

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Overview

The importance of building 21st century skills in young children.



Learning Skills

4C's: Critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Literacy Skills

Information literacy, media literacy, and technology literacy.



Life Skills

Flexibility, initiative, social skills, productivity, and leadership.

Strategies

Ways to implement 21st century skills into daily classroom life.



Coaching Corner

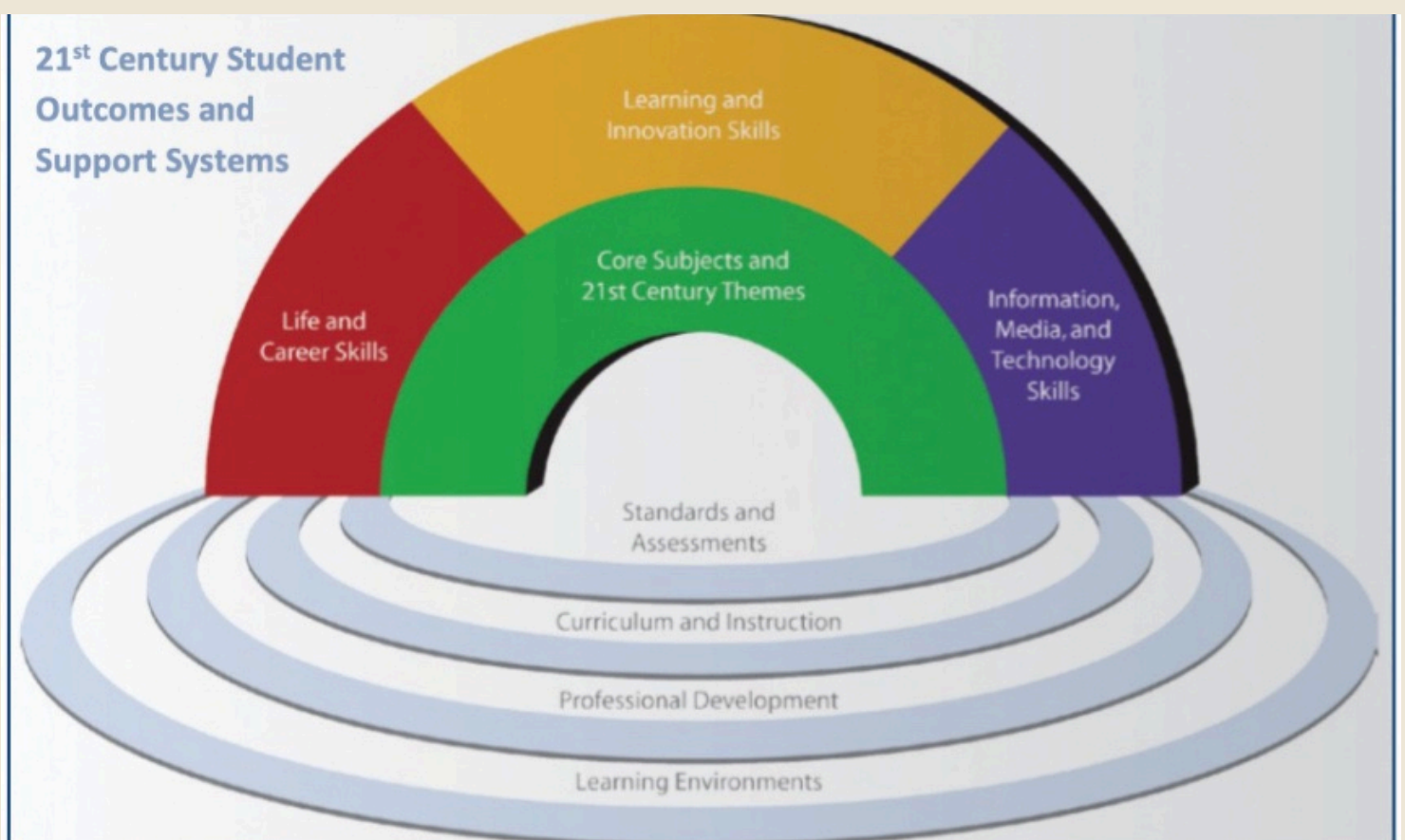
Questions to guide reflection.

Overview

The importance of building 21st century skills in young children.



The early years are a perfect time to support children's growth and development of 21st century skills. Essentially, these skills are what children need to be able to do in order to successfully engage in life in the 21st century. The framework used to organize 21st century skills is shown below and categorizes them into learning skills, literacy skills, and life skills.



NC State Board of Education, (2009). North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process. McREL.

- **Learning Skills:** Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Collaboration, and Communication
- **Literacy Skills:** Information Literacy, Media Literacy, and Technology Literacy
- **Life Skills:** Flexibility, Initiative, Social Skills, Productivity, and Leadership

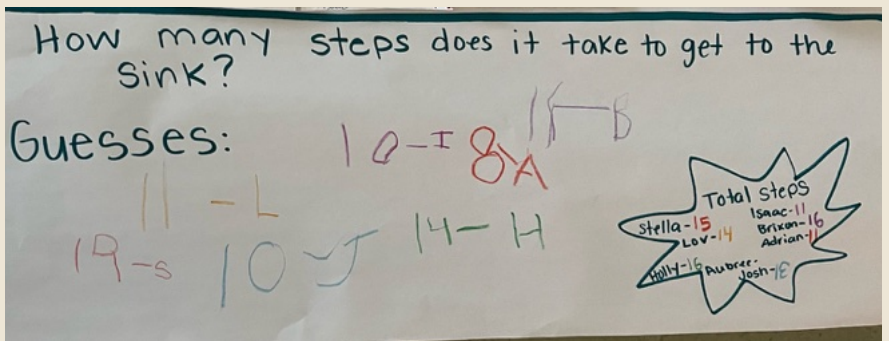
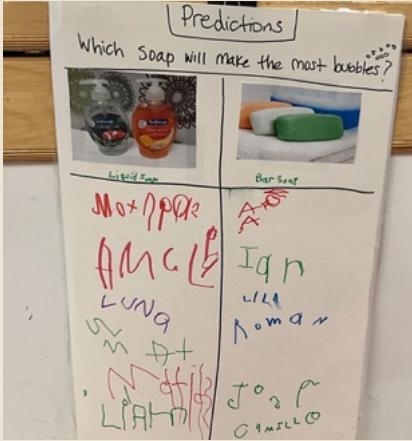


Learning Skills

4C's: Critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Critical Thinking

Asking and answering important questions. Finding solutions to problems and figuring them out independently. Reasoning effectively and making sound judgements and decisions.



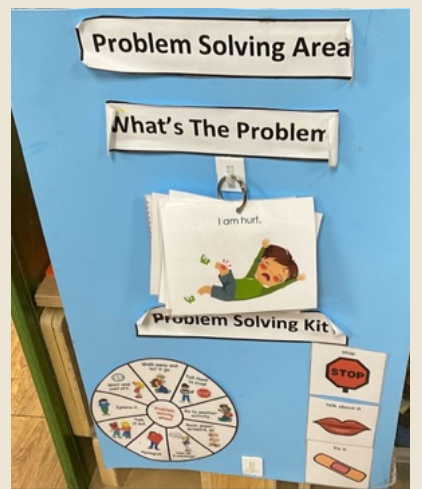
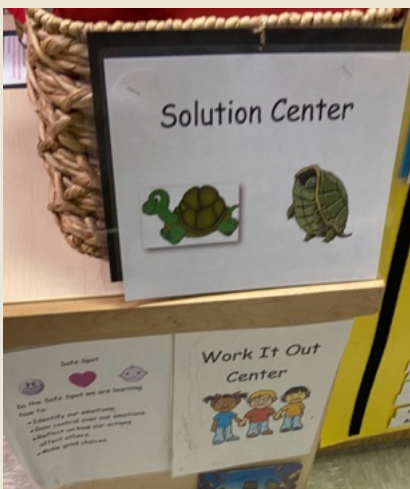
Creative Thinking

Discovering, innovating, and inventing. Thinking outside of the box. Viewing failure as a chance to learn, and being open and responsive to others' thoughts and ideas.



Communication

Talking and listening to others, sharing ideas, and clearly expressing what they need and/or want.



Collaboration

Working with others effectively and respectfully. Achieving compromises and getting the best results. Sharing responsibilities.



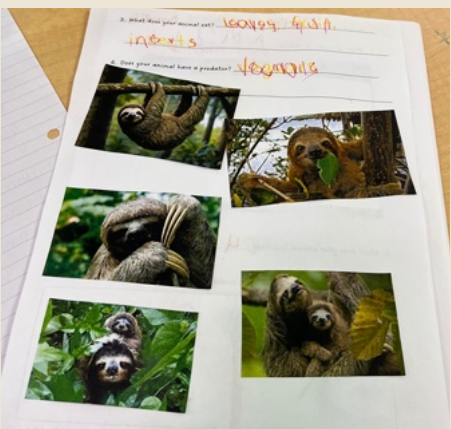
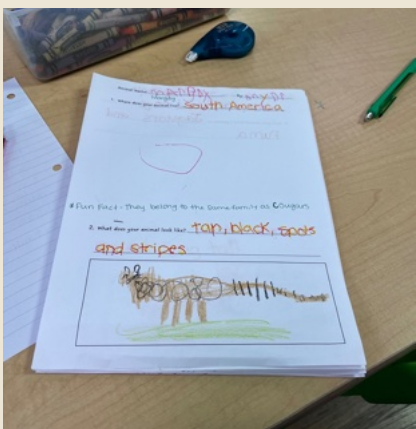
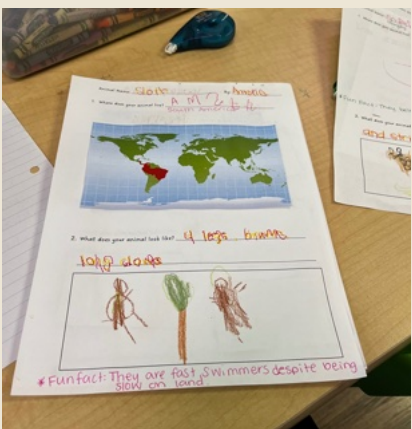
Literacy Skills

Information literacy, media literacy, and technology literacy.



Information Literacy

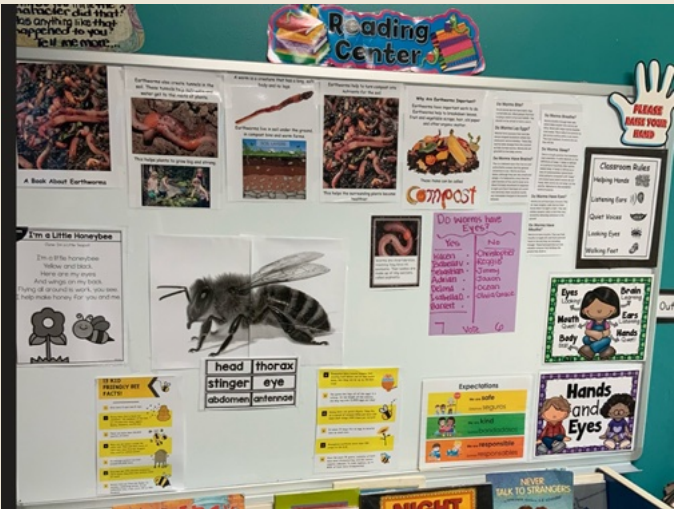
Understanding facts and data and how to discriminate fact from fiction. Having the skills needed to access information and use it accurately and creatively.



Children collaborated with their parents and teacher to choose an animal to research. They used technology to discover where the animal lives, what it eats, what it looks like, and other interesting facts. The information was then documented in a class book.

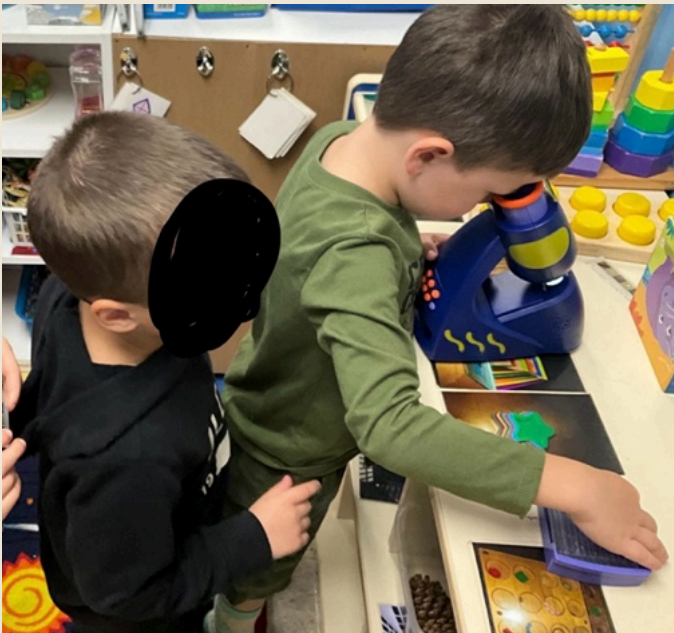
Media Literacy

Understanding the methods and outlets in which information is published. Learning how to use non-fiction books, magazines, and other print resources to obtain new information.



Technology Literacy

Understanding machines and how to use them and the tasks that each machine performs. In preschool, this can also include soft technology. Do children know how to use the tools and resources available to them?



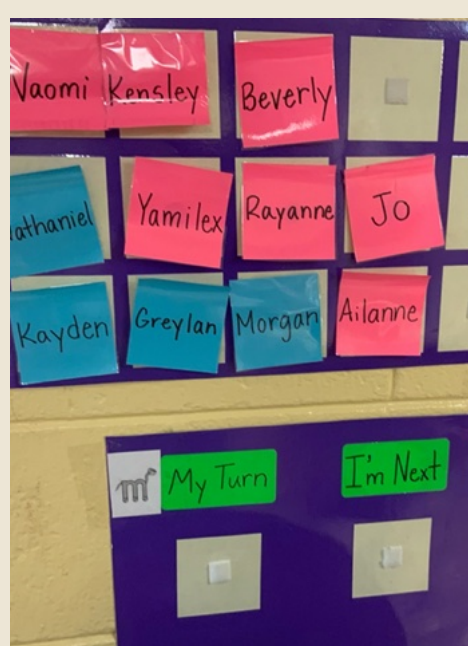
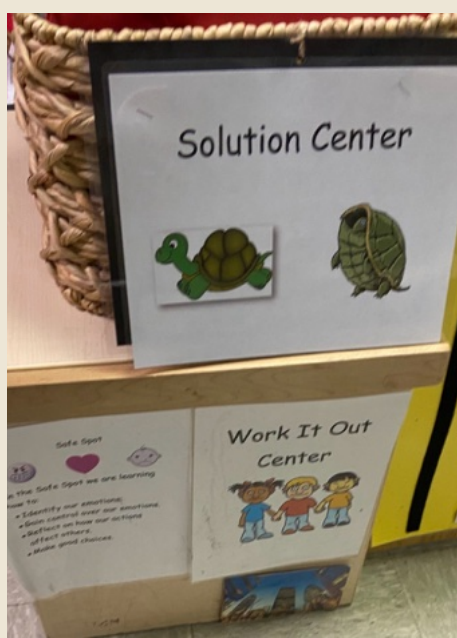
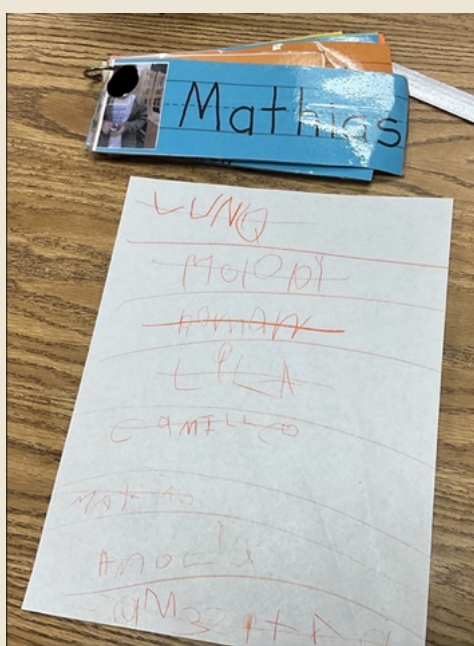


Life Skills

Flexibility, initiative, social skills, productivity, and leadership.

Flexibility

Adapting to change by engaging in jobs, roles, and responsibilities in the classroom. Managing their own behavior and exhibiting self-control in challenging situations.



Initiative

Being self-motivated to independently start projects, develop strategies, and create plans. You can support children by following their lead/interests both in play and through project-based learning.



Social Skills

Interacting and connecting with others. Respecting cultural differences, engaging with people of all social and cultural backgrounds. Responding open-mindedly to others' thoughts, ideas and values. You can support children's social skills by teaching them problem-solving skills, conversation skills, and turn taking/negotiation skills.





Life Skills

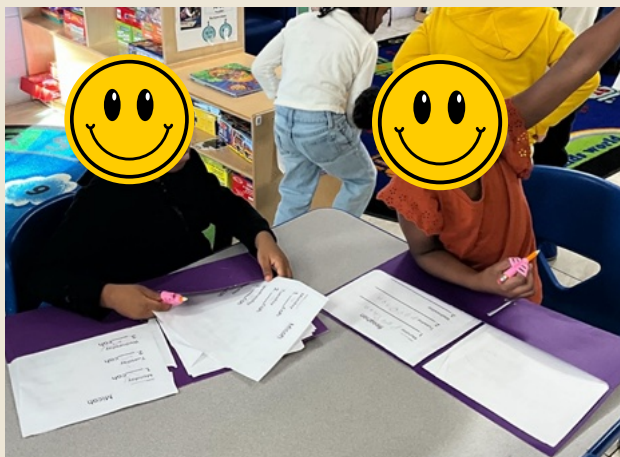
Flexibility, initiative, social skills, productivity, and leadership.

Productivity

Learning the process of completing tasks independently.

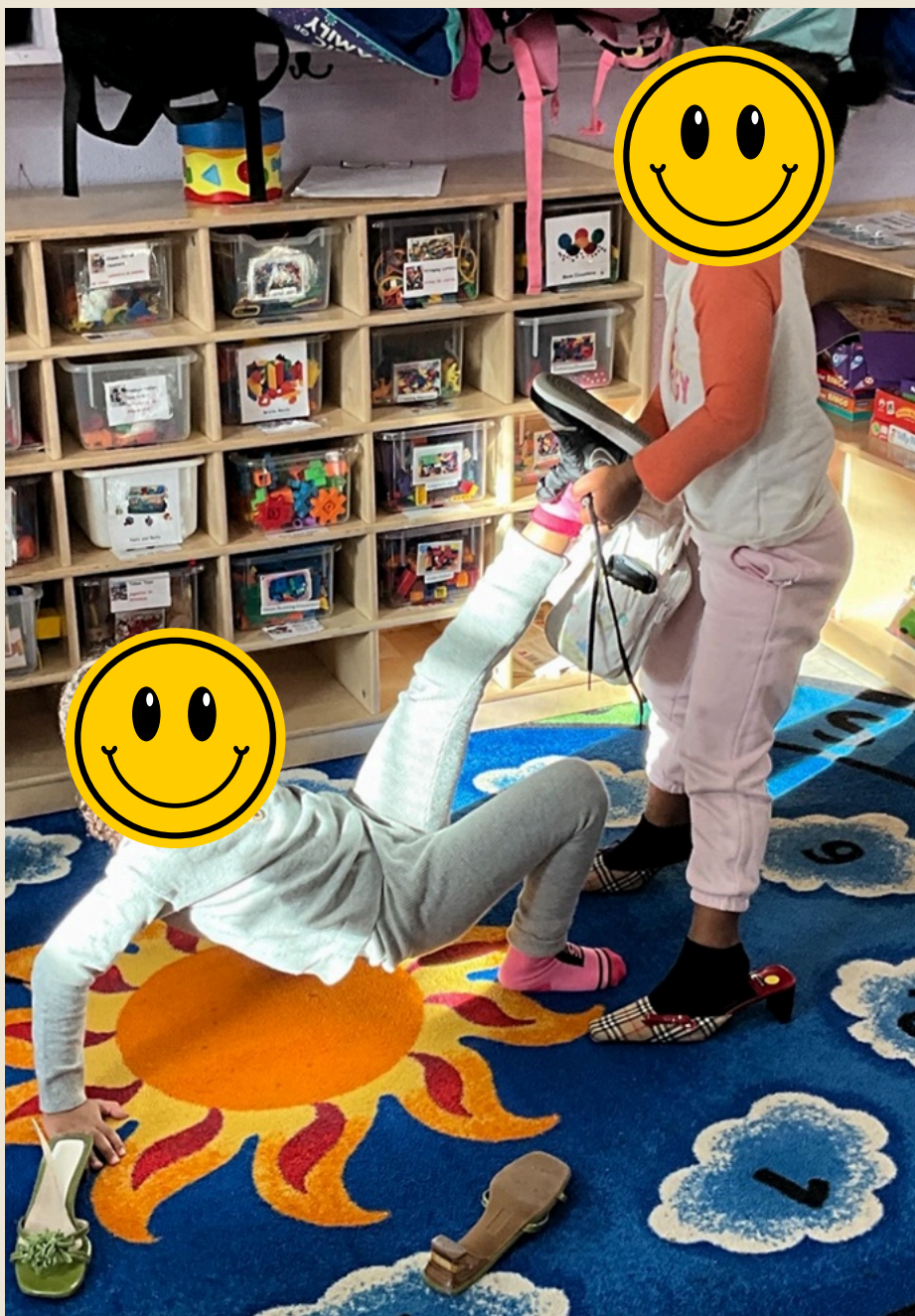
Understanding that it is okay to make mistakes and to keep trying.

Working with partners and in groups. Assigning jobs and roles within a group.



Leadership

Participating in jobs, roles, and responsibilities based on interest and strengths. You can teach and model for children the qualities of a leader, which include problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, responsibility, and honesty.

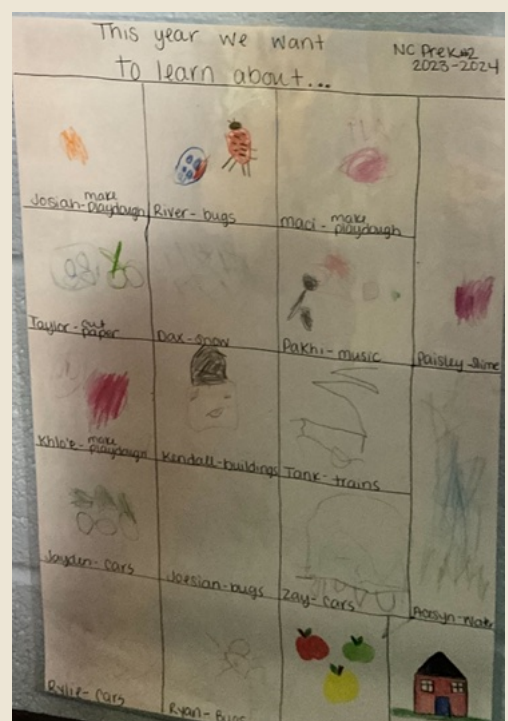


Strategies

Ways to implement 21st century skills into daily classroom life.



- **Focus on children's interests/Internal motivation-** Children learn best when they are interested in a topic. The content becomes meaningful and relevant. Learning can be sustained longer and understanding can become deeper when there is an emotional connection, personal experience or question posed. Project-based learning is a great way to follow the interests of children but is not the only way.
- **Focus on the whole child-** Teach social and emotional skills as well as academics. Use foundations to plan developmentally appropriate instruction and integrate all learning domains. Focus on what each child has to offer and celebrate their successes.
- **Make learning play based-** Children demonstrate what they are interested in, what they are learning, what they are concerned about and what they know through play. It is our job to observe children and make these connections.
- **Guided Play-** Interactions with adults help children learn important skills such as self-regulation, collaboration and social-emotional skills. This also serves as an assessment tool for the educator. It helps you learn where your children are and how you can help them get to the next step in their development.
- **Peer Interactions/Social Learning-** Create activities where children have to collaborate and problem solve with one another. Rule-based games help children develop self-regulation. Deciding on what to play in the dramatic play center or the block area requires collaboration, flexibility, and compromise.
- **Incorporate online learning opportunities-** These activities should enhance learning and be monitored. Plan virtual field trips, Zoom meetings with other classrooms, games where children have to cooperate and take turns. Consider how you can make technology available and provide opportunities for those that may not otherwise have access.



Strategies

Ways to implement 21st century skills into daily classroom life.



- **Differentiate instruction based on children's needs-** All children learn differently and bring unique strengths that shape their individual learning styles. They are also at varying stages of academic and social development. It's important to plan instruction based on children's needs and abilities. This approach directly connects to using data to inform and guide instructional planning.
- **Use data and on-going assessment to plan and reflect-** Data helps us understand where our children are in their learning and what they already know. By continuously collecting and reflecting on this information, we can plan more intentional instruction that supports each child's growth and next steps. Data collection can be formal or informal, and it serves as a valuable tool, not only to guide teaching but also to communicate progress with families, specialists, and colleagues.
- **Be consistent in your routine, rules, and expectations-** When children understand the rules, routines, and expectations, they feel safe and free to explore. Involving children in creating the rules encourages ownership and increases the likelihood they'll follow and even help reinforce them. Consistent routines also provide structure, helping children know what to expect. This predictability can be especially helpful for those who struggle with transitions or experience anxiety around change.
- **Promote a growth mindset-** Teach children that it's okay to make mistakes and experience failure. Through failure, we build persistence, resilience, and problem-solving skills.
- **Wonder together-** When adults and children wonder together, it creates a collaborative environment of exploration, discovery, and critical thinking.
- **Create authentic learning experiences-** Simulating real-world environments through media or specific skills or knowledge provides a more meaningful context for learning. When children apply specific skills and knowledge in realistic situations, they are more likely to retain and use those skills in the future. For example: Transform your dramatic play center into a restaurant. Children can practice writing skills by creating menus and taking orders, math skills by adding up prices and setting the table for a specific number of guests, and social skills through turn-taking, cooperation, and polite conversation. This kind of play-based, purposeful learning helps children make connections between classroom activities and the world around them.



Coaching Corner

Questions to guide reflection.

- Are the classroom displays a reflection of children's creative thinking and productivity?
- Am I providing opportunities for children to take initiative, problem-solve, and demonstrate flexibility?
- In what ways do you support children in finding solutions to problems on their own or with peers?
- How am I intentionally embedding opportunities for children to collaborate and communicate with their peers?
- Am I empowering the children in the classroom through opportunities for leadership?
- How do you encourage children to ask questions, explore, and think critically during play and learning experiences?
- How do you create opportunities for children to make choices and reflect on those choices?
- What opportunities do children have to share their thoughts, ideas, and stories with others?
- How do you integrate developmentally appropriate technology in your classroom?
- How do you support children in setting goals and taking ownership of their learning?
- How do you help children reflect on what they've learned or how they've grown?

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