

A shared language and framework for developing essential skills.

Building essential skills supports learning and progress in education and employability beyond it.

For all children to thrive, building these skills need to be explicitly embedded into the National Curriculum.

This needs to be reinforced through opportunities and support beyond the classroom, including youth social action.

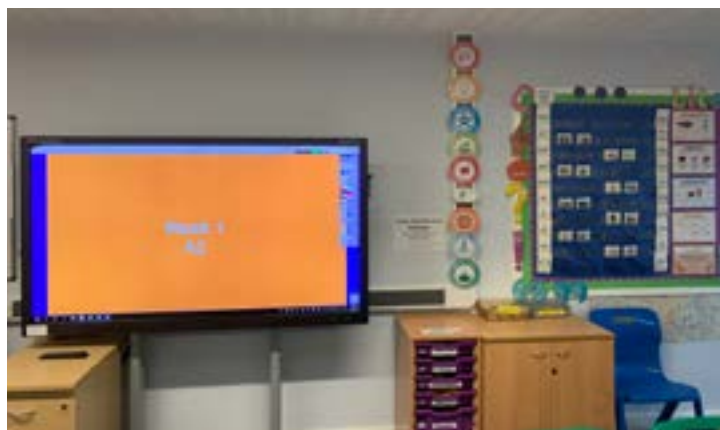
The Fair Education Alliance is backing the Skills Builder Framework. The consistent language and shared outcomes underpin this work.

We are calling for a shared language and framework for building essential skills



Folkstone College - Youth Social Action

Folkstone College embedded youth social action into their learning courses ensuring that all young people were gaining skills whilst helping their local communities. [1] ([View video here](#)).



Applying the Skills Builder methodology at Curwen Primary School

Since 2012, Curwen Primary School has been working to integrate essential skills education into the everyday curriculum. Students' progress is tracked against the Skills Builder Framework, and teachers have been trained on the most effective ways to build essential skills. [Find out more here](#). [2]

What is an essential skill?

Essential skills underpin success at every stage of life. Adapting the definition of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), essential skills are what everyone needs to support the application of specialised expertise and knowledge. They unlock learning whilst at school, ensure young people are fully prepared for the independence of university and college and empower them in landing their dream jobs. [3]

Using the Skills Builder approach, we define essential skills as: leadership, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, listening, speaking, aiming high and staying positive.

Building essential skills leads to better employability outcomes.

Research has shown that young people are leaving school without the essential skills they need to thrive. Consequently, employers are having to pick up where things have not worked in the education system. A report from the EY Foundation found that 45% of employers surveyed reported having to organise training in at least one basic skill for employees recruited in the last 12 months. [4]

Whilst continuous training and development is important in the workplace, it is a failure of the education system if young people are leaving school without the essential skills needed to flourish.

Essential skills need to be embedded into the national curriculum so that no child is left behind.

When looking at current provisions it is acknowledged that extracurricular activities are helping to bridge the skills gap for some children. Evidence has shown that taking part in a wide range of activities can help them to develop confidence, motivation, resilience and communication skills, leading to better academic outcomes. However, it is not good enough to rely on activities that take place outside of the school day to help build these skills. [5]

Low-income students are on average less likely to have access to extracurricular activities than their more affluent peers, meaning that they are missing out on key skills building opportunities. By recognising that the most persistently disadvantaged pupils are already almost 2 years (22.6 months) behind their peers at the end of GCSEs, we need to find a better way to bridge the disadvantage gap, not only academically but skills wise too.[6]

Work from the [Skills Builder Partnership](#) shows that building essential skills regularly and deliberately in a classroom setting has a significant impact on the rate at which those skills are acquired – students achieve more than 60% more progress per year on average.[7]



For future generations to be able to compete in a globalised world and tackle 21st Century challenges such as climate change, it is crucial that essential skills are embedded into the national curriculum.

Unfortunately change does not happen overnight. That is why we have included a series of case studies, frameworks and resources that highlight best practice for embedding skills and social action into schools to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach their potential.

"If you're from a poorer background you don't necessarily have the luxury of having spare time to be able to go to groups and extra things."

Young person, Anonymous [8]

Beyond the classroom matters too

While building essential skills should be a normal part of a good education, the best learning combines curriculum-based learning with co-curricular opportunities.

For example:

- [The National Literacy Trust's Words for Work programme](#) focuses on building teamwork, listening and speaking skills.
- [Brightside](#) uses mentoring to support building the skills.
- [Children's University](#) helps children to recognise the skills they build.
- [Spiral](#) works with young people to set them up for employability.

Similarly, social action is a great way that schools can help young people to build essential skills. Embedding youth social action into a school's ethos ensures that all young people are able to build essential skills, whilst making a positive change to their local community or school. [9] Getting involved in social action also helps students to have a sense of self-efficacy and influence which in turn helps to improve their wellbeing and increases their readiness to learn. [10]

Finally, this is an area where employers have a critical role to play. FEA members [Allen & Overy](#) use the Skills Builder Framework to enhance their work experience offer, [KPMG](#) run employability workshops in schools to build essential skills in schools and [UBS](#) host groups of students to practice their essential skills in their workplace.

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Case Studies



Community Action at East Kent College

East Kent College is committed to embedding Social Action into their school's ethos.

Each year they deliver two community action weeks where students take part in an activity that enhances their communities and the lives of those around them. [11]

[Find out more here.](#)

"There's little doubt of the positive impact social action has on young people's' lives. It develops them as individuals, gives them greater resilience and helps build a bridge into their local communities." [12]

- Principal of East Kent College, Graham Razey

Adopting a shared language at The National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity dedicated to giving children and young people the communication skills they need to succeed in the workplace. They've integrated the Skills Builder Framework into their [Words for Work programmes](#), including skills-focused language in their resources and reflection process. Teachers they work with track skill progress all the way through the programmes, and language from the Framework helps the organisation evaluate the programme in surveys and focus groups. [13]

[Find out more here.](#)



Campaigning to improve the health of Barrow-In-Furness

Victoria Academy in Barrow-in-Furness have a successful track record of bringing businesses and schools together to develop meaningful learning opportunities, anchored in life beyond the school gates. The most recent project explored how children could be involved in improving the health of their community, resulting in students presenting their findings to the Clinical Commissioning Group, offering their recommendations. [14]

[Find out more here.](#)

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Frameworks for reference

1. Breaking down essential skills for all children



The Skills Builder Partnership breaks down each of the eight essential skills into sixteen tangible, teachable and measurable steps. It can be used with children and young people to clarify what success looks like in each skill and to map out the trajectory for proficiency.

[Find out more here. \[15\]](#)

2. Research based models to build non-academic skills

Researchers, educators, employers, and parents agree that social and emotional learning (SEL) and non-academic skills matter for success in school and life, but it can be difficult to decide which skills to focus on – let alone how best to promote and measure them. Here is a collection of frameworks that can help to build essential skills in young people from Harvard University.

[Find out more here. \[16\]](#)

3. Promoting critical thinking in all classrooms

Every eight weeks The Economist Educational Foundation publishes resources to help 9-year-olds and up to develop knowledge, critical thinking, literacy and confidence through inspiring discussions about the news.

[Find out more here. \[17\]](#)

“At KPMG we seek to improve outcomes for young people by delivering programmes that help develop the essential skills required for the world of work. Establishing a baseline and providing students with a practical roadmap to improve is critical - Skills Builder has been invaluable in adding this structure to our programmes and their evaluation. The framework has enabled us to develop more consistency in our long term programmes with schools, to ensure learning objectives are clear and teachers, students and business volunteers are all using a common language to support sustained skills development.”

*Ben Churchill
Senior Corporate Responsibility Manager*

4. Emphasising skills and habits that can be developed over time

The Franklin Scholar shield is a framework which contains the 24 skills and habits that are known to be valuable and malleable, and able to be developed via practice.

[Read the full framework here. \[18\]](#)

[Read Franklin Scholars Impact Report post framework implementation. \[19\]](#)

5. Encouraging a culture of building skills like reading and writing

The National Literacy Trust offers schools a huge range of resources, tools and online training to audit literacy provision and raise standards in the classroom by empowering teachers. This resource is part of their Annual Literacy Review tool.

[Read their ‘Writing Culture Review’ here. \[20\]](#)

[You can see the whole offer here. \[21\]](#)