

FUTURE-READY SKILLS FRAMEWORK®

EXPLR's **Future-Ready Skills Framework**® equips 13–19-year-olds with portable skills for an uncertain, shifting work landscape. It's global in design and sets young people up for success in life and future careers.

The framework was developed with educators, and industry partners to reflect current role requirements and future talent demands. Language is clear and measurable so learners and employers can use common terms, verify evidence of competence, and address skills gaps effectively.

RATIONALE

The framework's structure—Core Skills → Strands → Competencies—responds to shifts in work by making capabilities concrete and portable across roles, sectors, and regions. Employers expect large-scale churn as tasks and tools change; according to the World Economic Forum, 23% of roles will experience structural labour-market churn within five years, reflecting both new jobs created and existing jobs displaced.

Demand signals point to growth in science and technology jobs. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, STEM occupations are projected to grow 8.1% from 2024 to 2034, compared with 3.1% for all occupations, and carry higher median wages.

At the same time, advanced industry faces a substantial talent need; Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute estimate U.S. manufacturing will require about 3.8 million additional workers between 2024 and 2033, with up to 1.9 million roles potentially going unfilled without action.

OECD Skills for Jobs evidence points to widespread skill imbalances—persistent shortages in digital, technical, and problemsolving capabilities that hinder tech adoption and productivity. The OECD notes these shortages are now structural across many economies.

CORE SKILLS

The eight **Core Skills** are translated into **Strands** and measurable **Competencies** so it's clear what young people can do, how growth is evidenced over time, and how those portable skills support success beyond school and into future careers.



STRANDS

Each **Core Skill** is divided into **Strands** that focus the skill and bridge it to the **Competencies** that follow.

1 Analytical Thinking

Economics & Decision Science – Applying principles of trade-offs, opportunity cost, and market dynamics to inform sound decision-making.

Engineering – Understanding design processes, systems thinking, and technical problem-solving used to create functional solutions.

Financial Literacy – Developing practical financial management skills, from budgeting and credit to investment and corporate finance.

Geo & Climate Literacy – Interpreting geographic and climate data to assess risk, sustainability, and decision-making in global contexts.

Numerical & Data Literacy – Building skills in statistical analysis, budgeting, and data interpretation to foster quantitative proficiency.

Problem-Solving Skills – Cultivating critical and analytical thinking, creativity, and the ability to evaluate and implement solutions to complex challenges.

Research & Information Gathering -

Strengthening the ability to locate, evaluate, and synthesize information for academic, professional, and real-world applications.

Systems Thinking – Mapping interconnections and feedback loops to understand complexity, trade-offs, and leverage points within real systems.

2 Collaboration

Leadership & Management – eveloping decision-making, delegation, and motivational skills to guide teams and projects.

Teamwork & Collaboration – BBuilding the ability to work effectively with others, share responsibility, and resolve conflict.

3 Communication

Communication Skills – Building verbal and written communication, active listening, and presentation abilities to convey ideas clearly and confidently.

Customer Service – Understanding customer needs, empathy, and service orientation in real interactions.

Networking – Developing ability to build and sustain professional relationships to expand opportunities.

Sales & Marketing – Building persuasion, branding, and market research skills for market-facing roles.

4 Creative Thinking

Creativity & Innovation – Fostering idea generation, design thinking, and planning to develop innovative problem-solvers.

Design & Make – Applying design principles and prototyping to develop practical, usercentered solutions.

Entrepreneurial Thinking – Building skills to identify opportunities, test ideas, and translate solutions into viable products, services, or ventures.



Accessibility & Inclusive Design – Ensuring products, systems, and communications are usable and fair for all individuals.

Data Governance & Privacy – Managing data responsibly with attention to consent, security, and ethical use.

Ethics & Integrity – Upholding ethical behavior, honesty, and accountability in academic, professional, and community contexts.

Standards, Safety & Quality – Applying safety protocols, compliance requirements, and quality assurance to maintain reliability and trust.



Project Execution

Documentation & Reproducibility – Creating clear records, instructions, and evidence so work can be repeated, validated, and improved.

Human Factors & Usability – Designing processes and products with attention to user experience, accessibility, and efficiency.

Organizational Skills – Structuring time, tasks, and resources to manage responsibilities effectively.

Project Management – Defining scope, milestones, risks, and communication strategies to deliver successful outcomes.

Risk & Resilience – Identifying risks, preparing mitigation strategies, and responding effectively to setbacks.

Time Management – Prioritizing tasks, balancing commitments, and meeting deadlines in dynamic environments.



Self-Efficacy

Adaptability & Flexibility – Responding effectively to change and shifting demands with resilience and openness.

Career Pathways – Exploring and aligning personal goals with evolving career opportunities and labor market trends.

Dependability – Building reliability, accountability, and trust by consistently following through on commitments.

Learning Agility – Developing the capacity to learn, unlearn, and relearn quickly to stay relevant in changing environments.



Tech Literacy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy – Understand core AI concepts and uses; weigh risks and ethics; apply AI tools responsibly.

Cloud & API Literacy – Connect services and data via APIs; manage keys and errors; plan for reliability and scale.

Digital Literacy – Use digital tools effectively; create content; practice strong privacy and cybersecurity habits.

Technical Skills – Work with software, data, and basic IT systems; troubleshoot issues and apply tools to real tasks.

The competency tables for each Core Skill and Strand follow on the next pages.

Analytical Thinking

Economics & Decision Science	High School	ECN-HS-1	Analyze using models to a basic supply-demand situation
Economics & Decision Science	High School	ECN-HS-2	Develop a cost-benefit table with marginal analysis for a real choice
Economics & Decision Science	High School	ECN-HS-3	Identify an externality or public good
Economics & Decision Science	Middle School	ECN-MS-1	Explain wants vs. needs and opportunity cost using a simple everyday choice
Economics & Decision Science	Middle School	ECN-MS-2	Read a simple price-quantity graph and describe what happens to quantity demanded or supplied when price changes
Economics & Decision Science	Middle School	ECN-MS-3	Recognize a positive or negative spillover at school/community and suggest one incentive or rule to improve outcomes
Engineering	High School	ENG-HS-1	Demonstrate ability to create an annotated diagram or schematic that explains function, data/energy flow, and at least two plausible failure modes.
Engineering	High School	ENG-HS-2	Evaluate and select manufacturing processes and tolerances for a key part and produce a simple drawing with critical dimensions (GD&T-lite if needed).
Engineering	High School	ENG-HS-3	Compose a one-page risk & compliance note citing relevant standards/safety rules and environmental constraints for the build.
Engineering	Middle School	ENG-MS-1	Illustrate a labeled diagram that shows the main parts and how the system works
Engineering	Middle School	ENG-MS-2	Choose a way to make one part (3D print, laser, or hand tools) and measure two key dimensions with a ruler or caliper.
Engineering	Middle School	ENG-MS-3	Make a safety checklist for your build and note any school or community rules you must follow.
Financial Literacy	High School	FL-HS-1	Develop advanced financial skills, including investing and managing credit.
Financial Literacy	High School	FL-HS-2	Create and manage a personal budget
Financial Literacy	High School	FL-HS-3	Understand basic principles of business finance including financial statements and corporate finance.
Financial Literacy	Middle School	FL-MS-1	Understand basic financial concepts such as saving, budgeting, and spending.
Financial Literacy	Middle School	FL-MS-2	Learn the importance of financial planning and goal setting.
Financial Literacy	Middle School	FL-MS-3	Explore simple financial transactions and their impacts.
Geo & Climate Literacy	High School	GEO-HS-1	Interpret a map/layer relevant to your project (exposure, transport, energy) and write a 150-word decision brief.

Geo & Climate Literacy Geo & Climate Literacy Geo & Climate Literacy Geo & Climate Literacy Middle School GEO-MS-1 Find a map that matters for your project and explain one thing it tells you. Describe one local weather/climate risk and ho might change a plan. Numerical and Data Literacy Problem-Solving Skills
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Data Literacy Numerical and Data Literacy Problem-Solving Skills Problem-Solving Skills Problem-Solving Skills Problem-Solving Middle School PS-HS-3 Skills Problem-Solving Middle School PS-MS-1 Symptomic Middle School PS-MS-2 Use creative thinking in projects and group
Data Literacy Numerical and High School PS-HS-1 Develop advanced critical thinking skills for complex problem-solving. Implement creative solutions in real-world scenarios. Problem-Solving High School PS-HS-3 Skills Problem-Solving Middle School PS-MS-1 Apply basic critical thinking to solve simple problems. Problem-Solving Middle School PS-MS-2 Use creative thinking in projects and group
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Skills problems. Problem-Solving Middle School PS-MS-2 Use creative thinking in projects and group
Problem-Solving Middle School PS-MS-3 Analyze situations to identify problems and potential solutions.
Research and High School RIG-HS-1 Perform advanced research for academic pape Information Gathering
Research and High School RIG-HS-2 Critically evaluate and synthesize multiple source of information. Gathering
Research and High School RIG-HS-3 Present research findings in various formats. Information Gathering
Research and Middle School RIG-MS-1 Conduct online research for assignments. Information Gathering
Information
Information Gathering Research and Middle School RIG-MS-2 Learn to evaluate sources for credibility Information

Systems Thinking	High School	SYS-HS-2	Run a simple scenario (if X changes, then Y) and present trade-offs across cost, time, equity, and risk.
Systems Thinking	Middle School	SYS-MS-1	Draw a simple map of parts that work together and show one cause → effect loop.
Systems Thinking	Middle School	SYS-MS-2	Explain one trade-off in your project (faster vs. safer, cheaper vs. durable) and your choice.

Collaboration

Leadership and Management	High School	LM-HS-1	Develop advanced leadership skills in extracurricular activities.
Leadership and Management	High School	LM-HS-2	Make informed decisions and take responsibility for outcomes.
Leadership and Management	High School	LM-HS-3	Inspire and motivate others through effective leadership.
Leadership and Management	Middle School	LM-MS-1	Take initiative in classroom activities and projects.
Leadership and Management	Middle School	LM-MS-2	Learn basic decision-making and delegation skills.
Leadership and Management	Middle School	LM-MS-3	Motivate peers through positive behavior and encouragement.
Teamwork and Collaboration	High School	TC-HS-1	Lead group projects and delegate tasks effectively.
Teamwork and Collaboration	High School	TC-HS-2	Resolve conflicts within teams using negotiation skills
Teamwork and Collaboration	High School	TC-HS-3	Foster strong interpersonal relationships through teamwork.
Teamwork and Collaboration	Middle School	TC-MS-1	Participate effectively in group projects and activities.
Teamwork and Collaboration	Middle School	TC-MS-2	Practice respectful communication and conflict resolution
Teamwork and Collaboration	Middle School	TC-MS-3	Build relationships through collaborative tasks.

Communication

Communication Skills	High School	CS-HS-1	Refine written communication through essays, reports, and creative writing.
Communication Skills	High School	CS-HS-2	Deliver formal presentations and public speeches.
Communication Skills	High School	CS-HS-3	Enhance listening skills through note-taking and summarizing key points
Communication Skills	Middle School	CS-MS-1	Develop clear and coherent writing for various purposes and audiences.
Communication Skills	Middle School	CS-MS-2	Practice effective oral communication in group settings.

Communication Skills	Middle School	CS-MS-3	Engage in active listening and provide appropriate feedback.
Communication Skills	Middle School	CS-MS-4	Demonstrate active listening skills in discussions and presentations.
Customer Service	High School	CU-HS-1	Apply customer service skills in school-based enterprises or internships
Customer Service	High School	CU-HS-2	Enhance empathy through community service activities.
Customer Service	High School	CU-HS-3	Demonstrate patience in real-world customer service scenarios
Customer Service	Middle School	CU-MS-1	Learn basic customer service skills through role-playing activities.
Customer Service	Middle School	CU-MS-2	Develop empathy by understanding different perspectives.
Customer Service	Middle School	CU-MS-3	Practice patience in challenging situations.
Networking	High School	NW-HS-1	Develop advanced networking skills for career development.
Networking	High School	NW-HS-2	Learn negotiation and influencing techniques.
Networking	High School	NW-HS-3	Evaluate solutions and make decisions based on evidence and analysis.
Networking	Middle School	NW-MS-1	Build basic networking skills through group activities.
Networking	Middle School	NW-MS-2	Practice effective communication in building relationships.
Networking	Middle School	NW-MS-3	Understand the importance of networking in personal growth.
Sales and Marketing	High School	SM-HS-1	Develop advanced persuasion and negotiation skills
Sales and Marketing	High School	SM-HS-2	Perform detailed market research for projects.
Sales and Marketing	High School	SM-HS-3	Create and implement branding strategies.
Sales and Marketing	Middle School	SM-MS-1	Learn basic persuasion techniques through projects.
Sales and Marketing	Middle School	SM-MS-2	Conduct simple market research activities.
Sales and Marketing	Middle School	SM-MS-3	Explore the fundamentals of branding

Creative Thinking

Creativity and Innovation	High School	CI-HS-1	Apply creativity to solve complex problems.
Creativity and Innovation	High School	CI-HS-2	Develop innovative projects and prototypes.
Creativity and Innovation	High School	CI-HS-3	Use strategic thinking in academic and extracurricular activities.

Creativity and Innovation	Middle School	CI-MS-1	Engage in activities that foster creative thinking.
Creativity and Innovation	Middle School	CI-MS-2	Experiment with idea generation techniques.
Creativity and Innovation	Middle School	CI-MS-3	Participate in design thinking exercises.
Design & Make	High School	DM-HS-1	Translate a problem brief into a requirements list that includes constraints, success metrics, accessibility, safety, and sustainability considerations.
Design & Make	High School	DM-HS-2	Produce a V1 prototype (digital or physical) with a basic BOM
Design & Make	High School	DM-HS-3	Run a structured test cycle (plan → measure → iterate) and maintain a versioned change log with photos or CAD revisions.
Design & Make	Middle School	DM-MS-1	Turn a problem brief into a short list of needs and constraints, including at least one safety and one accessibility consideration.
Design & Make	Middle School	DM-MS-2	Build a simple prototype (cardboard, basic CAD, or no-code app) and list the materials/tools you used.
Design & Make	Middle School	DM-MS-3	Test your prototype with 2-3 checks, record what happened with photos or notes, and describe one change you made.
Entrepreneurial Thinking	High School	ET-HS-1	Define a target user and problem ('job to be done')
Entrepreneurial Thinking	High School	ET-HS-2	Design and run two low-cost MVP tests (e.g., storyboard + landing/A:B), pre-register decision rules, analyze results, and make a go/iterate/stop call.
Entrepreneurial Thinking	High School	ET-HS-3	Estimate basic unit economics (price, COGS, margin), identify CAC proxy, list key risks (legal/ethics/data), and write a 90-day feasibility plan.
Entrepreneurial Thinking	Middle School	ET-MS-1	Describe a community problem and who it affects
Entrepreneurial Thinking	Middle School	ET-MS-2	Demonstrate ability to create a simple prototype or storyboard
Entrepreneurial Thinking	Middle School	ET-MS-3	Make a mini budget (materials/time), outline roles for a small team, and check for safety/consent when gathering data or photos.

Ethics & Responsibility

Accessibility & Inclusive Design	High School	A11Y-HS-1	Run an accessibility check (WCAG basics) on your artifact
Accessibility & Inclusive Design	High School	A11Y-HS-2	Adapt your communication or interface for a specific audience constraint (low bandwidth, color vision, language).
Accessibility & Inclusive Design	Middle School	A11Y-MS-1	Write alt-text for two images and check color contrast on a slide or screen.

Accessibility & Inclusive Design	Middle School	A11Y-MS-2	Change one part of your design to make it easier for someone new to use.
Ethics and Integrity	High School	EI-HS-1	Apply ethical principles in decision-making.
Ethics and Integrity	High School	EI-HS-2	Demonstrate reliability in academic and extracurricular activities.
Ethics and Integrity	High School	EI-HS-3	Reflect on the role of integrity in professional settings
Ethics and Integrity	Middle School	EI-MS-1	Understand the importance of honesty and accountability.
Ethics and Integrity	Middle School	EI-MS-2	Practice ethical behavior in academic settings.
Ethics and Integrity	Middle School	EI-MS-3	Learn about the impact of integrity in personal and community contexts.
Data Governance & Privacy	High School	GOV-HS-1	Write a one-page data purpose & retention plan
Data Governance & Privacy	High School	GOV-HS-2	Complete a lightweight DPIA for your project and document mitigations for two privacy risks.
Data Governance & Privacy	Middle School	GOV-MS-1	List the data you collect, why you need it, and how long you will keep it
Data Governance & Privacy	Middle School	GOV-MS-2	Identify one privacy risk in your project and write how you reduce it.
Standards, Safety & Quality	High School	STD-HS-1	Identify one applicable standard or regulation
Standards, Safety & Quality	High School	STD-HS-2	Run QA/QC on your artifact and document results with a pass/fail decision and rework plan.
Standards, Safety & Quality	Middle School	STD-MS-1	Write a short safety checklist for your build and follow it during testing.
Standards, Safety & Quality	Middle School	STD-MS-2	Create a quality checklist with 3 checks and record the results.

Project Execution

Documentation & Reproducibility	High School	DOC-HS-1	Demonstrate ability to create a README with purpose, steps, dependencies, and 'how to verify it works'
Documentation & Reproducibility	High School	DOC-HS-2	Package your evidence (data, code, CAD, photos) with file naming and a checklist another person can follow.
Documentation & Reproducibility	Middle School	DOC-MS-1	Write instructions so a classmate can repeat your project and get the same result
Documentation & Reproducibility	Middle School	DOC-MS-2	Keep a simple change log when you improve your project (what changed, why).
Human Factors & Usability	High School	HFE-HS-1	Plan and run a 3-user test
Human Factors & Usability	High School	HFE-HS-2	Redesign a confusing step in your artifact and show before/after with metrics (time on task, errors).

Human Factors & Usability	Middle School	HFE-MS-1	Ask two people to try your project
Human Factors & Usability	Middle School	HFE-MS-2	Label the steps a new user should follow and remove one extra step.
Organizational Skills	High School	OS-HS-1	Master project management techniques and apply to solve problems aligned with industry case studies or simulations
Organizational Skills	High School	OS-HS-2	Maintain organized notes and study materials.
Organizational Skills	High School	OS-HS-3	Plan and schedule long-term projects effectively.
Organizational Skills	Middle School	OS-MS-1	Organize schoolwork and materials systematically.
Organizational Skills	Middle School	OS-MS-2	Develop planning skills for academic projects.
Organizational Skills	Middle School	OS-MS-3	Practice attention to detail in assignments
Project Management	High School	PM-HS-1	Define scope, deliverables, and acceptance criteria
Project Management	High School	PM-HS-2	Demonstrate ability to create a timeline with milestones and dependencies (Gantt or Kanban)
Project Management	High School	PM-HS-3	Develop a risk register and stakeholder communication plan
Project Management	Middle School	PM-MS-1	Write a clear project goal, list tasks, and decide who does what on a small team.
Project Management	Middle School	PM-MS-2	Make a simple timeline with three milestones and track progress each week.
Project Management	Middle School	PM-MS-3	Hold a short check-in, record blockers and wins, and share a one-paragraph update with your teacher or mentor.
Risk & Resilience	High School	RSK-HS-1	Create a risk register (likelihood × impact) with mitigations and an incident response plan for one top risk.
Risk & Resilience	High School	RSK-HS-2	Write a brief post-mortem for a failed test: root cause, lessons learned, next steps.
Risk & Resilience	Middle School	RSK-MS-1	List three things that could go wrong in your project and one way to reduce each.
Risk & Resilience	Middle School	RSK-MS-2	Describe what you would do if your plan fails and who needs to know.
Time Management	High School	TM-HS-1	Develop advanced time management skills for academic success.
Time Management	High School	TM-HS-2	Create and follow detailed schedules and plans.
Time Management	High School	TM-HS-3	Balance multiple responsibilities effectively.
Time Management	Middle School	TM-MS-1	Learn to prioritize tasks and manage time efficiently.
Time Management	Middle School	TM-MS-2	Set short-term and long-term goals.

Time	Middle School	TM-MS-3	Practice multitasking in academic and
Management			extracurricular activities.

Self-Efficacy

Adaptability and Flexibility	High School	AF-HS-1	Demonstrate flexibility in adapting to different roles and responsibilities.
Adaptability and Flexibility	High School	AF-HS-2	Embrace change and manage transitions effectively.
Adaptability and Flexibility	High School	AF-HS-3	Develop coping strategies for stress management.
Adaptability and Flexibility	Middle School	AF-MS-1	Adapt to new and changing situations in school activities.
Adaptability and Flexibility	Middle School	AF-MS-2	Show openness to new ideas and approaches.
Adaptability and Flexibility	Middle School	AF-MS-3	Manage stress in varying academic scenarios.
Career Pathways	High School	CP-HS-1	Evaluate and select a target job family and extract top skills from three postings
Career Pathways	High School	CP-HS-2	Conduct one informational interview and produce a one-page brief on pathways, entry credentials, wages, and 90-day next steps.
Career Pathways	High School	CP-HS-3	Create a portfolio artifact with a LinkedIn-ready summary and tailor a resume bullet using the STAR method.
Career Pathways	Middle School	CP-MS-1	Pick a job that interests you and list 5 skills from two postings or profiles
Career Pathways	Middle School	CP-MS-2	Do one mini-interview (or watch a career video) and summarize the pathway, starter credentials, and your first next step.
Career Pathways	Middle School	CP-MS-3	Create one portfolio post about your project and write two resume bullets using the STAR method.
Dependability	High School	DP-HS-1	Demonstrate reliability in academic and extracurricular commitments.
Dependability	High School	DP-HS-2	Take accountability for actions and decisions.
Dependability	High School	DP-HS-3	Build a reputation for dependability.
Dependability	Middle School	DP-MS-1	Learn the importance of reliability in school activities.
Dependability	Middle School	DP-MS-2	Practice accountability for assignments and responsibilities
Dependability	Middle School	DP-MS-3	Understand the impact of dependability on trust.
Learning Agility	High School	LRN-HS-1	Create a personal learning plan with one stretch goal, curated resources, and a weekly reflection cadence.
Learning Agility	High School	LRN-HS-2	Use a self-review rubric to assess your artifact, set one 7-day improvement, and track completion.
Learning Agility	Middle School	LRN-MS-1	Set a clear project goal and track progress with a simple checklist

Tech Literacy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy	High School	AI-HS-1	Analyze the principles and algorithms underlying artificial intelligence.
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy	High School	AI-HS-2	Develop simple AI models or projects using available tools and platforms.
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy	High School	AI-HS-3	Evaluate the ethical, social, and economic implications of AI technologies.
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy	High School	AI-HS-4	Apply AI and data science tools to real-world industry challenges
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy	Middle School	AI-MS-1	Understand basic concepts of artificial intelligence and its applications.
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy	Middle School	AI-MS-2	Explore simple AI tools and their uses in everyday life.
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy	Middle School	AI-MS-3	Discuss ethical considerations and impacts of Al on society.
Cloud & API Literacy	High School	API-HS-1	Connect a form to a web service (API) and log successes/failures
Cloud & API Literacy	High School	API-HS-2	Secure a key/secret, handle an error, and read a status page to plan around downtime.
Cloud & API Literacy	Middle School	API-MS-1	Use a no-code tool to move data from one app to another and check it worked.
Cloud & API Literacy	Middle School	API-MS-2	Explain what an API does in one paragraph and show a simple example (request → response).
Digital Literacy	High School	DL-HS-1	Develop advanced digital skills, including complex coding and digital media production
Digital Literacy	High School	DL-HS-2	Apply digital tools in academic and real-world projects.
Digital Literacy	High School	DL-HS-3	Stay updated with the latest digital trends and cybersecurity measures.
Digital Literacy	Middle School	DL-MS-1	Gain proficiency in using digital devices and the internet safely.
Digital Literacy	Middle School	DL-MS-2	Learn basic coding and digital content creation.
Digital Literacy	Middle School	DL-MS-3	Understand online privacy and security issues.
Technical Skills	High School	TS-HS-1	Develop advanced technical skills relevant to various subjects
Technical Skills	High School	TS-HS-2	Perform complex data analysis using appropriate tools.
Technical Skills	High School	TS-HS-3	Apply technical knowledge in practical projects.

Technical Skills	Middle School	TS-MS-1	Gain basic proficiency in essential software and tools.
Technical Skills	Middle School	TS-MS-2	Learn fundamental IT skills, including internet research.
Technical Skills	Middle School	TS-MS-3	Explore introductory data analysis.

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