



SKILLS & DISPOSITIONS THAT SUPPORT YOUTH SUCCESS IN SCHOOL: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

An almost universally held goal for young people is that they transition to adulthood prepared to succeed in school, work and life. However, the way success is defined varies widely; and the ways we measure and support youth success vary even more.

Research points to several interrelated domains of learning: **knowledge** (acquiring information), **skills** (the ability to demonstrate a particular behavioral repertoire), and **dispositions** (mindsets that become internalized, such as curiosity or persistence). As a nation, we have placed high value on measuring knowledge through standardized testing, while devoting less attention to defining, measuring, and building skills and dispositions.

Researchers, educators, youth development practitioners, parents, and the general public all use different words to describe the skills and dispositions they hope young people will develop and demonstrate. Currently, some of the labels commonly used to describe these types of skills and dispositions include 21st century skills, social and emotional competencies, non-cognitive or non-academic skills, engagement and motivation, and habits of mind. Connected to each of these terms are frameworks that include different but related lists of indicators.

In 2011-2012, Youth Development Executives of King County, in partnership with the Road Map Project, convened a work group to identify and describe those skills and dispositions that matter most to school success. The resulting list, ***Skills and Dispositions that Support Youth Success in School***, brings together research and practical knowledge on what matters most to school success. By establishing shared language, this list can move us toward common measurement tools to both assess how young people are doing in these important areas, and to understand how our programs can contribute most effectively to skill development.

Traditionally, skills and dispositions have not been measured directly. Rather, they have been seen as contributing to those academic behaviors that can be measured easily – attending school regularly and getting good grades. However, measuring only attendance and course performance does not yield data that can inform efforts to improve student skills and dispositions. We need to go beyond our traditional metrics to understand how to help young people build skills and dispositions necessary to school, work, and life success.

The environments in which young people build skills and dispositions also vary widely, as do the adults that help facilitate their development – from teachers, counselors, and other school-based staff to child and youth development professionals, social workers and other community leaders, to parents and family members. Over the course of a typical year, a young person spends nearly 75 to 80 percent of their time outside of the traditional school day – with their families, in youth development programs, and in their community. It is critical that we look to the full range of settings where students can build skills and dispositions, and work to align language, measurement, and supportive practices.



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OUTCOME DOMAINS		SKILLS & DISPOSITIONS
Motivation & Engagement	FUTURE ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal management: Setting short- and long-term goals and monitoring progress toward their achievement • Hope and optimism: Positive beliefs regarding one's future potential, goals and choices
	SELF MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional regulation: Assessing and regulating one's feelings and emotions • Self-discipline: Ability to focus on a task in spite of distractions
	PERSEVERANCE / GRIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance: Tendency to persist in spite of obstacles or setbacks • Goal orientation: Commitment to the achievement of goals over time
	SELF EFFICACY & MINDSETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Efficacy: Belief in one's own capabilities and capacity to learn and succeed • Growth mindset: Belief that intelligence and ability can increase through effort • Mastery orientation: Enjoyment of learning and desire to master new skills; willingness to try new things • Relevance: Belief that work done in school is related to personal aspirations
	BELONGING & IDENTITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging: Perception of acceptance and support in a learning community • Relationship building: Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with adults and peers in school setting • Personal identity: Understanding and valuing one's own culture and beliefs • Social capital: Recognizing and using family, school, and community resources; asking for help when needed
21st Century Skills	INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration: Negotiating and compromising when working in groups or pairs • Communication: Communicating effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences • Cultural competence: Ability to work effectively with people from different backgrounds; appreciation of diversity • Conflict resolution: Preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict • Compassion: Taking the perspective of and empathizing with others
	CREATIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideation: Using a wide range of idea creation techniques • Imagination: Using intellectual inventiveness to generate, discover, and restructure ideas or imagine alternatives • Innovation implementation: Acting on creative ideas to make a new contribution
	CRITICAL THINKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metacognition: Ability to reflect on one's assumptions and thinking for the purposes of deeper understanding and self-evaluation. • Problem solving: Generating and selecting from alternatives based on desired outcomes • Analytical thinking: Separating problems or issues into their component parts