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Educator Guide for Project Management Skills for Life®

This Educator Guide is designed to support educators and adult facilitators in delivering the *Project Management Skills for Life®* curriculum to youth in a way that is interactive, age-appropriate, and highly adaptable. It should always be used in tandem with the official *Project Management Skills for Life®* curriculum, educator guide and virtual toolkit. These three resources together provide a comprehensive experience where this Educator Guide helps adults lead instruction, the student guide gives learners the core content and exercises, and the Virtual Toolkit offers digital templates, virtual collaboration opportunities, AI prompts and interactive planning visuals.

Each chapter of this guide follows the corresponding sections in the student guide and expands them with facilitation guidance broken down into:

Key Learning Goals

This section outlines what students should understand or be able to do by the end of each chapter. These are aligned with the project management process groups and help facilitators focus on the most essential takeaways.

Facilitation Strategy

Offers step-by-step guidance for leading activities and discussions. This includes when to model an example, when to guide group work, and how to introduce tools or concepts in a way that supports engagement and comprehension.

Suggested Questions and Prompts

Provides open-ended questions and reflective prompts facilitators can use during lessons to spark critical thinking, dialogue, and self-assessment among students. These prompts help deepen understanding and encourage peer-to-peer learning.

Ideas for Adaptation and Differentiation

Includes ways to modify the activity or content to meet the needs of diverse learners—including younger students, multilingual learners, or those with different learning preferences. This helps ensure that every student can access the material meaningfully.

Group and Individual Activity Extensions

Provides optional activities to reinforce key concepts. These can be done collaboratively (e.g., team posters or peer feedback) or individually (e.g., reflection journals or one-on-one interviews). They're great for deepening learning or adding variety.

Suggested Time Allocation

Estimates how long each part of the session might take. These time frames help facilitators pace their sessions and balance discussion, instruction, and activity time within a 45- to 60-minute class or workshop block.

Where Students May Get Stuck

Highlights common challenges students face when learning or applying project management concepts. Recognizing these sticking points allows facilitators to proactively address confusion or frustration.

Support Strategies

Offers practical ideas to help students overcome the common barriers listed above. These include scaffolding techniques, visual aids, sentence starters, peer support ideas, and more.

Virtual Toolkit Integration (Miro)

Explains how to use the corresponding digital templates and collaborative zones from the Skills for Life Virtual Toolkit (Miro board). These integrations help bring projects to life visually and support remote or tech-enhanced facilitation.

Agile Angle

Introduces students to flexible, iterative thinking inspired by Agile project management. This section encourages reflection, team adaptability, and continuous improvement, reinforcing that it's okay to adjust plans as new information or challenges arise.

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Project Management Skills for Life®

Preface

Project Management Fundamentals

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Key Learning Goals:

- Define what project management is and why it matters
- Understanding that we all do projects all the time and there are tools that allow us to be more successful/efficient
- Distinguish between a project and ongoing operations
- Reflect on personal experiences managing tasks or events

Facilitation Strategy:

- Begin with a discussion prompt: “What’s something you’ve planned from start to finish?”
- Share and compare examples of projects vs. operations (e.g., writing a research paper (takes on a specific task the is time bound and done only once) vs. doing daily homework (While the content might be slightly different every day, this is more of an ongoing operation)).
- Guide students through Exercise 1: listing personal projects and identifying their deliverables.
- Highlight key characteristics of a project: unique, temporary (has a beginning and end), goal-oriented, and planned.

Suggested Questions and Prompts:

- Was this a one-time event or something you do regularly?
- What was the goal or outcome of what you planned?
- What made it feel like a project and not just a task?
- Did anyone help you? Who were your stakeholders?
- What would you do differently if you ran the project again?

Ideas for Adaptation and Differentiation:

- For younger or early learners: Use simple visuals (e.g., project or not? flashcards) and sentence starters.
- For older or advanced learners: Have students identify constraints (time, money, resources) from a past project.
- For multilingual learners: Allow them to describe their past projects in their first language or use images to represent deliverables.

Group and Individual Activity Extensions:

- *Group:* Play “Project or Not?”—students sort everyday activities into projects vs. operations and explain their reasoning.
- *Individual:* Complete a reflection on a personal project experience and what made it successful or challenging.
- *Optional:* Interview a parent or teacher about a project they’ve managed and share back with the group.

Suggested Time Allocation:

- Intro discussion and definition: 10 minutes
- Exercise 1: Personal project list and deliverables: 10 minutes
- Group share-out and categorization: 10 minutes
- Wrap-up discussion on project characteristics: 10–15 minutes

Where Students May Get Stuck:

- Confusing daily routines with projects
- Struggling to identify a start and end to their example
- Unclear on what counts as a “deliverable”

Support Strategies:

- Use side-by-side comparisons and a visual anchor chart
- Prompt with examples from different areas: home, school, extracurriculars
- Offer peer coaching or small group support to brainstorm ideas

Virtual Toolkit Integration (Miro):

- Use the “What is a Project?” section of the Miro board
- Complete Exercise 1 using digital sticky notes to list personal projects
- Use icons to label different types of deliverables (product, service, event, etc.)
- Color-code projects by topic (e.g., school, home, community)

Agile Angle:

- Emphasize that even personal projects can benefit from being broken into steps and improved over time.
- Introduce the idea that teams in Agile environments reflect regularly to learn and improve their processes.

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Chapter 1

Initiating Process

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Key Learning Goals:

- Define a project's purpose using the 5Ws + H
- Identify stakeholders, sponsors, and project managers
- Complete a project charter using a real-world scenario

Facilitation Strategy:

- Present the 5Ws + H (Why, Who, What, When, Where, How) as a visual anchor for project initiation.
- Lead a class discussion using the community garden or talent showcase example from the workbook.
- Model completion of Exercise 2 as a whole group, then assign Exercise 3 and 4 in teams.

Suggested Questions and Prompts:

- What problem does your project solve?
- Who needs to be involved for this to work?
- How will you know your project is successful?
- Who might resist this project, and how would you engage them?
- What's your "elevator pitch" for your project?
- Where will deliverables be used?

Ideas for Adaptation and Differentiation:

- For younger students: Provide sentence starters (e.g., "Our project will help ___ by ___.")
- For advanced students: Have them create a stakeholder influence/power grid.
- For multilingual learners: Use visuals or icons for each project role; allow verbal discussion in place of written reflections.

Group and Individual Activity Extensions:

- *Group:* Develop a team name and logo after completing your charter.
- *Individual:* Write a journal entry from the perspective of a stakeholder affected by the project.
- *Optional:* Create a video "pitch" for the project using their charter as the script.

Suggested Time Allocation:

- Introduction to Initiating concepts: 10 minutes
- Guided group example (Exercise 2): 10 minutes
- Team-based charter creation (Exercise 3): 15 minutes
- Team share-out and reflection: 10 minutes

Where Students May Get Stuck:

- Confusing sponsors with team members or stakeholders
- Being too vague or broad in their project goals
- Not knowing how to define a "deliverable"
- Not fully understanding boundaries, constraints, assumptions or user acceptance criteria

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Support Strategies:

- Offer a structured brainstorm: "What do you want to change or improve at school?"
- Share sample project charters for inspiration
- Use peer interviews to help refine the "Why" and "Who" and other "W" questions

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Virtual Toolkit Integration (Miro):

- Use the *Initiating* zone on the Miro board
- Teams can draft their charter directly on the template and drop sticky notes for each 5W + H
- Add emojis or icons to highlight stakeholders and sponsors

Agile Angle:

- Introduce the concept of evolving charters—remind students that the "Why" might get refined as the project progresses.
- Encourage lightweight pitches or "elevator talks" that can evolve as more is learned.

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Chapter 2

Planning Process

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Key Learning Goals:

- Develop a clear project scope statement
- Break down work into manageable parts using a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)
- Create a schedule with realistic time estimates and task sequencing
- Understand project constraints and the critical path

Facilitation Strategy:

- Begin with a review of the completed project charter from Chapter 1.
- Introduce the concept of scope: what's included in the project and just as importantly, what's not.
- Model WBS creation with a class example (e.g., planning a class party or talent show).
- Facilitate group work to build WBS and draft timelines for their own projects.
- Use visual tools (sticky notes, cards, or digital Miro boards) to demonstrate dependencies and critical paths.

Suggested Questions and Prompts:

- What does your project need to produce or achieve to be successful?
- What specific tasks need to happen to get there?
- Which tasks can happen at the same time, and which depend on each other?
- What materials, time, or help will each step require?
- What might slow us down or block progress?

Ideas for Adaptation and Differentiation:

- For younger students: Provide WBS examples and use icons or images for each task.
- For students who need support: Offer scaffolded templates with task categories to choose from.
- For advanced learners: Ask them to identify the critical path and adjust for hypothetical constraints (e.g., fewer team members, limited budget).
- For multilingual learners: Use visual or bilingual task labels and pair them with peers for timeline creation.

Group and Individual Activity Extensions:

- *Group:* Create a WBS poster or Miro board segment showing task breakdown and owners
- *Individual:* Time-estimate three WBS tasks and reflect on which one might be most difficult
- *Optional:* Swap timelines with another group and peer review for feasibility and sequencing

Suggested Time Allocation:

- Constraints, Assumptions, Boundaries, User Acceptance Criteria (Exercise 4): 15 minutes
- Scope discussion and examples: 10–15 minutes
- WBS modeling and group work: 20–25 minutes
- Project plan/schedule building and discussion: 15–20 minutes
- Identifying risks and response planning: 10-15 minutes

Where Students May Get Stuck:

- Making tasks too broad and not breaking them down to the smallest level
- Forgetting dependencies or logical task order
- Struggling to estimate time and identify potential roadblocks
- Struggling with identifying risks and building mitigation strategies

Support Strategies:

- Use guiding questions like “What happens before this task?”
- Build a shared task bank as a team before breaking into small groups
- Provide a timeline template and show how to use buffers for delays
- Introduce a classroom “risk jar” with common planning surprises and discuss how to handle them as they relate to risks and risk mitigatio

Virtual Toolkit Integration (Miro):

- Build a Work Breakdown Structure with sticky notes and task groupings
- Use the Timeline area to visually sequence tasks and assign due dates
- Explore the Critical Path Template with a sample project for comparison
- Use the Project Plan tool
- Consider identifying risks and building a response plan with the help of the AI prompt

Agile Angle:

- Introduce visual tracking tools like Kanban boards for task management
- Encourage “sprint planning” where students identify short-term goals within the longer project
- Talk about planning for change: what if something in the timeline slips, how do we adapt?

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Chapter 3

Executing Process

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Key Learning Goals:

- Complete project tasks collaboratively and according to plan
- Practice effective team communication and role accountability
- Track progress and adapt responsibilities as needed
- Use tools to report status and maintain momentum

Facilitation Strategy:

- Begin each session or work period with a stand-up meeting: “What did you do yesterday? What will you do today? Any blockers?”
- Assign and rotate roles such as task lead, status reporter, and timekeeper to give all students leadership experience.
- Model completion of a status report using a real or sample project update.
- Emphasize teamwork norms and active listening; debrief on communication breakdowns as learning moments.

Suggested Questions and Prompts:

- What did your team accomplish since your last check-in?
- What task are you responsible for today?
- What’s getting in the way of progress?
- Who do you need support from and why?
- Are we still aligned with our project plan and goals?

Ideas for Adaptation and Differentiation:

- For quieter students: Offer written formats for check-ins or one-on-one “buddy” reporting
- For students with executive functioning needs: Provide a daily checklist of responsibilities or visual task board
- For teams working asynchronously or virtually: Use shared digital docs or message boards for daily updates
- For multilingual learners: Use icons, sentence frames, or translated check-in templates

Group and Individual Activity Extensions:

- *Group:* Create a team tracker to show daily progress and rotating leadership
- *Individual:* Maintain a “Contribution Log” or “Teamwork Journal” to reflect on their own role and the team’s dynamic
- *Optional:* Conduct a midpoint team retrospective: what’s working, what’s not, and how to improve it

Suggested Time Allocation:

- Daily stand-up meeting: 5–10 minutes
- Active task execution: 25–30 minutes
- Status report check-in and reflection: 10–15 minutes
- Team collaboration and troubleshooting: 10–15 minutes

Where Students May Get Stuck:

- Unequal task distribution or unclear responsibilities
- Delayed progress due to miscommunication
- Forgetting to report updates or revise their plans
- Losing momentum or enthusiasm

Support Strategies:

- Use a visible task board to track progress (To Do, Doing, Done)
- Set “mini-goals” for each session to create a sense of accomplishment
- Provide feedback rubrics for teamwork and participation
- Facilitate “team huddles” if progress stalls and help redirect energy

Virtual Toolkit Integration (Miro):

- Use the Executing area to track individual and team progress
- Use the Project Status Report Template
- Add visual signals (colors, emojis, icons) to communicate completion, delays, or blockers

Agile Angle:

- Encourage short feedback loops with daily or weekly retrospectives
- Remind students that team roles can be flexible and should adapt to the project’s needs
- Highlight the value of team reflection: what’s working and what needs a pivot?

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Chapter 4

Monitoring & Controlling Process

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Key Learning Goals:

- Monitor progress against the project plan
- Identify and respond to previously identified risks, issues, and change requests
- Recognize and manage scope creep
- Use documentation tools to support adjustments and communication

Facilitation Strategy:

- Present a project scenario where something changes (e.g., venue unavailable, key task delayed) and ask students to respond as if they were in charge.
- Model how to log a change and update the project plan.
- Use real-time examples from student projects to demonstrate how issues and risks are tracked.
- Encourage teams to pause mid-project to review their original plan and make updates accordingly.
- Make sure that students understand the difference between a risk and an issue.

Suggested Questions and Prompts:

- Is your project still on schedule? What's ahead or behind?
- Has anything unexpected come up that might affect your plan?
- Can you differentiate between what is a risk and what is an issue? How are they different?
- How big is the impact of this change do we need to update the scope or timeline?
- Who needs to be informed if the project changes?
- What's your plan to get back on track?

Ideas for Adaptation and Differentiation:

- For students who need more structure: provide a visual checklist of common risks and issues
- For younger learners: Use color-coded cards to represent different kinds of changes (e.g., 🔴 risk, 🔵 issue, 🟢 improvement)
- For teams with varying communication styles: allow video or pictorial documentation of change impacts
- For multilingual learners: Create dual-language glossaries for "issue," "risk," "scope," and "change"

Group and Individual Activity Extensions:

- *Group:* Complete a risk analysis of their current project and role-play a change management meeting
- *Individual:* Write a short "incident report" about a past experience where a plan had to be changed and how they handled it
- *Optional:* Teams create a "Plan B" or contingency plan for a core task or milestone

Suggested Time Allocation:

- Discuss how changes impact scope/schedule (Exercise 5): 10 minutes
- Scenario or simulation setup: 10–15 minutes
- Risk/issue identification discussion: 10–15 minutes
- Change log documentation and project updates: 20–25 minutes
- Share-out of revisions and justifications: 10 minutes

Where Students May Get Stuck:

- Ignoring or minimizing problems until they become bigger
- Struggling to distinguish between risks (potential) and issues (actual)
- Forgetting to document or communicate changes
- Overcommitting and expanding the project without approval

Support Strategies:

- Use a classroom "Change Board" or "Risk Radar" for visibility
- Offer sample risk logs and change templates
- Reinforce language: "If it's already happened, it's an issue. If it might happen, it's a risk."
- Create a checkpoint routine where all teams update their plan

Virtual Toolkit Integration (Miro):

- Use the Monitoring & Controlling area with the Issue Log and Change Request templates
- Add digital icons or severity ratings for easy prioritization
- Include live examples of scope change from a demo project
- Annotate timelines with visual indicators of changes and delays

Agile Angle:

- Emphasize that Agile teams expect and adapt to change—it's part of the process
- Introduce the concept of a backlog where new ideas or scope changes can be captured and prioritized
- Encourage regular team reflection to refine tasks and goals

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Chapter 5

Closing

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Key Learning Goals:

- Reflect on project successes, challenges, and lessons learned
- Document feedback and final deliverables
- Celebrate accomplishments and formally close the project
- Recognize the importance of continuous improvement
- Ensure stakeholders are satisfied with the project deliverables

Facilitation Strategy:

- Guide students through a Lessons Learned discussion using a structured reflection template.
- Facilitate a project showcase or gallery walk where each group presents their project and shares key outcomes.
- Highlight the value of taking time to recognize team contributions, growth, and impact.
- Prompt students to reflect individually and as a team on what they would do differently in future projects.

Suggested Questions and Prompts:

- What went really well in your project, and why?
- What was one challenge your team overcame?
- If you had to do this project again, what would you change?
- What did you learn about yourself as a team member or leader?
- Who or what helped you succeed and how can you acknowledge them?

Ideas for Adaptation and Differentiation:

- For younger students: Use sentence starters like “I am proud of…” or “Next time, I would…”
- For students who are visual or artistic: Create a project scrapbook, digital timeline, or photo collage
- For multilingual learners: Allow reflections in their first language or use a mix of words and drawings
- For teams that prefer talking: Facilitate a recorded group conversation instead of written reflections

Group and Individual Activity Extensions:

- *Group:* Design and deliver a final presentation, pitch, or celebration moment (e.g., award show, certificates)
- *Individual:* Write a letter to future project teams sharing lessons or advice
- *Optional:* Create a short reflection video or infographic summarizing key takeaways

Suggested Time Allocation:

- Lessons Learned discussion: 15–20 minutes
- Final project showcase or gallery walk: 20–25 minutes
- Team celebration and peer recognition: 10–15 minutes
- Individual reflections or journaling: 10–15 minutes

Where Students May Get Stuck:

- Focusing only on problems instead of recognizing growth
- Forgetting to formally close or archive the project
- Overlooking the contributions of quieter teammates

Support Strategies:

- Use a structured reflection guide with specific categories: Successes, Challenges, What We Learned
- Encourage students to nominate peers for “shout-outs” or team awards
- Build closure into the schedule and treat it as important as any planning step
- Prompt with a visual journey map or timeline to spark memory and pride

Virtual Toolkit Integration (Miro):

- Use the Closing zone with the Lessons Learned
- Add sticky notes with quotes, reflections, or thank-yous from the team

Agile Angle:

- Reinforce that Agile teams celebrate “demos” and “retrospectives” to reflect and improve
- Encourage the habit of closing every project no matter the outcome with feedback
- Suggest students create a personal “growth log” to track how they improve across multiple projects

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