



Cradle to Career – Glossary

The purpose of this document is to highlight terms used to describe cradle-to-career skills across the educational spectrum. These terms often have multiple, varying definitions when used to describe development of specific skills at different ages. This is not an exhaustive list as there are a vast number of currently used terms. This document intends to provide examples for consideration.

This document is based on terminology encountered during our topical research. Each time a new term was uncovered through the multiple readings, it was entered into the table, along with the definition laid out in the article or resource. Definitions provided come from the perspective of the early childhood (ECE) and youth sectors. This document can be used as a template to collect terms used in an individual state or community to identify terms different stakeholders and how they define and use them in practical application. Using a tool such as this while working toward developmental alignment from birth through adulthood will support clarity in language and prompt conversation to support the bridging language divides and move conversations forward to support a continuum approach. NOTE: Gaps or terms not listed are not meant to imply that those definitions do not exist or that this term is not being used for this age range. This is a cursory list.

Term	Definition Examples (Early Childhood)	Definitions Examples (Youth)
Approaches towards learning	<p>" refer to the inclinations, dispositions, or styles rather than skills that reflect the myriad ways that children become involved in learning and develop their inclinations to pursue it. Approaches to learning that vary within and between cultures must be respected, making a uniform or "cookie cutter" approach to early childhood education with the Goal of all children coming out the same undesirable. A child can be successful in school in many ways, and families and teachers should understand the various ways that children become engaged in learning in order to know how to enhance and not discourage their engagement. Curiosity, creativity, independence, cooperativeness, and persistence are some of the approaches that enhance early learning and development."ⁱⁱⁱ</p> <p>Four sub-domains make up approaches to learning: emotional and behavioral self-regulation, cognitive self-regulation (executive functioning), initiative and curiosity, and creativity.ⁱⁱ</p>	<p>In a review of websites and documents, “approaches towards learning” for this age range referred to the approaches institutions took in the environment students experience (e.g., “student-centered approaches towards learning”) rather than a skill students themselves had.</p>



Term	Definition Examples (Early Childhood)	Definitions Examples (Youth)
Communication	<p>“All through the early years, children build their understanding of the purpose of a book or a story, develop an awareness of the alphabet and the ability to write a few letters and expand their use of language to communicate their needs, thought and wishes.</p> <p>Just as children seem to be compelled to learn language, they are excited about using pictures and letters to communicate . Given appropriate experiences, children are more likely to be successful in learning to read and write .”ⁱⁱⁱ</p>	<p>“refer(s) to the specific types of communication used in the workplace, and include oral, written, non-verbal, and listening skills.”^{iv}</p>
Emotion management/ Emotional self-regulation	<p>"ability to be aware of, and constructively handle, both positive and challenging emotions."^v</p> <p>Goals for emotional and behavioral self-regulation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages feelings and emotions • Manages actions, words, and behavior • Follows classrooms rules and routines with increasing independence (preschool) • Appropriately handles and takes care of classroom materials (preschool) 	
Empathy	<p>Frequently listed as a skill under the social-emotional domain.</p>	<p>"abilities to see things from others’ perspectives, to suspend judgment, actively listen, and recognize how different values, life opportunities, and obstacles have shaped others.”^{vi}</p>
Executive function (EF) Self-regulation skills (SR) *NOTE: In a review of usage,	<p>EF "refers to effortful cognitive processes as opposed to relatively automatic aspects of cognition associated with crystallized knowledge and declarative memory (memory for information that has been learned). ..Executive function consists of distinct but moderately interrelated cognitive functions, including working memory, inhibitory control, and attention shifting components”^{vii}</p>	<p>EF “includes 'thinking outside the box' and flexibly adjusting to unexpected change (cognitive flexibility & creative problem-solving), reasoning and mentally playing with and relating ideas and facts (working memory), and giving considered responses rather than impulsive ones, resisting temptations, resisting distractions, and staying focused (self-control, discipline, & selective attention).”^{xi}</p>



Term	Definition Examples (Early Childhood)	Definitions Examples (Youth)
<p>these terms are sometimes interchangeably or as a sub function of the other. Others definitions them as distinctly different (though interrelated)</p>	<p>EF: “We define “EF” as the following skills: response inhibition, attention control, attention shifting (also called cognitive flexibility), and working memory.”^{viii}</p> <p>EF & SR "are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses." Depends on three brain functions: working memory, mental flexibility, self-control^{ix}</p> <p>Cognitive self-regulation (executive functioning) goals include (for preschool age children):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains focus and sustains attention • Persists in tasks • Increasing ability to control impulses • Holds information in mind and manipulates it to perform tasks • Demonstrates flexibility in thinking and behavior^x 	
<p>Grit</p>		<p>"Grit is the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals" ^{xii}</p>
<p>Higher-order thinking skills</p>	<p>The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) is frequently used assessment of a classroom instructional climate and in one of the three domains, educators are assessed on degree to which they promote this skill, opposing it to rote and fact-based learning.</p>	<p>“consists of problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making.”^{xiii}</p>



Term	Definition Examples (Early Childhood)	Definitions Examples (Youth)
Initiative	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework has a subdomain of Approaches to Learning that houses a subgroup <i>initiative and curiosity</i> . Goals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates emerging initiative in interactions, experiences, and explorations (infant/toddler) • Demonstrates initiative and independence (preschool)^{xiv} 	"capacity to take action, sustain motivation, and persevere through challenge toward an identified goal." ^{xv}
Problem solving	"abilities to plan, strategize, and implement complex tasks." ^{xvi}	"Problem solving and critical thinking refers to the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve workplace problems, as well as knowing how to use these skills in a variety of settings, including working with teams and working with disgruntled clients or customers." ^{xvii}
Positive Self-Concept Self Identify and Belonging	Goals for self-identify and belonging include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes self as a unique individual having own abilities, characteristics, emotions, and interests. • Expresses confidence in own skills and positive feelings about self • Has sense of belonging to family, community, and other groups^{xviii} 	"includes self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-awareness and beliefs, as well as self-esteem and a sense of well-being and pride." ^{xix}
Responsibility/ Responsive Decision Making	"Young children must learn to solve social problems – to analyze social situations, identify problems, set prosocial goals, and determine effective ways to solve differences that arise within their peer group. Responsible decision-making increasingly includes the ability to make appropriate ethical decisions that consider and respect others and promote the well-being of the school and community. At the ages considered here, complying with classroom rules, resisting peer pressure, and controlling aggression or other disruptive behavior also reflect such responsibility." ^{xx}	"involves the dispositions and abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfill obligations of challenging roles." ^{xxi}
Self-awareness	"Self-awareness refers to the ability to accurately assess personal feelings, interests, values, and strengths. As children move into elementary school, their feelings of	



Term	Definition Examples (Early Childhood)	Definitions Examples (Youth)
	<p>self-efficacy become even more important. This aspect of SEL also includes identifying and labeling one’s own feelings. Although preschoolers have a well-defined, stable sense of self, much development in this area occurs during the preschool through primary years.”^{xxii}</p>	
Self-Control	<p>“ Self-control enables children to cooperate with others, to cope with frustration, and to resolve conflicts.”^{xxiii}</p>	<p>“refers to one’s ability to delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention, manage emotions, and regulate behaviors.”^{xxiv}</p> <p>"voluntary regulation of behavioral, emotional, and attentional impulses in the presence of momentarily gratifying temptations or diversions"^{xxv}</p>
Self-management	<p>“Self-management includes the ability to handle one’s emotions in productive ways, being aware of feelings, monitoring them, and modifying them when necessary, so that they aid rather than impede the ways in which the child is able to cope with varying situations. This aspect of SEL also includes handling stress, persevering despite obstacles, and expressing emotions appropriately. At the same time, important non-emotional aspects of self-management are paramount to success in the preschool through elementary years. These include being able to use some non-SEL skills (e.g., working memory, attention, and inhibitory control) to regulate one’s social and academic behavior.”^{xxvi}</p>	
Soft Skills	<p>Another term for “non-cognitive” skills.</p>	<p>"Soft skills refer to a broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. These skills are broadly applicable and complement other skills such as technical, vocational, and academic skills"^{xxvii}</p>
Social-emotional learning skills	<p>Emotion Management, Empathy, Teamwork, Responsibility, Initiative, Problem Solving^{xxviii}</p>	



Term	Definition Examples (Early Childhood)	Definitions Examples (Youth)
Teamwork	"Forming a cohesive, high-functioning group that works together effectively toward shared goals" ^{xxix}	

- ⁱ [Reconsidering Children’s Early Development and Learning: Toward Common Views and Vocabulary](#)
- ⁱⁱ [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ [Kansas Early Learning Standards](#)
- ^{iv} [Child Trends \(Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields](#)
- ^v [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#)
- ^{vi} [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#)
- ^{vii} [National Research Council \(Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How”\)](#)
- ^{viii} [OPRE, ACF, USHHS \(Executive Function Mapping Project\)](#)
- ^{ix} [Harvard Center on the Developing Child](#)
- ^x [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#)
- ^{xi} [US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health \(Executive Functions\)](#)
- ^{xii} [Angela Duckworth – Grit Site](#)
- ^{xiii} [Child Trends \(Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields](#)
- ^{xiv} [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#)
- ^{xv} [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#)
- ^{xvi} [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#)
- ^{xvii} <http://youth.gov/feature-article/soft-skills-pay-bills>
- ^{xviii} [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#)
- ^{xix} [Child Trends \(Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields](#)
- ^{xx} [Compendium of Preschool Through Elementary Social-Emotional Learning and Associated Assessment Measures](#)
- ^{xxi} [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#)
- ^{xxii} [Compendium of Preschool Through Elementary Social-Emotional Learning and Associated Assessment Measures](#)
- ^{xxiii} <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/228-help-your-child-develop-self-control>
- ^{xxiv} [Child Trends \(Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields](#)
- ^{xxv} [Angela Duckworth – Grit Site](#)
- ^{xxvi} [Compendium of Preschool Through Elementary Social-Emotional Learning and Associated Assessment Measures](#)
- ^{xxvii} [Child Trends \(Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields](#)
- ^{xxviii} [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#)
- ^{xxix} [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#)