

Life Skills:

Supporting Student Success

About This Resource

This Life Skills framework is intended to guide and inform program planning teams in the identification of appropriate outcomes on the life skills continuum for individual students. It may compliment, but does not replace a student's individual program plan.

Life skills enable individuals to function effectively within their environment and lead healthy, meaningful, and productive lives. Successful acquisition of these skills and strategies allows individuals to make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and cope with the demands of daily living.

Supporting
Student
Success

Four Domains—Definitions

Healthy living: Leading a balanced lifestyle resulting in emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual well-being

Independent living: Managing self-care and the activities of daily living

Career development: Increasing work/employability skills by acquiring experiences, knowledge, and the abilities to attain them

Self-awareness: Developing understanding; accepting and advocating your strengths and challenges, preferences, and needs

Key Principles

The following Key Principles, as stated in the *Special Education Policy* (2008), provide the context for the development of outcomes on the life skills continuum. Program planning teams work collaboratively to profile the student's strengths and challenges to identify individual outcomes that will ultimately support student success.

Right to an Appropriate Education

A right to an appropriate education means the fundamental educational human right of every individual to have their unique learning needs responded to on an individual basis.

Right to Quality Education and Qualified Teachers

All students have a right to a quality education taught by licensed qualified teachers.

Right to an Inclusive Education

Inclusive education embodies beliefs, attitudes, and values that promote "...the basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming and services in the company of their peers."¹

Teacher's Responsibility

Teachers are responsible for teaching all students who are placed under their supervision and care. This includes responsibility for safety and well-being, as well as program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This is not a responsibility that can be transferred or delegated to non-teaching staff.²

Parental Involvement

Parents/guardians have a duty and a responsibility to support their children in achieving success. They are an integral part of their children's education and should be involved in program planning from the outset.³

Student Involvement

All students are expected to achieve to the best of their individual abilities the essential graduation learnings as stated in the Public School Programs.⁴

Individual Program Plan and Accountability

An individual program plan (IPP) is developed in consideration of the student's strengths and needs. The outcomes in the IPP form the foundation for the evaluation of student progress. This progress is an important component in measuring school success.

Collaboration

Collaboration and consultation are essential in planning and supporting students with special needs to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to program planning and service delivery.

¹Inclusion Fact Sheet. See also *Education Act*, Section 64(2)(d).

²Responsibilities of teachers and principals are outlined in the *Education Act*, Sections 26, 38.

³*Education Act*, Section 25; *Special Education Policy* (2008), Policy 2.2.

⁴*Education Act*, Section 24.

Books and Brochures

Brolin, Donn E., and Robert J. Loyd. *Career Development and Transition Services: A Functional Life Skills Approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Limited, 2004.

Eckenrode, Laurie, Pat Fennell, and Kathy Hearsey. *Tasks Galore for the Real World*. Raleigh, NC: Tasks Galore Publishing Inc., 2004.

Mannix, Darlene. *Life Skills Activities for Secondary Students with Special Needs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Mundell, Susan B., and Karen DeLario. *Practical Portfolios: Reading, Writing, Math, and Life Skills, Grades 3–6*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press, 1994.

New Brunswick Association for Community Living. *Employ Ability: An Employer Guide to Hiring & Training Workers with Intellectual Disabilities*. Fredericton, NB: New Brunswick Association for Community Living. www.nbacl.nb.ca

Shea, Victoria, and Betty Gordon. *Growing Up: A Social and Sexual Education Picture Book for Young People with Mental Retardation*. Chapel Hill, NC: Division for Disorders of Development and Learning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1984.

The Conference Board of Canada. "Research Topics." *Employability Skills 2000+*. www.conferenceboard.ca

Online Resources

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. "Educator Resources." www.okcareertech.org

Department of Labour and Workforce Development: "Career Options." www.novascotiacaereroptions.ca

Emond Montgomery Publications. *Learn Smart: Strategies to Succeed in School and Life Teacher's Resource*. www.emp.ca.

Department of Community Services. Youth Secretariat. www.gov.ns.ca/coms.

Adolescent Health Transition Project. "Adolescent Autonomy Checklists." depts.washington.edu/healthtr/Checklists/intro.htm

Bloorview Kids Rehab. *Growing Up Ready Timetable and Checklists*. Toronto, ON. www.bloorview.ca

Professional Resources

Baker, Bruce L., and Alan J. Brightman. *Steps to Independence: Teaching Everyday Skills to Children with Special Needs*, 4th ed. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., 2004.

Baker, Jed. *Preparing for Life: The Complete Guide for Transitioning to Adulthood for Those with Autism and ASP*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, 2005.

Brolin, Donn E. *Life Centered Career Education (LCCE)*. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, 1992.

Brolin, Donn E., and Robert J. Loyd. *Career Development and Transition Services: A Functional Life Skills Approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Ltd., 2004.

Coyne, Phyllis, and Ann Fullerton. *Supporting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Recreation*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, 2004.

Hawkins, Gail. *How to Find Work that Works for People with Asperger Syndrome*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004.

Krug, David A., Gary Nave, Joel R. Arick, and Tera Hoffman. *Functional Assessment and Curriculum for Teaching Everyday Routines (FACTER)*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED Inc., 2001.

Mannix, Darlene. *Life Skills Activities for Secondary Students with Special Needs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Melberg Schwier, Karin, and David Hingsburger. *Sexuality: Your Sons and Daughters with Intellectual Disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Brooks Publishing Co., 2000.

Mesibov, Gary, John B. Thomas, S. Michael Chapman, and Eric Schopler. *TEACCH Transition Assessment Profile (TTAP)*, 2nd ed. Austin, TX: PRO-ED Inc., 2007.

Mundell, Susan B., and Karen DeLario. *Practical Portfolios: Reading, Writing, Math, and Life Skills, Grades 3–6*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press, 1994.

Paterson, Kathy. *Real Life Literacy: Classroom Tools that Promote Real-World Reading and Writing*. Markham ON: Pembroke Publishers, 2006.

Wrobel, Mary. *Taking Care of Myself: A Healthy Hygiene, Puberty and Personal Curriculum for Young People with Autism*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, 2005.

Website References

Website references contained within this document are provided solely as a convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by the Department of Education of the content, policies, or products of the referenced website. The department does not control the referenced websites and is not responsible for the accuracy, legality, or content of the referenced websites or for that of subsequent links. Referenced website content may change without notice.

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How to Use This Resource

This resource is a discussion tool for parents/guardians, teachers, and program planning teams to support the selection of appropriate life skills curriculum outcomes. A check mark in the ✓ column indicates that the program planning team has selected this element, in that particular domain, as a priority in programming and services for this student, this school year, and/or this semester.

The other three columns are explained below.

Why? What? Where?

These are questions to inform the selection of the element:

Where is the student currently functioning in relation to this element?

What evidence (assessment/observation) identifies the student's strengths and challenges in relation to this element?

Why is this element important for this student at this time?

How?

How should this element be addressed?

Options could include one or more of the following:

- within existing curricular outcomes
- within individual program plan outcomes
- through support from home and community

Strategies and Resources

- What human and material supports are required to address this outcome?
- What role might the community play in the generalization of this skill?
- What strengths and emerging skills does the student have that support the acquisition of the new skill?
- What adaptations and assistive technologies can be used to facilitate independent functioning?

The attached disk includes a Word template of the Life Skills: Supporting Student Success table, as well as a list of supplementary resources and links.

How Life Skill Credits Are Recognized on a Senior High Transcript

Life skills credits not aligned with public school program credits will be shown on the student transcript using the course title from the provincial course code files provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Education (e.g., Daily Living Skills 10, 12 IPP, etc.).

Should a program planning team determine that the life skill outcome(s) cannot be specified as an IPP utilizing general curriculum outcomes of a public school program course, a course from the provincial course code files, or using an approved locally developed course title, a request can be made to acquire a new course code, using the Course Code Request Form (www.EDnet.ns.ca).

Healthy Living	✓	Why/What/Where	How	Strategies and Resources
Includes				
Fostering friendships				
Participating in leisure/recreation activities				
Understanding your body				
Coping with stress/anxiety				
Developing and maintaining personal fitness				
Making healthy food choices				
Having a healthy self-esteem				
Participating in spiritual activities				
Making choices and decisions				
Understanding personal safety and awareness of risks				
Developing problem-solving and negotiating skills				
Using medication safely				
Developing alcohol and drug awareness				
Acquiring knowledge of available support structures				
Knowing and contacting your own health-care team				
Maintaining family relationships				
Other (Specify)				
Other (Specify)				
Career Development	✓	Why/What/Where	How	Strategies and Resources
Includes				
Understanding the world of work				
Developing job readiness e.g., prior to going to work				
Exploring career options				
Preparing portfolios and résumés				
Developing interview skills				
Developing employability skills specific to a job				
Knowing workplace responsibility, e.g., work ethic				
Understanding and practicing work safety				
Other (Specify)				
Other (Specify)				

Independent Living Skills	✓	Why/What/Where	How	Strategies and Resources
Includes				
Communicating wants and needs				
Using assistive technology				
Managing personal care routines e.g., hygiene, toileting, dressing, feeding				
Managing time				
Moving about your community				
Taking responsibility for a job or chore				
Developing consumer skills				
Taking care of clothing				
Planning and preparing food				
Accessing community resources and services				
Managing money and personal finances				
Managing emergency situations				
Being a responsible citizen				
Exploring housing options				
Understanding legal responsibilities, e.g., taxes, passport, SIN, MSI				
Other (Specify)				
Other (Specify)				
Self-awareness	✓	Why/What/Where	How	Strategies and Resources
Includes				
Making choices				
Developing social and intrapersonal skills				
Knowing my disability				
Understanding and expressing my strengths and challenges				
Developing resiliency/perseverance skills				
Knowing my rights and responsibilities				
Knowing how to advocate for myself				
Addressing sexuality				
Other (Specify)				
Other (Specify)				

What options exist to address elements of the life skills domains?

The curriculum of the Public School Program (PSP) provides many opportunities to address the development of life skills through both instructional content and the teaching of specific strategies. For some students, individualized programming for life skills is necessary.

When this happens the program planning team (PPT) should consider programming that provides authentic opportunities for learning in inclusive environments considering the principle of “Only as Special as Necessary.”

Do all students with IPPs need life skills programming?

No, life skills programming is not the result of a student’s programming being individualized in other areas. Like all individualized outcomes, life skills outcomes are developed in response to the individual student’s strengths, challenges, and interests.

This resource will support program planning teams’ identification of particular life skills element(s) for individualization, which may result in a more comprehensive and focused life skills programming.

How important are life skills in transition planning?

Very important!

Managing and coping with change is an important contributing factor for all students in making successful transitions. Proactive student-centered programming minimizes barriers and contributes to personal growth.

There are often specific new skills necessary for students to successfully engage in their changing environment.

How important is the tracking and evaluation of elements to successful life skills programming?

This resource asks the team not only why the element is important but also where the student is currently functioning in relation to the element.

This baseline data provides vital information required to track growth over time. The program planning team needs to be clear about how progress will be tracked, and achieved, and if necessary, revised. Data collection will provide a review of what has been accomplished and what remains to be worked on.

The reporting template for IPPs provides a rubric for both the focus of instruction and reporting student progress.

What is meant by the gradual shift of responsibility?

Gradual shift of responsibility can refer to a student’s growth toward independence and/or the shift of responsibility from one service provider to another.

In terms of personal growth, the student will most likely need greater support when beginning to acquire an essential life skill. By providing opportunities for a student to gradually take greater responsibility for the skill, we are helping the student to become more independent and promoting greater success for his or her future life experiences in the community. This is the optimal outcome of life skills programming.

However, some students will require ongoing support beyond the school system. In these instances, the shift of responsibility refers to a collaborative/integrative service approach for ongoing support particularly from school to post-secondary settings.