game was created by M. Hardt of Performance by Design, Inc. to simplify the “type of match” dimension of complexity in tasks. All you need is one deck of cards for each group of three to four trainees.

Part I

1. Show trainees the ace of hearts.
2. Have trainees shuffle the deck of cards and then find the ace of hearts (A♥) in the deck.
3. Once they are done, have them think about the process.
4. Point out that since they were shown the card they needed to locate, there was a direct match between the visual of the card and the card in the deck.

Part II

1. Have trainees put the card back into the deck and shuffle the cards.
2. This time, have trainees locate all four aces.
3. Once they are done, have them think about the process.
4. This time they were asked to make a direct match between the cards they were asked to find and the cards in the deck, but they had to locate a card four times to find the four aces (A♥, A♦, A♣, and A♠). This strategy is known as “cycling”. Increased time was required to complete the task.

Part III

1. Have trainees put the cards back into the deck and shuffle.
2. This time have trainees find all the♦s and place the cards in order from A (low) to K (high). Players should display sequence A♦ to K♦.
3. Once they are done, have them think about the process.
4. This task also involves multiple “locates”, but this time trainees had to manipulate, or process, the cards by sequencing them. This strategy is known as “integrate”.

Part IV

1. Have trainees put the cards back in the deck and shuffle.
2. This time they should identify the highest-scoring hand for each of the three most popular card games in North America.
3. Once they are done, have them think about the process.
4. Point out that this task was the most challenging because it depended on trainees’ using their prior knowledge to complete the task. They had to “generate” the answer from their own heads.

Explain that the card game illustrates the strategies of locating, cycling, integrating, and generating. It demonstrates the kinds of analysis that went into determining the Essential Skills complexity levels. In particular, tasks that require only locating are considered easier than tasks that require cycling, integrating, or generating.

Provide an overview of the guide’s contents and opportunities to practise

You can use the organization of the guide to train others how to use the guide. Refer to the relevant sections of the guide as you carry out these tasks.

- Introduce the purpose of the guide and the value of understanding Essential Skills (Why Use This guide? and Why Do Essential Skills matter?, pages 4–5).
- Explain how trainees can apply the content of the guide (How Can I Use This Guide?, page 8).
- Walk trainees through the two-step process (How Can I Identify Essential Skills in Classroom Activities?, page 9).
- Review the examples in step 1 (pages 11–12).
- Provide practice on step 1 (pages 13–14).
- Discuss responses (Step 1: Answers, pages 15–16).
- Review the examples in step 2 (page 18).
- Provide practice on step 2 (page 19).
- Discuss responses (Step 2: Answers, page 20).
- Provide practice using a practice set (one from Appendix 2, pages 23–28).

- Discuss responses (Appendix 2, Answers, pages 29–30).
- Point out the ongoing usefulness of the Quick Reference Sheet (Appendix 1, page 22).

Direct attention to the extensive collection of analysed activities

Select some examples of the classroom activities that have already been analysed and are posted on the OSP website. Explain how trainees might use these in their work.

Resources

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