STAFF ROOM POSTER

The Five ATL Skill Families

Approaches to Learning are teachable, not absorbed. Name the family, model the skill, practise it inside subject content.

THINK Thinking

Analysing, evaluating, generating ideas. Best built through collaborative problem-solving with clear scaffolds.

In class: Before you answer, list two ways this could be wrong. Compare with your partner.

SAY Communication

Reading, writing and talking for an audience. Teach the formats explicitly; do not assume them.

In class: Today's exit note is one sentence a Year 5 learner could understand.

TEAM Social

Working in groups with real roles and individual accountability, not seating proximity.

In class: You are the summariser: your job is to state the group's answer in 20 seconds.

PLAN Self-management

Organising time, materials and emotional state. The strongest predictor family; the least often taught.

In class: Two minutes: write your order of attack for these tasks before touching question one.

FIND Research

Finding, judging and recording information honestly. Teach source-checking as a routine, not a lecture.

In class: Find one source that disagrees with your first source. What explains the gap?

LEARNER DESK CARDS: CUT AND KEEP

Independent Work Cards

Self-management prompts for learners during extended tasks. Practise the routine before you need it.

Before you start

Read the whole task. Decide your first step, your order, and what finished looks like.

Say: "What will I do first, and how will I know it is done?"

Every ten minutes

Glance at the plan. Are you still on the task you chose, or did you drift?

Say: "Am I doing what I planned, or what was easiest?"

When you are stuck

Try one fix before asking: re-read the task, check the example, or break the step in half.

Say: "What have I already tried?"

Before you hand it in

Check against the success criteria, not your effort. One improvement beats one excuse.

Say: "Which criterion is weakest? Fix that one."

CLASSROOM POSTER

Talk That Moves Thinking Forward

Collaboration improves thinking when talk has structure. Sentence stems for group problem-solving, displayed where groups work.

Build

Add to an idea before adding your own.

In class: Adding to what Sam said, we could also...

Probe

Ask for the reasoning, not just the answer.

In class: What makes you think that? What is your evidence?

Challenge kindly

Disagree with the idea, never the person.

In class: I see it differently because... what do others think?

Summarise

Capture the group's best thinking before moving on.

In class: So our strongest answer so far is... because...

TEACHER CHECKLIST

Teaching an ATL Skill Explicitly

Use when planning to develop one skill across a unit. Skills stick when they are named, modelled and revisited, not mentioned once.

Name and frame

- [ ] The skill has a name learners use, displayed in the room.
- [ ] Learners know why the skill matters beyond this subject.
- [ ] One skill is the focus for the unit, not five at once.

Model and scaffold

- [ ] You have demonstrated the skill aloud, including the messy parts.
- [ ] A scaffold exists (stems, checklist, planner) and is faded over the unit.
- [ ] Group tasks assign real roles with individual accountability.

Practise and reflect

- [ ] The skill is practised inside subject content, not in standalone lessons.
- [ ] Learners reflect briefly on the skill after using it, in one sentence not one page.
- [ ] You revisit the same skill at least three times across the term.

CPD BRIEFING: STAFF ROOM COPY

ATL Skills: A 5-Minute Evidence Briefing

What the research behind this toolkit says, and where to hold claims lightly.

Collaboration builds thinking, with conditions

Collaborative problem-solving shows a large effect on critical thinking (ES 0.82 across 36 studies). The moderators matter: scaffolds, sensible group sizes and sustained duration, not just sitting together.

Skills must be taught inside content

Skills training reviews consistently favour explicit teaching embedded in subject lessons over standalone study-skills courses. Name the skill, model it, practise it in context.

Self-management punches above its weight

Training in planning, monitoring and task management improves self-efficacy and engagement, and self-regulation predicts long-term outcomes across domains.

The honest caveat

Only about a quarter of skills-training studies are randomised trials, and most were delivered by researchers rather than teachers. Treat programmes as promising rather than proven, and check effects with your own classes.

Evidence base

Xu, E., Wang, W. and Wang, Q. (2023). The effectiveness of collaborative problem solving in promoting students' critical thinking: a meta-analysis. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications.

Wolters, K. et al. (2025). Academic skills training interventions for adolescents in secondary education: a systematic review. School Psychology Review.

Taghani, A. et al. (2021). The effect of metacognitive skills training of study strategies on academic self-efficacy and engagement. Current Psychology.