

1. What are Essential Skills?

Essential Skills are prioritized skills taken directly from the Common Core Standards (for ELA), from the CA standards (for History), and from the Next Generation Science Practice Standards (for Science) that DV Connect teachers will focus on during in-class instruction, projects/workshops, and academic assessments.

Essential Skills are organized by grade level and subject area, excluding math (DV Connect teachers will continue to use Common Core state standards, CGI math practices, and CPM curriculum to deliver math instruction on campus). The skills are streamlined and build upon each other in grade level succession.

While Essential Skills are derived from standards, they are NOT content standards. DV Connect teachers use content as the vehicle for teaching and assessing these prioritized skills. All projects/workshops will continue to have themes and focus centrally on history, science, and social sciences.

2. Why do you use Essential Skills?

With 40% (or less) of a child's instructional time spent on campus at DV Connect, it is impossible to "cover" every standard. Even in traditional 5-day programs, each standard cannot be taught meaningfully! As a community that values depth over breadth, we believe adopting Essential Skills is one way to help accomplish these deep dives that we deeply value as a Project-based learning community.

Essential Skills also support efforts to differentiate in-class instruction. Teachers can see what these skills look like at each grade level, so teachers can tailor/support instruction to meet the wide variety of academic needs in their classrooms.

Essential Skills are also likely to show up naturally in each project/workshop, and therefore give teachers multiple opportunities to assess and provide feedback on student learning, rather than teaching a content standard once while it's relevant then moving on.

With the common language in Essential Skills, teachers are given more opportunities to collaborate, assess their instruction, and collect/analyze student work and data with their colleagues.

All three Da Vinci High Schools use Essential Skills, which allows for a smooth transition into 9th grade for our middle school students.

3. How do you use Essential Skills?

DV Connect teachers will use Essential Skills to inform their planning and instruction, build assessments and analyze assessment data, provide feedback on academic growth, and much more!

Essential skills will be used for the purpose of on-campus instruction only. Families will continue to use standards as posted on their Work Journals.