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# **Creativity in the Development of Critical Skills**

Wendy Onslow-Mato



# Session Focus

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1. Overview - critical skills in the classroom
2. Teachers – share & discuss problems and/or successes
3. Teacher workgroups - adapt and develop existing ideas.

# Overview

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- What are critical skills?
- Are critical skills only valid in English?
- Are they only valid in academic study?
- At what level do we start?
- How can we include in our classrooms?
- What to do when it doesn't work....

# What are critical skills?

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Skills related to...

- interacting with others in the world
- thinking about the world
- adapting to the world
- solving problems in the world

(Mueller, 2008, p.7)

# Are critical skills only valid in English?

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What do you think?

Yes?    No?    Maybe?

Even if not taught ...they exist in L1

Transferable to L2/L3/L4.....

# Are they only valid in Academic study?

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Consider situations where critical skills are used...

- Many situations...not only academic!
- Use creatively to create student interest?
- Link to non-academic

# At what level do we start?

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- Learnt or inherent - both
- Never too soon to start developing
- Benefits/drawbacks to starting early?

# How to include in our classrooms?

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- Pictures/photographs etc.
- Link to reading(s)
- Encourage questions
- YouTube or other film clips (adverts, songs)
- Use of realia
- Speaking
- Technology

....basically multimodal...anything goes...if it works

Dare I say it...you are only bound by your own imagination and creativity!!!



# How to include in our classrooms?

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Examples.....

# Pictures and photographs

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- Choose to complement class level
- Story-telling/descriptions
- Lead-in activity
- Comparisons
- Combination of above...

# Comparison - Discussion

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(Richina, 2011)



(Walstad, 2012)

# Comparison - Reveal

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**The Exploitation of Domestic Child Labor;  
Enslaved in a System of Servitude**  
(Richina, 2011)



**Raising a Helpful Child**  
(Walstad, 2012)

# Link to Reading



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## Arnott's probes child labour claims

JEFF TURNBULL

March 30, 2010

Arnott's is taking steps to make sure the cocoa for its iconic Tim Tam chocolate biscuits is produced in Africa without the use of child labour. Its pledge follows a meeting on Monday with World Vision Australia chief Tim Costello, who called on the Australian-based manufacturer to ensure its West African cocoa is from an ethical source.

"Every Australian loves Tim Tams and Mint Slices but we want to know the chocolate in these biscuits has been produced ethically," Mr Costello said.

"We're calling on Arnott's to demonstrate that it is not indirectly supporting the worst forms of child labour."

Arnott's says it is aware that child labour is used in the cocoa fields of West Africa and within six months it will have a proposal for how they would source ethical cocoa.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, about 75 per cent of the world's cocoa is sourced from West Africa. Arnott's says a fraction - just 0.1 per cent - of its cocoa comes from West Africa. In a statement, Arnott's says it is committed to playing its part by sourcing sustainable cocoa that avoids the use of child trafficking and unacceptable forms of child labour.

A report published by the US Department of State indicated there were at least 100,000 child labourers in the Ivory Coast alone. Mr Costello said that last August, Interpol rescued 54 children, some as young as 10 years old, from the cocoa fields of the Ivory Coast.

"These children were unpaid, forced to carry massive loads and were of seven different nationalities, indicating that they had been trafficked from neighbouring countries," Mr Costello said. He said ethical certifications, like the Fairtrade label, aimed to ensure products met agreed environmental, labour and developmental standards.

World Vision Australia's 'Don't Trade Lives' campaign is calling on the global chocolate industry to guarantee farmers a fair price for their cocoa and to eliminate exploited labour from cocoa production by 2018.

"The campaign has borne fruit with Cadbury's - this Easter their Dairy Milk bar for the first time is ethically-sourced," Mr Costello said.

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Source: Turnbull, J 2010, 'Arnott's probes child labour claims', Sydney Morning Herald, 30 March, viewed 24 August 2010, <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/arnotts-probes-child-labour-claims-20100330-ra58.html>.

# Encourage Questions

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- Teacher as antagonist
- Students ask/write questions or comments
- Share with class
- Encourage other students to answer questions

# YouTube clips

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Url for Spiderman clip or search for 'Spiderman baby and me'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ3nBSTpq4M&feature=youtu.be>

Idea is to play and get students to guess what the clip is for. Stop before the brand reveal. Students discuss what they think and why. Then play further to show first screen shot reveal of brand name. Again stop discuss..why? Then play to the slogan....stop discuss why and links between the ad and the slogan & product.....

Note: There is another clip on youtube with people in the street finding their baby reflection...search 'Evian baby and me'

# Use of realia

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- What is it? (games for lower levels)
- Touch and feel...

Here you can use common or unusual items and students need to critically evaluate from looking at the item what it is and used for...or put items in a paper bag or touch box where they cannot see them and must use sense of touch to guess.



# Speaking

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- **Playing and acting** (students guess context and situations...use of mime etc.)
- **Voice games....what do I mean.** (Use of the same simple phrases and change the voice intonation, tone etc. to match different emotions and give different meanings...)
- **Voice and body language...** (Similar to above but add body language...)



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- Use of Internet & mobile phones
    - Socrative ( [socrative.com](http://socrative.com))
    - Instagram (Use for posting photos and commenting/guessing what they are. E.g. a photo of part of an object or landmark,,,students comment what they think it is and why..))
    - Facebook (Develop critical discussion logs etc.)
    - What's app (Use for grammar and understanding...do you mean what you write... students have to read other students' messages and explain what they think they mean..)
  - Any app.....think creatively

# What to do when it doesn't work....

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- Try, try and try again
- Flexibility....think on your feet
- Have a back-up plan
- Adapt
- Know your learners
- ....your ideas???

# Teacher sharing

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Now it's your turn!!

Let's focus on different critical skills....

Choose one activity you have used to develop critical skills in your classroom and share with your group.

Was it a success? Why? Why not?

You have **5** minutes for this.

# Teacher Creativity

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1. Now choose one of the activities from the group discussion
2. Discuss ideas on how to put a creative spin on the activity to increase its classroom appeal.....or to adapt it for a different level
3. Share

Photos of notes on whiteboard walls available.

# In Summary

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- Critical skills – essential for students in life and include *critical thinking*
  - Critical skills are valid in every language in both academic study and non- academic
  - Never too early to start developing these skills
  - Some ideas for inclusion in the classroom:
    - Pictures/photographs etc.
    - Link to reading(s)
    - Encourage questions
    - YouTube or other film clips (adverts, songs)
    - Use of realia
    - Speaking
    - Technology
  - Strategies to help it work
    - Teachers
      - share & discuss problems and/or successes
      - adapt and develop existing ideas

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# The Critical Skills Students Need

# 2

Why do I keep calling these “critical” skills? I use the term “critical” here, and in the title of the book, in two ways. First, I believe the skills I mentioned in Chapter 1, and that I will describe in more detail in this chapter, are essential to one’s ability to function effectively and fully in our world: school, work, and life. I will make the case further in this chapter that possessing these skills (and having the disposition to apply them) will enable us to tackle problems across multiple and varied contexts, as well as best utilize the knowledge we have acquired.

Second, I call these skills critical because I believe they require or emphasize *critical thinking*. One cannot be a good communicator, good problem-solver, good collaborator, or good information seeker without careful and thoughtful participation in those processes.

It would be quite presumptuous of me to claim that I know what all the most critical skills are. So, I will simply argue that these are *some* of the most critical skills we need to succeed. Others could add to (and subtract from) this list. Yet, I am comfortable suggesting that those individuals who possess the skills described in the following list will be well prepared for most challenges they encounter. If that is true, should not teaching and assessing these skills be a central aspect of what we do in school?

## “THE” CRITICAL SKILLS

In attacking a task such as generating a list of critical skills, it is helpful to try and categorize the items in the list. This gives more meaning to the items by highlighting similarities and differences. So, I have grouped a number of skills along four dimensions:

- 1) Skills related to interacting with others in the world
- 2) Skills related to thinking about the world
- 3) Skills related to adapting to the world
- 4) Skills related to solving problems in the world



## **INTERACTING WITH OTHERS**

Since we are a social species, effectively interacting with other humans is often critical to our success. Thus, it is quite beneficial to be competent at:

- **Communication Skills**—including the abilities to read, write, speak, and listen in a particular language as well as in other common languages; express oneself through and interpret nonverbal communication; communicate through and interpret artistic expression
- **Collaborative Skills**—including the abilities to contribute to group activities and discussions; consider the ideas and perspectives of others; include others in the collaborative process; stay focused on the task; provide and receive feedback constructively
- **Leadership Skills**—including the abilities to model appropriate behavior; direct and organize the behavior of others; persuade others; manage conflict; take action and accept responsibility for the consequences
- **Interpersonal Skills**—including the abilities to take the perspective of others; manage conflict; manage one's emotions and impulses across a variety of interpersonal situations; maintain positive relations with others; adhere to appropriate boundaries when interacting with others

## **MAKING SENSE OF THE WORLD**

Also, part of human nature is our capacity to reason and reflect upon the decisions and problems we encounter. Thus, the cognitive processes that often direct our behavior are also critical to our success. Such skills include:

- **Logic or Reasoning Skills**—including the abilities to draw appropriate inferences; deduce logical conclusions; identify assumptions; generate predictions; recognize faulty logic
- **Quantitative Reasoning Skills**—including the abilities to estimate; exhibit a sense of scale; interpret quantitative data in varied formats; use quantitative data to support arguments; interpret probabilities; recognize misuses of data
- **Analytical Skills**—including the abilities to identify patterns; identify the components of a concept or problem; identify appropriate criteria for judging a product or idea; compare and contrast concepts or processes; classify or organize elements along specified criteria
- **Evaluation Skills**—including the abilities to evaluate the validity of claims; evaluate the relevance of different types and sources of evidence for different types of claims or questions; evaluate the sufficiency of evidence to draw a conclusion; apply criteria to the judgment of a product or idea; identify possible errors and biases in

claims or conclusions

- **Integration Skills**—including the abilities to find connections between similar and dissimilar concepts or processes; combine disparate ideas into a new, coherent idea; synthesize a variety of components into a new product

## **PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

With such a plastic brain, humans have considerable capacity to adapt to the environment. The more we learn from our successes and failures and learn how to adjust accordingly the more successful we tend to be. That places considerable importance upon the following skills:

- **Self-assessment Skills**—including the abilities to apply relevant criteria to own work; identify strengths and weaknesses; judge when one has successfully completed a task
- **Goal-setting Skills**—including the abilities to identify clear goals; identify realistic goals; identify goals relevant to the task; identify effective responses to positive and negative outcomes
- **Self-management Skills**—including the abilities to manage one's time; be prepared; develop and follow successful routines; organize and plan appropriately; prioritize; respond flexibly to new situations; manage stress and handle distractions; act independently when necessary or appropriate
- **Metacognitive Skills**—including the abilities to monitor one's progress on a task; assess task difficulty; anticipate likelihood of difficulty on a task; acknowledge one's strengths and limitations; evaluate effectiveness of current and alternative strategies; recognize when a change in approach is needed and make adjustments; identify errors; take control of learning
- **Study (or Learning) Skills**—including the abilities to manage time for a task or situation; recognize the best strategies for certain kinds of tasks; outline or organize information to be learned; give meaning to the information to be learned; attach useful cues to the information to be learned; exhibit active engagement with information to be learned; make information personally relevant; use others wisely in service of learning of information; apply meta-memory knowledge to learning of information

## **SOLVING PROBLEMS**

Virtually everything humans do can be thought of as a problem to be solved, a question to be answered, or a task to be completed. Thus, our success in life also depends upon developing skills which enhance our capacity to successfully approach, analyze, and complete tasks. Such skills include:

- **Problem-solving Skills**—including the abilities to identify a (the) problem; determine knowledge and skills necessary or helpful to solve the problem or complete the task; apply appropriate knowledge, rules and strategies to the problem; generate possible solutions; evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of possible solutions; given relevant constraints, determine best possible solution(s)
- **Information Literacy Skills**—including the abilities to identify or frame a question to be answered; locate appropriate sources of information that address the question; access the information from a variety of sources; evaluate the accuracy, relevancy, authority, and currency of the information for the question; determine when sufficient information has been acquired to answer the question
- **Creative or Innovative Skills**—including the abilities to identify novel connections between disparate concepts and contexts; identify novel approaches to a process or task; combine disparate concepts, processes or tools in novel ways
- **Technical Skills**—including the abilities to recognize appropriate tool(s) for specific tasks; contribute to the completion of a task through effective application of tools

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***Note:** I have not listed dispositions or habits of mind among these critical skills. Yet, research finds that those are critical as well. Someone might possess good critical-thinking skills, but if she is not disposed to applying them in certain situations or in general those skills are not employed (Bensley, 2006; Perkins, Jay, & Tishman, 1993). However, to keep attention here on how to develop these skills, that discussion will be left to others.*

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Okay, take a look at the list of skills. Obviously, these skills overlap considerably within and between the categories. Also, one could choose a variety of names that capture their focus, but this categorization helps elucidate the relevance and importance of these skills. Given that, what do you see when you look at the list?

When scanning the list and imagining a student employing most or even many of these skills, can you understand a teacher's enthusiasm for working with such a student? When you imagine an employee (or supervisor) or colleague or neighbor or leader with such skills do you see great promise for such a person in any sphere of life? These are skills we can teach, beginning at an early age. We just are not doing it now, at least not systematically and not for most students.

## BEYOND READING, 'RITING, AND 'RITHMETIC

A few critical skills, such as reading and writing, do receive considerable attention in our schools. Yet, even there, in part because of our overstuffed curricula, many students do not receive sufficient instruction and practice in how to read the variety of nonfiction texts they will encounter in school and beyond. Similarly, too many students graduate high school with weak communication skills.

Other critical skills, such as

- information literacy skills
- metacognitive strategies
- problem-solving skills
- collaborative skills

receive far less attention, particularly relative to the frequency with which we are called upon to use them in numerous contexts.

I am not referring to discipline-specific skills—how to conduct scientific inquiry, how to multiply fractions, or how to converse in another language. Many of those are important as well. Rather, I am arguing for greater attention to those skills that cross all disciplines and thus do not belong to any one discipline. Given that most of these skills do not have a particular disciplinary home, they often receive much less attention even though they are often applied across a much greater range of contexts.

To explore these critical skills further, let us examine their *relevance* to school, work, and life.

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## Speaking

Video recording  
own pres

and analysing  
it (peer fb)

on speaking techniques)

Interruption

Monitor (Buzzer / Movement)

In a presentation  
there is a interruption  
monitor (person) who watches  
the others and warns them  
if sb is interrupting the speaker

Use Agree/Disagree

cards to force  
consideration of  
other side  
opposing view

Hot topics

(Erase  
Simpler Discussion Lang  
so that sts  
are forced to  
use more  
complex language)

Record conversations  
you overhear in public

Group task-based learning  
eg. justify which car to buy  
or which candidate to hire.

Compare two newspaper  
accounts of the same story

Group gets an object  
and has to invent a  
logical use for it  
(there's no "correct" answer.)

What's the  
object in a box -  
why do you think  
that's what it is?

Show pics

Have ss create  
their own discussion  
questions.

## Speaking

Ambiguous Advertisements

eg. Spiderman → Evian

Have ss. create their own  
tenuous links

Advertisements

→ Evian

→ their own

The Avengers

→ Hearing aids

Skydiving

→ office chairs



## Speaking

Video recording  
own pres  
and analysing  
it (peer fb on speaking techniques)

### Interruption

Monitor (Buzzer / Movement)  
Beeper

In a presentation  
there is a interruption  
monitor (person) who watches  
the others and warns them  
if sb is interrupting the speaker

Use Agree/Disagree  
cards to force  
consideration of  
other side  
opposing view

### Hot topics

(Erase  
Simpler Discussion Lang  
so that sts  
are forced to  
use more  
complex language)

## Reading:

Create a courtroom drama  
based on articles of different  
opinions. (like a debate)

Create a visual based on the  
reading.

## Reading

### Newspaper Articles scan

- T writes Qs from website eg SMH
  - Sts locate answers
  - Sts. write Qs from own website for each other
- Create story

## WRITING

Using pictures  
as a lead-in  
give ideas  
an essay

→ students

→ Use pairs,  
+ contrast

## WRITING

Using pictures  
as a lead-in to  
give ideas for  
an essay.

→ students think: cause + effect.

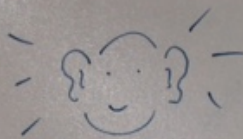
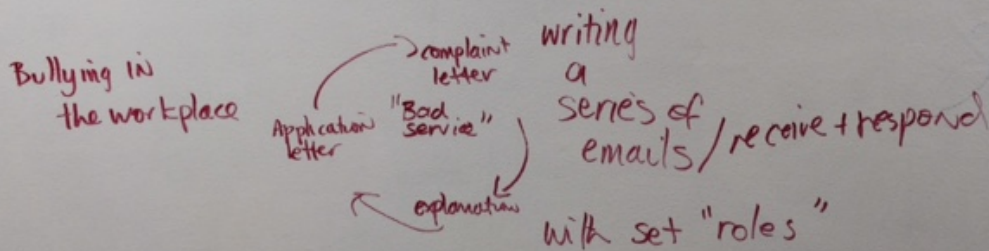
→ Use pairs, ask them to compare  
+ contrast to build sentences  
to verbalize ideas.



Modelled before.

Create the situation first — based  
on a real

Create a 3 way cycle  
of correspondence workplace  
communication  
issue



## LISTENING



Successful: Listening to the News

- identify no. of news items
- categorize items (eg. local, ...)
- answer Qs - politics, economy, ...

Creative

→ Generate discussion



Unsuccessful: Listening to audios

Produced in the U.K or U.S.A  
(sts. finding it difficult to understand  
accent/dialect /intonation/vocab

Why?

Advert

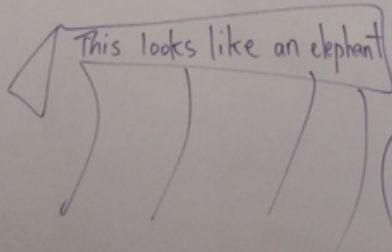
Social Marketing

Discuss the meaning of \_\_\_\_\_ dynamic messages  
in your culture? effective or not  
~~kineto~~  
create a campaign

Speaking

Banksy → Art / Graffiti?

Vandalism?



Backup plan /  
(Plan A+B) flexibility!

### Extra Notes for Critical Skills

Use texts from the curriculum

- Natural fit into daily schedule

- Benefits student and teacher – time efficient & supports curriculum

Student friendly tasks

- Scaffolded – ease of instruction

  - encourage comprehension

- Promote student interest

- Use transferable skills from L1 –L2

- Non-intrusive – natural fit into daily lessons and course structure

- Time efficient

- Easily adapted for independent study

Ease of use/implementation for teacher

- Relevant to course material

- Limit new topics or material – an extension of current course material

- Time efficient

- Can be used as a diagnostic/consultative tool

## Example In-class activity

### Part 1

Look at these two photographs and discuss them with your group members.

Note down any ideas you have.



This particular exercise was a lead in to an article related to child labour being indirectly used by the Australian biscuit company, Arnotts. Students were put into groups and asked to discuss the photographs and note down anything they noticed or anything the photograph made them think about...it was up to the students what they wanted to say.

After group discussion each group gave their feedback...to make it more interesting the teacher added information or made comments in response to students' comments. It was interesting to note how different groups found different things and how they changed their opinions with each new comment/piece of information the teacher gave.

Finally, the teacher showed students the related article for each photograph; the headlines (in order of photographs) made it clear what the photos were for.

### ***The Exploitation of Domestic Child Labor; Enslaved in a System of Servitude***

By Allison Richina, International Labor Rights Forum

### ***Raising a Helpful Child***

written by: Deborah Walstad • edited by: Amy Carson • updated: 6/6/2012

### **Result:**

The students questioned the Arnott's article much more and the questions they asked were more critical.

## Part 2

### Arnott's probes child labour claims

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