

VANTAGE EDUCATION

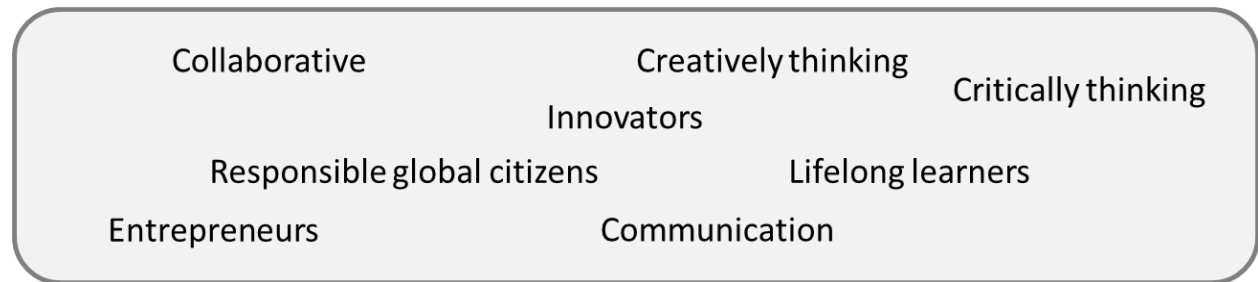
Developing Lives. Accelerating Potential

21st Century Skills



Introduction

Young people in the 21st century need to be:



It's a challenging time to be entering the workforce for the first time. The traditional path of getting a college education or learning a skill, then taking a job and remaining in it for your entire career, is largely obsolete now. However, there are certain skills that are as necessary now as they have always been. So-called "soft skills," such as comprehensive listening, holding meaningful dialogues and having difficult conversations, can be learned, but are often not taught. Evaluating job candidates for their soft skills rather than their technical know-how, education, or professional training has become a top priority for many, if not most, employers.

Our 21st Century Skills modules focus on the skills to access and to assess new information on the area of 'life skills'. These are the subjects that identify what needs to be taught, in order to give children those skills (i.e. the outcome).

The syllabus we provide are underpinned by the skills students need in the 21st century (read more below):

1. Critical thinking
2. Creative thinking
3. Communication
4. Collaboration and teamwork
5. Personal skills
6. Social skills

Vantage also has 21st Century Knowledge-based modules that focus on the knowledge that needs to be acquired (i.e. the new information itself).

1. CRITICAL THINKING

The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement

Analysing	Separating or breaking a whole into parts to discover their nature, functional and relationships. "I studied it piece by piece" "I sorted things out"
Applying Standards	Judging according to established personal, professional, or social rules or criteria. "I judged it according to..."
Discriminating	Recognizing differences and similarities among things or situations and distinguishing carefully as to category or rank. "I rank ordered the various..." "I grouped things together"
Information Seeking	Searching for evidence, facts, or knowledge by identifying relevant sources and gathering objective, subjective, historical, and current data from those sources "I knew I needed to lookup/study..." "I kept searching for data."
Logical Reasoning	Drawing inferences or conclusions that are supported in or justified by evidence "I deduced from the information that..." "My rationale for the conclusion was..."
Predicting	Envisioning a plan and its consequences "I envisioned the outcome would be..." "I was prepared for..."
Transforming Knowledge	Changing or converting the condition, nature, form, or function of concepts among contexts "I improved on the basics by..." "I wondered if that would fit the situation of ..."

2. CREATIVE THINKING

Analytical

Before thinking creatively about something, you first have to be able to understand it. This requires the ability to examine things carefully to understand what they mean. Whether you are looking at a text, a set of data, a lesson plan, or an equation, you need to be able to analyse it first.

Open-Minded

Creativity involves thinking of things no one else has considered before. You have to set aside any assumptions or biases you may have, and look at things in a completely new way. By coming to a problem with an open mind, you allow yourself the chance to think creatively.

Problem Solving

Employers don't simply want to hire creative people because they are impressive. They want creative employees who will help them solve work-related issues. Therefore, when applying for jobs, highlight your ability not only to think creatively, but to use your creativity to solve an important issue.

Organisation

This might seem counterintuitive: aren't creative people known for being somewhat disorganized? Actually, organization is an important part of creativity. While you might need to get a bit messy when trying out a new idea, you then need to organize your ideas so that other people will be able to understand and follow through with your vision. Being able to structure a plan of action with clear goals and deadlines is vital.

Communication

People will only appreciate your creative idea or solution if you can communicate it effectively to the people you work with (or your clients or vendors). Therefore, you need to have strong written and oral communication skills.

You also need to be able to fully understand a situation before thinking creatively about it. Therefore, you also need to be a good listener. By asking the right questions and understanding the problem, you can come up with a unique solution.

3. COMMUNICATION

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage your emotions so as to communicate effectively, avoid stress, overcome challenges and empathise with others. It's a skill which is learned over time rather than obtained.

There are four main strands to emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Each of these strands is important in its own way and allows you to communicate confidently with a variety of people.

You think about feelings – self and others, Pause, Try to control your thoughts, benefit from criticism, authentic, empathy, praise others, give helpful feedback, apologise, forgive and forget, keep your commitments, help others, protect yourself from emotional sabotage.

Cohesion and Clarity

Good communication is much more than saying the right thing; it is about communicating messages clearly and concisely. Before you start a conversation, type an email or begin a discussion, have in mind what the purpose of the communication is and what information you hope to obtain as a result. Lack of clarity and cohesion can result in poor decisions and confusion.

Friendliness

In any type of communication, make sure that you set the right tone. A friendly tone will encourage others to communicate with you. Always try to personalise messages, particularly when working with partners or fellow colleagues. Wishing the recipient a good weekend, for example, is a great way to personalise your message.

Confidence

In all interactions, confidence (but not over-confidence) is crucial. Demonstrating confidence will give customers faith in your abilities to deliver what they need, and that you will follow through with what you have promised.

Conveying confidence can be something as simple as maintaining eye contact during a conversation, or using a firm but friendly tone when speaking with people over the phone. Be careful not to come across as aggressive, since this will have the opposite effect of what you are hoping to achieve.

Empathy

Within a busy work environment, everyone will have their own ideas about how things should be done. Even if you have disagreements with your colleagues or partners, their point of view should be considered and respected.

Empathy is also beneficial when speaking with customers in certain types of customer-facing role. The goal here is to understand where the other person is coming from - and respect their views even if they are very different from your own.

Respect

Empathy leads into the next communication skill, respect. If you respect the ideas and opinions of others, they will be more likely to communicate with you. Active listening or simply using the name of the person you are speaking to can both be effective. Make sure that when you type emails, you don't sound insincere or write in a way that is insincere.

Listening

Good communication is all about listening effectively. Take the time to listen to what the other person is saying and practice active listening. Pay attention to what the other person is saying, ask questions and clarify points, and rephrase what they have said so that you know you have understood correctly.

Open Mindedness

Try to enter into communications without having an agenda. Strong communications require an open mind and a commitment to understanding other people's points of view. If you disagree with the people you are speaking to, try to reach a middle ground that benefits all parties. Approaching a discussion with an open mind is more likely to result in a successful outcome.

Tone of Voice

The tone of your voice can set the whole mood of the conversation. If you start the discussion in an aggressive or unhelpful manner, the recipient will be more inclined to respond in a similar way. The tone of your voice will include the level of emotion that you use, the volume you use and the level of communication you choose.

The same sentence can have a very different meaning depending on which words are emphasised and the tone of your voice. In a customer complaint scenario, for example, your tone of voice should be as calm as possible, since an unfriendly tone of voice will only serve to worsen the situation.

Asking Good Questions

Good questions can help conversations flow and improve the outcome. During a conversation, always aim to ask open-ended questions. These are questions with prompts which encourage the recipient to speak about certain points and they require more detailed responses.

If you need further information still, you can use probing questions which request even more information from the recipient such as ‘Tell me the process of...’ During the conversation include a mixture of questions including clarification, ‘what if’ scenarios and open-ended questions to make sure that you achieve what you set out to do at the beginning of the call or conversation.

4. COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK

Elements of Successful Collaboration

The idea of collaboration seems easy enough – just work together. But there’s more to it than that. If you need to work with others on a project, make sure you include all of these elements of a successful collaboration:

- Clear definitions and agreements on the roles of partners in the collaborative process.
 - Open communication within teams to share the information necessary to carry out tasks.
 - Consensus about goals and methods for completing projects or tasks. Don’t move forward until all members are in agreement.
 - Recognition of, and respect for, the contribution of all collaborators. It’s important to give credit where credit is due.
 - Identification of obstacles and addressing problems cooperatively as they occur.
- Teamwork is essential at all times.
- Group goals are placed above personal satisfaction and/or recognition. It’s crucial to put the desired project results at the forefront – this isn’t about the individual goals.
 - Willingness to apologize for missteps and ability to forgive others for mistakes. Holding a grudge or sabotaging the efforts of other team members just can’t happen.

Examples of collaboration skills

- Actively listening to the concerns of team members
- Agreeing on roles that capitalize on individual strengths
- Analysing problems without assigning blame
- Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of partners

- Brainstorming solutions to problems
- Building consensus about goals and processes for group projects
- Compromising when necessary to move the group forward
- Defining mutually acceptable roles
- Delegating tasks with open discussion
- Displaying a willingness to find solutions to problems
- Drawing consensus around goals and processes
- Eliciting the views of reluctant group members
- Facilitating group discussion
- Following through with commitments in a reliable manner
- Forgiving others when they come up short
- Giving credit to others for contributions
- Interviewing clients to determine their needs and preferences
- Identifying obstacles to success
- Investing the required time and energy to complete tasks
- Taking a leadership role
- Listening to the concerns of team members

5. SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills are the skills we use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language and our personal appearance.

Human beings are sociable creatures and we have developed many ways to communicate our messages, thoughts and feelings with others.

What is said is influenced by both verbal language and the way we use it - tone of voice, volume of speech and the words we choose - as well as by more subtle messages such as body language, gestures and other non-verbal communication methods.

The fact that some people are better '*social interactors*' than others has led to detailed investigations into the nature and function of interpersonal interaction.

Developing social skills is about being aware of how we communicate with others, the messages we send and how methods of communication can be improved to make the way we communicate more efficient and effective.

Characteristics of social skills

Social skills are goal-directed.

Socially skilled behaviours are interrelated in the sense that one person may use more than one kind of behaviour at the same time, for the same goal.

Social skills should be appropriate to the situation of communication. Different social skills will be used for professional and personal communication.

Social skills can be identified as certain types of behaviour whereby an individual can be judged on how socially skilled they are.

Social skills can be taught, practiced and learned.

Social skills should be under the cognitive control of the individual - learning them involves learning when to use particular behaviours, as well as what behaviours to use, or how to use them.

6. PERSONAL SKILLS

Employers want employees who can solve problems on their own using creative thinking and thoughtful analysis. Critical thinkers are useful in every industry, from healthcare and engineering to education. Below are skills that you should develop to be a capable critical thinker:

- Accuracy
- Adept
- Analytical
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Detail-oriented
- Efficiency
- Industriousness
- Innovative
- Logical thinking
- Practical
- Punctual
- Rational
- Resourceful

Problem Solving

Employers value good problem-solvers as they effectively and swiftly make decisions while largely keeping their emotions at bay. They gather as much information as they can and let intuition, logic and innovative thinking drive the best solution. They are also great collaborators and open to the ideas and opinions of others.

- Accuracy
- Assertive
- Conflict management
- Decision making
- Diplomatic
- Ethical
- Humble
- Influential
- Insightful
- Intuitive
- Listening
- Patience
- Perceptive
- Practical
- Realistic
- Reflective
- Teamwork

Flexible/Dependable

As two valued qualities that feed off of each other, dependability and flexibility go hand in hand.

Employers hire candidates who demonstrate reliability, responsibility and are trustworthy with more responsibilities.

Flexible employees can adapt to change, take on projects outside of their scope and shift their schedule if necessary. A flexible and dependable employee is also willing to help on other projects, even when they are in an unfamiliar focus area.

- Accountable
- Adaptability
- Capable
- Competence
- Dynamic
- Helpfulness

- Honest
- Loyal
- Punctual
- Reliable
- Responsible
- Teachable
- Trustworthy

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills, also known as people skills, are those related to how you communicate and interact with those around you. Employers want employees who can get along well with their employers, their colleagues, and clients.

People with interpersonal skills are also more likely to work well in teams. Displaying such skills will impress your potential employer and could lead to future opportunities for promotions and raises. Here's a list of interpersonal skills and qualities for resumes, cover letters, job applications, and interviews.

- Articulate
- Attentiveness
- Collaborative
- Conscientiousness
- Considerate
- Empathy
- Encouraging
- Inclusive
- Leadership
- Management
- Nonverbal communication
- Professional
- Respectful
- Sense of humour
- Sincere
- Sociable
- Teaching
- Training
- Understanding
- Verbal communication
- Relationship building

Motivated

Employers seek employees who are positive and passionate about their jobs and are motivated. These individuals tend to put the most effort into their work and learn from their mistakes and failures.

- Ambition
- Alertness
- Amiability
- Confidence
- Dedication
- Dependability
- Determination
- Energy
- Hardworking
- Independent
- Life skills
- Optimism
- Positive
- Resilience
- Strong Work ethic
- Productive
- Enterprising
- Visionary
- Passion