Unit 3: Foundational Skills for College and Career Readiness

1. Building 21st Century Skills
2. Job Readiness Skills
3. Jumping into the Market
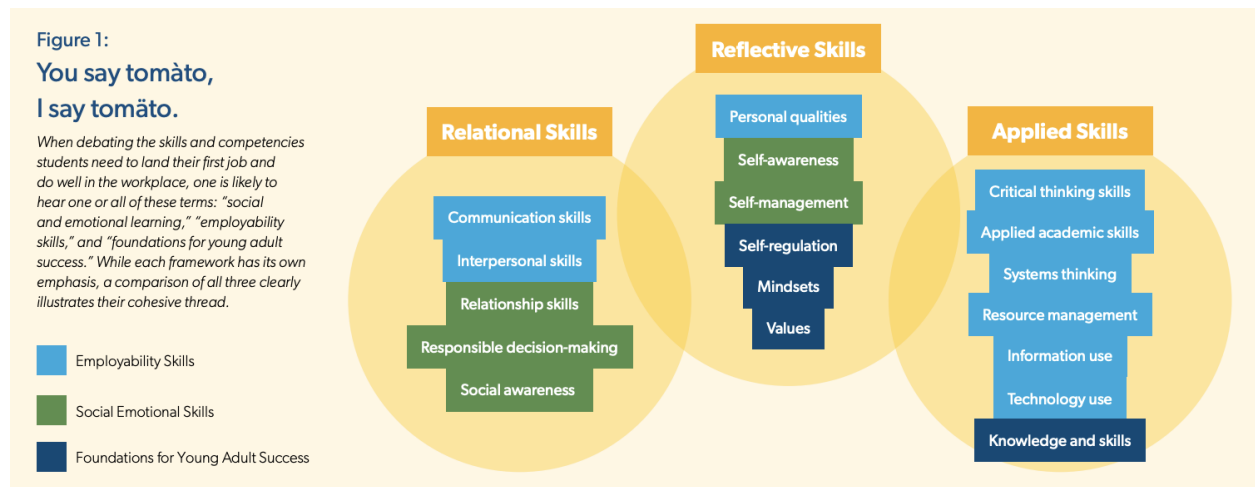

Figure 1:
You say tomàto,
I say tomäto.

When debating the skills and competencies students need to land their first job and do well in the workplace, one is likely to hear one or all of these terms: "social and emotional learning," "employability skills," and "foundations for young adult success." While each framework has its own emphasis, a comparison of all three clearly illustrates their cohesive thread.

Employability Skills

Social Emotional Skills

Foundations for Young Adult Success

Relational Skills
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making
- Social awareness

Reflective Skills
- Personal qualities
- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Self-regulation
- Mindsets
- Values

Applied Skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Applied academic skills
- Systems thinking
- Resource management
- Information use
- Technology use
- Knowledge and skills

Chart from (Afterschool Alliance).

1.Building 21st-Century Skills

Background

Relational skills, reflective skills, and applied skills are helpful for all young people to explore and acquire. Sometimes called soft skills, people skills, social emotional learning (SEL), or employability these are traits that can be learned and practiced by young people in out of school time as a great way to prepare for life beyond high school. These skills help youth foster healthy relationships with others, develop skills to cope in a variety of situations, academically and socially, and helps youth develop empathy for themselves and others.

In an article published by The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit news outlet dedicated to education, Laura Jimenez, the director of an American Institutes for Research explained the importance of SEL for college readiness.

"We know a ton about what it takes for kids to be college eligible, like the level of knowledge you need to do well in a college course," said Jimenez. "What that knowledge can't tell you is if your class is at eight in the morning, are you going to be able to get up and get to class? Are you going to seek help when you need it? That's where the social-and-emotional-learning conversation is starting to take off—there are plenty of kids who are eligible but not ready." Emotional development can help youth to get ready for the next big step in their lives.

SOCIAL and EMOTIONAL LEARNING - How-Tos

> **The five essential aptitudes of social and emotional learning:**
> - self-management,
> - self-awareness,
> - responsible decision-making,
> - relationship skills, and
> - social awareness.
>
> The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Youth professionals foster SEL development by offering young people autonomy, choice, and appropriate levels of structure and supervision. Below are ways as a mentor and role model you can support a young person's SEL, self identities, and positive growth into the future.

Effective communication
Framing the idea of 21st century skills is effective communication: consider offering these tips to youth from VentureLab:

> 1. COMPOSURE: Even professional public speakers get nervous! It's normal to be anxious or worried and have lots of adrenaline flowing. Take two deep breaths. Practice what you'll say in your head and go for it!
> 2. BODY LANGUAGE: Pay attention to your body language. Sit/stand up straight. Use your hands but not too much. Maintaining eye contact with your audience to establish connection, trust, and show confidence.
> 3. VOLUME: Pay attention to how loud or soft you are speaking. Effective speakers talk at a volume that makes it easy for the audience to hear what they're saying.
> 4. SPEED: Pay attention to how quickly or slowly you are speaking. Effective speakers talk at a pace that makes it easy for the audience to understand what they're saying.

5. EMPHASIS: Pay attention to what words you are emphasizing when you speak. Effective speakers draw attention to important words and phrases.
6. PAUSE: Pay attention to when you are taking a break to pause. Effective speakers take time to collect their thoughts and leave room for moments of quiet.
7. ACTIVE LISTENING: Effective speakers are also active listeners! Face the speaker and make eye contact, nod, and smile when appropriate to acknowledge what is being said.
8. EVERYTHING: Review and apply all the prior tips. You are courageous! You've got this! Remember: composure, body language, volume, speed, emphasis, pause, and active listening.

Venture Lab Career Exploration and Innovation Guide, 2020

Activities

The biggest benefit to youth is that these skills help them become better learners. Here are some activities that build 21st century skills:

Cup Stacking Teamwork Activity

Time Management List

Complement Yarn

Barometer - Taking a Stand on Controversial Issues

Body Sculpting - Using Theater to Explore Important Ideas

Town Hall Circle

Working with People - Identity in the Workplace

Most workplaces today employ people from diverse cultural backgrounds. As a result, youth will need to be culturally aware as they enter the workforce. Depending on their career, students may also need to be prepared to interface with international colleagues or travel internationally for business. In these situations (and, perhaps, many others), they will encounter differences in cultural expectations and customs surrounding dress, communication, timeliness, and greetings in the workplace. Making students aware of some of these differences they may encounter out in the world, not just in the workplace, will go a long way to make them more culturally aware.

The Anti-Defamation League published Resources for Educators, Parents, and Families. The educational programs and training include anti-bias tools and strategies, children's literature on bias, diversity, and social justice.

Watch Peggy McIntosh's TED Talk on white privilege and unpacking the invisible backpack. Ask participants to tell their own story. What is your lived experience and what do you bring to the table? Reflect on these and how people want to be seen, the labels they choose and how to respect folks for

their lived experiences. Encourage youth to review the [checklist of the privilege list](#) and consider what they bring into the work environment.

The National AfterSchool Association uses [Pronouns.org](#) as a guide. The site explains, "Using someone's correct personal pronouns is a way to respect them and create an inclusive environment, just as using a person's name can be a way to respect them."

Mizzen by Mott resources for working with people:
[Unseen obstacle course](#): A sighted student pairs with a blindfolded student to navigate through an obstacle course to foster teamwork, communication, trust, and listening skills.
[My life](#): Youth create two concentric circles to discuss various questions. They rotate every few minutes changing partners and discussing new questions to practice communication and getting to know new people.
[Building well-rounded teams: Step in the circle if](#): Youth recognize diverse skills and strengths prompting the building of well-rounded and collaborative teams.

Problem solving at work

Employers look for and value employees with strong problem solving skills. From the U. S. Department of Labor, "Employers say they need a workforce fully equipped with skills beyond the basics... These skills include critical thinking and problem solving" ("Mastering Skills for Workplace Success" 98). Employees who are adept at problem solving can better overcome unexpected obstacles making them very valuable for important projects.

A simple way to get students introduced to the concepts of problem solving is through a course from MIT's Office of Digital Learning, [Introduction to Problem Solving Skills](#). This self-paced web-based course takes students through a series of short video clips and then presents prompts for feedback from the students. At the end, a PDF of the student's responses can be printed. Another resource is from the U.S. Department of Labor and their [Skills to Pay the Bills](#) Program. [Problem Solving and Critical Thinking](#), provides an introduction to the value employers put in problem solving skills and includes 5 activities to do with your students.

Mizzen by Mott offers the following tools for problem solving
[Difficult decisions](#): Youth role-play in groups to act out a business-related conflict and work together to resolve the conflict.

Code-Switching

Code-switching is the practice of switching the languages, speaking styles, dialects, tone of voice, and behaviors for different environments. It happens every day when going in between formal and informal spaces as a way to be effective and efficient with communication. Professionally, knowing what type of

language to use based on the situation and that it's OK to switch it up will be help them navigate different situations.

Some examples of code-switching are:
- Different ways of speaking between a boss and a friend
- Texting language or spelling when writing a professional communication
- People who speak more than one language mixing them together in sentences during excited conversations

While code-switching occurs on a regular basis, it can be problematic for individuals from minoritized backgrounds. Youth may be unfairly judged by they way they present, speak, or engage. Youth from minoritized backgrounds may feel a need to code switch to fit in and thus deny the rich backgrounds and lived experiences that make them unique. This is hard landscape to navigate, and some of these tools may benefit youth exploring their personal and professional identities:
- Harvard Businesses Review's article on The Costs of Code-Switching.
- Code-Switching Activity by Boys Town to help youth practice various situations by using code-switching.
- The National Council of Teachers of English shares an article on Flipping the Switch: Code-Switching from Text Speak to Standard English.
- NPR shares two codes-switching articles: How Code-Switching Explains the World and Five Reasons Why People Code-Switch.

Additional resources to help build and teach social emotional learning or 21st century skills:
Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success: U.S. Department of Labor's Office of DIsability Employment Policy
How to Teach 21st Century Skills in Middle School: Applied Educational Systems
20 Critical Thinking Activities for Elementary Classrooms: Teaching Expertise
Career Readiness and Competencies: National Association of Colleges and Employers
Professional Development: Culture in the Classroom: Teaching Tolerance
How to Bridge Workplace Issues That Arise from Cultural Differences: SHRM
When Culture Doesn't Translate: Harvard Business Review
How to Properly Shake Hands in 14 Different Countries: Business Insider

2. Job Readiness Skills

Background and How tos:
In addition to teaching youth 21st century skills and providing them lots of opportunities to practice those skills, it is also valuable to help prepare youth for being part of a workplace community. The Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network toolkit provides the following actions to prepare youth for the workplace:

1. **Model workplace norms** by asking youth to attend your program for specific hours and hold them accountable to being on time and present, possibly creating a dress code, providing stipends, and by requiring that they behave as they would in a workplace.
2. Involve youth in the task of **creating a mission statement and class expectations** to teach about participation and collaboration in the workplace.
3. **Use role playing** to provide opportunities to practice how to act and respond in specific workplace situations such as an interview, a disagreement with a coworker, or more complex incidents of racism or harassment.
4. **Introduce youth to working professionals,** or mentors, that they can meet with and discuss what it's like to work in a specific workplace and what it takes to do their job.
5. **Arrange job shadowing opportunities** for youth to visit a variety of workplaces and observe how people behave, dress, and talk at work. Invite them to report back on what they've learned. (FYSB)

Creating a vision board

A vision board or poster can help people visualize what their ideal life would look like, which is considered an essential goal-setting step in finding true success. Students form a deeper understanding of their needs for a balanced, happy, and healthy life. Using the Mizzen by Mott app, youth will walk through creating a visualization to help frame where they are TODAY and where they want to go tomorrow. Check out the app and lesson plan here.

Building a Network
South Dakota's career advisors team developed a series of networking skills lessons to get youth familiar with networking. The series of activities include networking BINGO. It walks participants through a process that familiarizes youth with the benefits and opportunities networking.

Mizzen by Mott offers youth a chance to collaborate and identify complementary interests and ideas, and in the process - develop networking skills. Check out the lesson plan here.

If youth are particularly interested in building and nurturing a professional network, the US Department of Labor's Skills to Pay the Bills series offers robust lessons and tools!

Crafting a Resume
A resume is an essential marketing tool to showcase skills, experience, and accomplishments. Resumes are expected in college applications, scholarship applications, internships, and other employment

opportunities. They are the invitation to a conversation with a potential employer, school, or funder and should give a good idea of someone's personality.

Start early in high school	Youth can begin to compile information about their experiences, accomplishments, and activities early on.
Build a functional resume	At this stage, a focus on skills acquired and experiences makes more sense than work history.
Focus on the highlights	One page is ideal. A resume isn't the place for detail, that happens in the interview.
Make it look professional	Easy to read fonts, correct spelling, proper grammar, and punctuation make a resume much easier to read. Contact information is at the top, and each component should be bold and prominent.
Use action verbs	Action verbs make reading sentences easier and demonstrate motivation.
Do not over exaggerate	Honesty is important in building relationships. A resume is a strong way to communicate a sense of self and skills. Stick to what's real.
Get feedback from friends, family, and educators	Asking for help is a great way to continue to hone a fantastic resume. A fresh set of eyes can catch errors they may have missed and give insight into how their resume is perceived.

Why Every High School Student Should Have a Resume and Resume Tips: How to Write a Resume that Stands Out both offer insight into why time and attention on resumes are valuable. Below are a few examples and templates to help aid youth in the writing process:

- High School Resume Template
- General Resume Template
- One-Page Resume Template
- Sample First Resume
- Sample First Resume - No Work Experience
- Sample Teen Resume
- Sample High School Resume
- Sample High School Resume With a Summary
- High School Graduate Resume Example
- High School Resume Example - Summer Camp

Examples provided by (Doyle).

Drafting an Email

"The average employee spends two and a half hours per day dealing with email. That is equivalent to 81 working days every year—or a quarter of your working life" (Masters). That's a lot of time to dedicate to communication!

Understanding and using appropriate email etiquette goes a long way with employers, fellow staff, and community members. Indeed offers five steps to help youth draft quality emails:

1. **Identify the goal:** Encourage anyone writing an email, what they want the recipient to do once the message is read. Based on that information, encourage the author to make sure the body of the email and any attachments support the desired outcome.
2. **Consider the audience:** Different audiences require a different approach to communication. If it is an email to an upcoming job interview, the tone should be formal and respectful. On the other hand, if a student is composing an email to a coworker and has a good relationship, it can be familiar.
3. **Keep it concise:** People receive a lot of email, keep messages brief, to the point, and filled with easily accessible key information.
4. **Proofread:** Proofreading an email is super important! Error free messages demonstrate professionalism, this includes checking the names of recipients or others mentioned in the body of the email. Check out grammar sites, such as Grammarly, to double-check for errors. Also, if youth have referenced something specific in their email, make sure a link or attachment is included for further understanding.
5. **Use proper etiquette:** Youth should make sure they have included a proper greeting ("Dear (First Name)," or "Greetings,") and closing ("Thank you") in their email to show they are being polite. "Include a courteous greeting and closing to sound friendly and polite. Additionally, be considerate of the recipient and their time" (*How to Write a Professional Email).* Unless it is an emergency, avoid emailing after-hours or while someone is on leave.

Check out [this template](#) provided by the MOST Network to help students in your program compose professional emails.

Another helpful resource is the [Comprehensive Guide to Email Etiquette for High Schoolers](#) from College Vine.

In the email writing simulation activity, youth use templates to craft emails for specific professional use cases. In the second part of the activity, youth will be prompted with unique scenarios and be asked to draft professional emails in response. [Find the activity guide here](#).

Presentation

Personal presentation is how an individual portrays and presents themselves to others. It's looked at as a form of communication. It includes how you look, including body language, what you say, and what you do. For youth to present themselves with confidence, they need to believe it first, so it all starts with good self-esteem and self-confidence.

Discussion questions:
1. Why do employers want their employees to look professional?
2. How does your appearance as an employee reflect back on the company image?
3. By instituting and enforcing dress codes, are employers stifling people's individuality and freedom of expression? Is this justified?
4. Is it more important to stand out or fit in at the workplace? Why?

From the MOST network toolkit

Mizzen by Mott resources for job readiness:

How has technology changed the way businesses operate? Technology and the economy are constantly affecting each other. In this activity, youth evaluate how technology has changed the nature of work for an assortment of jobs. They write job ads to recruit employees for these jobs (grades 6-8)

Working together in the digital age: Many companies employ people who work in a variety of situations. Youth will compare different ways workers collaborate through technology (grades 6-8)

Professional habits: Youth identify and classify the behaviors and habits of a professional worker and practice writing promotion and demotion letters that reflect these behaviors (grades 9-12)

Additional resources, tools, and readings to follow up with Job Readiness:

Tips on preparing young people for the world of work, toolkit by Family and Youth Services Bureau

Preparing youth for the workforce of tomorrow: Cultivating the Social and Emotional Skills Employers Demand, article Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

3. Getting into the Market

Background

As adults with a few interviews under our belts, sharing our stories and role playing with youth can be a tremendous help in landing a job or getting into schools! Interviewing is beneficial for many reasons: it helps grow responsibility, improves skills, builds students' resumes and work experience, and is a great networking opportunity.

How tos

Share this interview basics handout with youth as a way to begin conversations and make the process more clear. Explore the contents together and ask question about how youth might prepare and how their choices might impact the experience.

★ **Virtual Interview Tips:** If youth have an interview over Zoom or on a different virtual platform, help them test lighting, camera location, and background images.

Below is a list of common interviewing questions with some advice on what the interviewer is looking for.

1. **Why are you looking for a job?**
   a. While making money may be the obvious answer, it is important for youth to discuss their interest in the field of work they are applying for or how the position will further develop their skillset.

2. **Why are you interested in working for our company?**
   a. This question is to see if the interviewee has researched the company. Ensure youth know what the company does, what they are trying to achieve, and the work environment.

3. **What do you think it takes to succeed in this position?**
   a. This is where youth should think back to the job skills and requirements. Make sure youth share the skills they have with the interviewer that the position is looking for.

4. **How would you describe your ability to work as a team member**?
   a. This is where youth provide a specific example of working in a team, whether in school, afterschool, or sports successfully.

5. **Tell me about a significant problem you recently handled.**
   a. With this question, the interviewer is trying to figure out when the interviewee used the skill of problem-solving. Youth need to show a resolution with a positive outcome.

Activities - Check out these extra resources if youth are curious to learn more:
- Kahoot! quiz on effective and ineffective interview practices.
- Indeed's Interviewing Career Guide with questions, answers, advice to help youth prepare.
- Muse discusses the ten different types of interviews and how youth can succeed.
- Applied Education Systems discusses the ways to teach high schoolers interviewing skills.
- Career Profiles talks about the most important interview tips for job seekers.
- Check out MOST Network's Video Interview Simulation to help your student's interview practice.
- Check out MOST Network's Phone Interview Simulation to help your students' interview practice.

Mizzen by Mott provides numerous activities to explore interview preparation
Animal interview, children respond to interview questions as their favorite furry friend (grades k-2).

Interview skills: Youth practice interviewing for a job as well as evaluating applications, building skills in speaking and listening (grades 9-12).

Group interview: Youth practice mock interview building communication skills and practicing persuasion, logic, and teambuilding (grades 9-12).

Thinking on your feet: Youth practice job interviews and handling unusual, unexpected, or difficult questions that challenge thinking (grades 9 -12).

Interview fails: In this activity, youth write and perform skits where they act out some common interview mistakes while their peers try and guess the mistake and discuss how and why it should be avoided (grades 9-12).

Portfolio Development

A portfolio is both a product and a process. As a product, it serves as a collection of skills and knowledged presented in a series of documents. As a process, it is an opportunity to capture and show life experience, work, volunteerism, school and the skills gained. The portfolio development process can uncover personal and work-related strengths and interests. These interests can guide future choices as a young person begins to navigate the world away from home.

What to Include in a Portfolio

Portfolios can serve multiple purposes, but there are three main elements to include:

1. **Performance:** Pick a couple of items that demonstrates someone's best work and a brief description about why they were included.
2. **Process:** Select a product and number of drafts or versions to show how the final product developed over time.
3. **Progress:** Pieces that show a skillset development, for example something from early on in high school and then a similar piece from near the end of high school. The goal is to show progression in a particular skill set.

Each element in a portfolio should provide evidence of youth's education and experience. The list below are elements that can be included provided by the MOST Network:

About Me	A brief biography or introduction to the person and their aspirations.
Career Goals	A summary of professional goals gives readers a sense of where they see themselves in the future.
Resume	Include a link or a copy of the resume.
Relevant Skills	This could be included in the About Me section and lists essential skills related to a student's career aspirations.

Work Samples	This is the most crucial component of any portfolio. This should make up most of the portfolio and include a student's best work as evidence of their relevant skills. These samples can take nearly any digital form but should be included in the form that best demonstrates the knowledge and skill that went into the project or experience. ● Artwork ● Blueprints or digital models ● Essays or papers ● Capstone Projects ● Recorded presentations or slideshows ● Video or audio projects ● Lab reports ● Research posters ● Photos or videos from learning experiences or demonstrations of knowledge and skill
Awards or Recognitions	Include any awards and recognitions students have received.
Evidence of Internships, Work, Leadership, or Volunteer Experiences	It is a good idea to include any evidence of these experiences to show well-roundedness and other experiences a student might have had outside of the classroom. Evidence might include: ● Flyers or brochures from the host organization ● A written summary of and reflection on the experience ● Any output/product created by the student during the experience ● Photos or videos of student participation in the experience
Letters of Recommendation	Collect 2-3 letters of recommendation from adults, mentors, or teachers who have had a positive influence on the student's educational journey and include these in the portfolio as well.
Reflection	A crucial component of portfolios is a reflection. Students should have the opportunity to reflect on their learning and experiences and the evidence they gather as part of their portfolio and include these reflections as part of the portfolio also. This can be as simple as why they chose to include a specific artifact or a more detailed exploration of how they have developed specific skills.

(*College and Career Readiness Toolkit* 75-76).

Check out these tools to help develop portfolios:
- TeachThought provides information on [12 Educational Apps to Create Digital Portfolios.](#)
- Shake Up Learning helps guide through the process of [Creating Powerful Student ePortfolios with Google Sites.](#)

- Indeed provides information on [How to Make a Digital Portfolio That Gets You Hired.](#)

Additional Tools for Jumping Into the Market:

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