



Keep it simple – embed skills

This thought leadership focus is about **REFLECTING** on what we do, the skills we use, more skills we use but don't recognise and how we can do this with our students by focusing on a theme and simply recognising all the **little** skills a student uses. As adults we inherently use a wide range of tasks, often without even realising!

1. **THINK** back over the last hour and **THINK** about how many skills you have just used. Did you: -

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speak with another person? <input type="checkbox"/> Speak with 2+ people in a group? <input type="checkbox"/> Ask any questions? <input type="checkbox"/> Use a hand gesture? <input type="checkbox"/> Give feedback in a conversation? <input type="checkbox"/> Read someone else's body language? <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to someone? <input type="checkbox"/> Move around while thinking? <input type="checkbox"/> Sit in a quiet space to think? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Read a short piece of text or a headline? <input type="checkbox"/> Read a visual? <input type="checkbox"/> Read an email? <input type="checkbox"/> Read a notice or newsletter? <input type="checkbox"/> Write a note to yourself? <input type="checkbox"/> Think about time or money? <input type="checkbox"/> Type/write anything? <input type="checkbox"/> Use numbers in an everyday setting? <input type="checkbox"/> Help someone with words?
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When we work with students, embedding all these key skills (and more) is often about keeping a theme or topic simple and engaging enough that we can add or adapt key skills into tasks without students realising!

2. **THINK** about the situations YOU were in when (what context) you were using the skills above:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Was it to do with planning? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it about a student? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it to do with money? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it about something in the past? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it about something in the future? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it something to do with a culture? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Was it about a course? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it personal or family related? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it to do with something social? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it to do with health, well-being? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it something to do with a person? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it something to do with a team?
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When SLR designs material we often have a big masterplan in our minds of what a theme could be about and how we can break it down into manageable and meaningful chunks to engage learners. We then break the chunks down into a sequence of tasks that embed selected and short literacy, numeracy, thinking, social and life skills to reflect the skills and knowledge we want students to work on.

As educators, we want to focus on engaging tasks and practising the skills, rather than confusing them with complex instructions or words. Once we have some engagement, we can then weave in other layers of skills, or link ideas together within themes. For example, if we want to focus on using numbers it could be any topics to do with currency, shopping, budgeting, measuring, cooking, timing, calendars, money, weight/volume, building etc. and it becomes about the simple tasks within that theme that build up to

create a bigger picture. Within a numbers theme like “TIME FOR A DATE” or “IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MONEY”, some tasks will also weave in literacy, thinking, social and communication skills! The reality is we don’t come across many students who use the word “numeracy” or “literacy” when they talk to each other, but they do make plans, need to understand time and routines, use money and buy things!!



3. So now instead of thinking about every day skills like in 1 + 2 that involved basic literacy and numeracy skills, **THINK** back over the last week when you may have used some of the following high level skills in many small everyday settings or maybe in some larger ways. Did you: -

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make a financial decision? <input type="checkbox"/> Make a social decision? <input type="checkbox"/> Consider different options? <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss a problem? <input type="checkbox"/> Find a solution? <input type="checkbox"/> Order items? <input type="checkbox"/> Order events? <input type="checkbox"/> Organise material or resources? <input type="checkbox"/> Manage yourself? <input type="checkbox"/> Manage others? <input type="checkbox"/> Research for information? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Present information? <input type="checkbox"/> Plan a task? <input type="checkbox"/> Manage time? <input type="checkbox"/> Visualise something? <input type="checkbox"/> Show respect to someone? <input type="checkbox"/> Show respect to an item? <input type="checkbox"/> Show care towards someone or something? <input type="checkbox"/> Show some leadership? <input type="checkbox"/> Work with another person? <input type="checkbox"/> Use simple negotiation? <input type="checkbox"/> De-escalate a disagreement?
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Isn’t it amazing how many skills we can use within an hour, a day, a week or a term? We embed skills and knowledge into our everyday actions, and we can also embed many skills within our material to students.

Sometimes the most rewarding part of a topic for you and the most positive experience for a student may be the time they may have to talk, to build a relationship with you, explore an idea, do something they thought they couldn’t or just to complete short tasks using skills they already have mastered.

When you think a student isn’t quite grasping the main points in your lesson, or that they are falling behind their peers, slow down a little and remind yourself of the many skills they ARE showing in your lessons and the social cues and modelling they may be picking up by just being there.

4. Really **LOOK** at your next topic that is coming up (or the topic you just used) and **THINK** about:

1. What theme could this fall under ... what is the bigger picture for a student?
2. What big skills will be covered in the topic?
3. What smaller skills are also woven in?
4. Is it offering a range of spoken interactions?
5. Is it offering some different ways to write/communicate (or have ideas written FOR a student)
6. Are there some small snippets to read and process?
7. Is there a chance for some embedded numeracy skills (numbers, measurements, statistics, time, location, angles, temperature, conversions etc.)?
8. Is there a chance to be creative, to think, to move around, to use visuals?
9. Is there a chance for social cues and modelling to be used?
10. Can the topic be linked to other topics to embed more skills and reinforce knowledge?

Thanks for TAKING 5 MINS to just stop, think and appreciate how much we can embed into the learning we help deliver and the knowledge we help build ... by simply embedding skills!



Note: Thoughts in this series are based on Supporting Learning (SLR) experiences with over 500 NZ schools and schools worldwide, as well as research used for articles, presentations and study and while SLR examples are used in this Take 5mins, there are many other valid options that will suit your students.