

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM GUIDE
FOR COMPULSORY SCHOOL
LIFE SKILLS
2004**

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

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CONTENTS


Foreword	5
Introduction	7
Study and instruction	8
Evaluation	11
Final Life Skills Objectives in Compulsory School	12
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	12
Society, environment, nature and culture	13
Intermediate objectives upon conclusion of life skills in	
Grade 4	14
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	14
Society, environment, nature and culture	15
Enabling objectives for Grade 4	16
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	16
Society, environment, nature and culture	17
Intermediate objectives upon conclusion of life skills in	
Grade 7	18
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	18
Society, environment, nature and culture	19
Enabling objectives for Grade 5	20
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	20
Society, environment, nature and culture	20
Enabling objectives for Grade 6	21
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	21
Society, environment, nature and culture	21
Enabling objectives for Grade 7	22
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	22
Society, environment, nature and culture	23
Intermediate objectives upon conclusion of life skills in	
Grade 10	24
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	24
Society, environment, nature and culture	25
Enabling objectives for Grade 8	26
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	26
Society, environment, nature and culture	27



Enabling objectives for Grade 9	28
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	28
Society, environment, nature and culture	29
Enabling objectives for Grade 10	30
Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle	30
Society, environment, nature and culture	31



FOREWORD

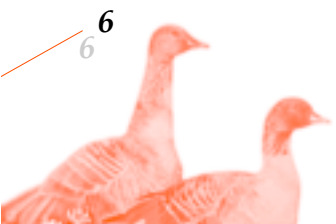


Both national law and various domestic and international obligations assumed by the Icelandic state require Icelandic educational authorities to provide children and youth with various types of instruction which fall outside the scope of traditional school subjects. These include, for instance, Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Article 10 of the Act on Equal Rights of Men and Women, Article 117 of the Traffic Act, Article 14 of the Tobacco Use Prevention Act and the UN Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992.


Life skills is a new subject in Icelandic compulsory schools, intended partly to facilitate schools in fulfilling the above-listed requirements in a comprehensive manner. It is also a response to demands that the school expand its role in raising children.

According to the reference timetable, at least one instructional period per week must be devoted to this subject from Grade 4 until the conclusion of compulsory school. It is left to the discretion of school administrators to decide whether to take advantage of the possibility of adding further instructional periods to life skills instruction.

The fact that the subject is not given a fixed time quota in the reference timetable until Grade 4 does not mean that instruction in life skills begins in Grade 4. It is much more an indication that young children's instruction is characterised by teaching methods which could be defined as life skills study, while in Grade 4 instruction often becomes more subject-specific, and as a result it is considered necessary to specify a time in the reference timetable devoted to this important aspect of school work.



INTRODUCTION



Life skills study is intended to strengthen a pupil's overall development. This involves, for instance, having pupils make an effort to develop spiritual values, physical health and psychological strength. They strengthen their social skills, moral competence and respect for others and themselves. In addition, an effort is made to strengthen their courage, initiative, natural creativity and adaptability to meet the demands and challenges of everyday life.

The emphases in life skills underline the fact that the school is the pupils' workplace, where valuable upbringing takes place. Basic responsibility for children's upbringing must, however, always be in the hands of their parents/guardians. As the school assists parents in their role as child-raisers, pupils' education and welfare is thus a joint project of schools and households. This co-operation must be based on mutual respect, mutual trust and joint responsibility.

One of the emphases of life skills is to have the school create a positive and secure study environment, characterised by the support and co-operation of everyone in the school, both pupils and staff. A positive school spirit, together with realistic demands and expectations of pupils, facilitates them in achieving the study objectives set.

Making life skills a special subject is a response to contemporary demands that pupils be better prepared to face the challenges of life. To do so, they need to work on themselves, respect themselves but know their strong and weak sides.

Life skills provides valuable opportunities to strengthen pupils' social development. The aspects dealt with are connected with participating in a democratic society, belong-

ing to a family, having friends and comrades, working with others and placing oneself in another's position. The subject looks at the pupil as a whole, his/her ability to communicate, express opinions and give reasons for them, set objectives, show initiative, find his/her way around in the local environment, avoid dangers and be independent. In addition, creative ability and practical skills need to be developed. Life skills also gives schools the opportunity to take a closer look at issues which may come up and concern pupils' well-being and feelings.

Study and Instruction

Life skills as a subject is intended to encourage pupils' all-round development, in order to enable them to better deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skills is a collective term for a variety of study areas, making it easier for the teacher to follow a variety of routes to reach the specified objectives. They include aspects intended to increase pupils' self-knowledge, assist them in creating responsible lifestyles and values for themselves, finding solid ground to stand on and a sense of purpose in their lives, and developing their ability to build up and maintain productive relations with others. Life skills as presented in the National Curriculum Guide is based, on the one hand, on topics where the focus is on self-knowledge, maturity and individual development and, on the other hand, on topics where external aspects of daily life are at the forefront.

The former comprise the core of the subject and aim at increasing self-knowledge, maturity and individual development. The topics have been named **Self-knowledge, Communication, Creativity and Lifestyle**. They include the objectives of development and self-knowledge, as well as objectives which are to encourage initiative, independent, creative and critical thinking, adaptability and moral competence to take decisions in an ever-changing reality.



The latter topics, named Society, Environment, Nature and Culture, offer more flexibility for implementation by individual schools. Here the schools have the opportunity of introducing issues which reflect to a greater extent their special situation, emphases in their work, ideology, local conditions and issues which may arise at any time and affect pupils and teachers. These are topics which often arise from the pupils' immediate environment and with which they have to wrestle in their daily lives. This also includes alcohol and drug abuse prevention, and guidance on choosing study or work following the completion of compulsory school. In addition, there are objectives which schools must work towards in accordance with law or because of domestic or international obligations. Institutions outside the school system also have certain educational obligations in this regard.

The Curriculum Guide expands on and specifies the final objectives of both sets of topics. They are intended to give an overarching view of what life skills in compulsory schools are aiming at. They explain the general purpose of the study and describe what schools should be aiming for and what pupils should have acquired upon completion of mandatory school study.

The intermediate objectives are fully explained for topics included under **Self-knowledge, Communication, Creativity and Lifestyle**, which form the core of the subject and its main focus. The intermediate objectives thus give an overall view of what students are generally expected to have learned upon their conclusion.

Schools have more latitude in how they implement the topics covered by **Society, Environment, Nature and Culture** and may add objectives to provide the flexibility to adapt the subject to their needs and circumstances. The National Curriculum Guide, in particular, sets the study



objectives for aspects which fall outside of traditional school subjects but which it is important for schools to deal with. In this manner, the attempt is made to integrate them in a unified manner within the framework of the subject.

Similarly, only the enabling objectives are fully developed for **Self-knowledge, Communication, Creativity and Lifestyle**. The enabling objectives are a collection of objectives/topics by which the intermediate objectives are to be achieved. They are intended to describe the organisation, continuity and progression of study and demonstrate how the intermediate objectives can be broken down in detail. They are presented as guidelines for teachers, parents and pupils. A school may decide to rearrange these enabling objectives and then present this arrangement in its school curriculum.

The enabling objectives for **Society, Environment, Nature and Culture** are primarily broken down for topics which fall outside the traditional study subjects, leaving it to schools to specify them further in accordance with the final objectives and the policy and emphases of the schools themselves.

In implementing life skills as a subject, it is important to bear in mind that other compulsory school subjects involve life skills. They are intended to encourage pupils' all-round development, make them more conscious of their own history and increase their comprehension of reality. Integration of topics in other subjects with life skills makes it possible to give more personal significance and meaning to the subject, while at the same time increasing the variety of core life skills topics. The objectives of subjects such as *sports, exercise and health; Christian studies, religion and ethics; fine arts; nature study; history and geography; computers and technology; mathematics; home economics and language arts* can each in their own way be integrated with the objectives



of life skills. Normally, such developments would be laid out in a school's life skills programme, as it is part of each school's policy formation to adapt the subject to its policy and specific situation.

Evaluation

Evaluation in life skills has to be based on a variety of assessment methods. The topics dealt with are often highly subjective, making it difficult to assess them in a traditional manner. It is possible, however, to evaluate the knowledge aspects using written or oral tests.

Using self-evaluation of pupils enables the teacher, pupil and parents to monitor study progress and achievement.

Pupils can collect their assignments in portfolios, which the teacher can then give an assessment and which they can take with them if they change schools.

Presentations in connection with project work can be published on the web or set up in the school for access by other pupils, parents and other relatives, and pupils given assessment for their work.



Final Life Skills Objectives in Compulsory School

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- develop sensitivity for the variety of his/her own emotions, realising how emotions affect the behaviour, thinking and all relations of living beings;
- foster a sense of solidarity, sympathy and respect for the opinions and values of others in order to be able to have rich and productive relations with other individuals irrespective of their race, gender, nationality, religion or physical and mental ability;
- acquire communicative skills and practice in expressing and following up on his/her opinions, emotions and interests;
- be conscious of the role of the family in creating and reinforcing the self-image and attitude of individuals;
- show initiative in developing his/her natural creativity and adaptability in a variety of tasks within and outside of the school, including
 - creative and original ideas,
 - logical assessment and ability to draw conclusions,
 - critical thinking,
 - courage to resolve issues,
 - placing phenomena and topics in a new context;
- acquire the courage to create his/her own image, lifestyle and opinions in an independent and responsible manner and to realise how they are interrelated in setting objectives for the future.



Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- acquire an overview of society enabling him/her to understand and respect society's rules and thus develop the strength and responsibility to shape and improve his/her environment through democratic methods and discussion;
- make realistic plans for study and work options following the conclusion of compulsory school;
- become more capable of taking responsibility for his/her own life, for instance, by deciding against using narcotics and abusing therapeutic drugs;
- be conscious of various dangers and pitfalls in his/her environment and responses to them, for instance in traffic and at home, and to natural dangers and catastrophes;
- know and realise what it means to be a consumer in a complex and ever-changing society, including basic knowledge of:
 - consumers' rights,
 - individual and public finances,
 - advertising and its impact,
 - consumption and the environment,
 - the earth's resources,
 - housing, clothing, price and quality of food;
- develop international consciousness and understanding of the concept of sustainable development, thus becoming aware of the importance of every individual's contribution to prevent and deal with environmental damage;
- have the opportunity to enjoy outdoor leisure in Icelandic nature;
- have a basic idea of culture's visual symbolism as presented in propaganda, in films, on the Internet, in the news, on signs, etc.;
- have an opportunity to discuss various current issues, in their immediate environment or on the public scene.



Intermediate objectives upon conclusion of life skills in Grade 4

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil should

- be able to analyse and describe various emotions, e.g. happiness, joy, sorrow, anger;
- realise that there are a variety of stimuli in the environment, both positive and negative, which can influence his/her life;
- respect and understand the purpose of the rules which govern human relations;
- be able to apply the concept of equal rights in a variety of contexts;
- be able to express his/her thoughts, opinions, emotions and expectations;
- have learned ways of strengthening his/her communicative skills, including:
 - co-operative skills,
 - consideration for others,
 - respect him-/herself and others,
 - placing oneself in another's position,
 - listening to others and being polite;
- be aware of different types of families and the position of individuals within them;
- have the courage to ask critical questions;
- show initiative and creativity in their working methods;
- know what objectives mean and how people use objectives to achieve what they aim at;
- know his/her physical requirements for nutrition, rest, motion and hygiene and make an effort to respond to these;
- realise that every person is different and thus develop respect for individual differences in appearance, dress and taste.



Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil should

- have knowledge of the traffic regulations concerning pedestrians;
- be able to point out potential perils in the environment and home and know hazardous substances which may be stored there;
- be able to seek information and directions to find his/her way around in the surrounding environment, e.g. oral instructions or signs.



Enabling objectives for Grade 4

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- be able to express a variety of emotions;
- respect the rules of play in group games;
- be able to point out and name various aspects of the environment affecting his/her well-being;
- be able to consider the concept of equal rights from various angles, e.g. equal rights of men and animals, of management and employees, children and adults;
- practice expressing his/her emotions, thoughts and expectations in various ways, e.g. in words or by acting them out;
- be able to place him-/herself in the position of opponents and seek to resolve disputes;
- be able to interpret the roles of family members in varying types of families;
- be able to describe individuals' needs in varying circumstances and how these can be met, e.g. clothing suitable for the situation, nourishment based on energy needs;
- be capable of setting goals on his/her own initiative, e.g. when to complete homework or tidy up;
- be able to place him-/herself in the position of various persons to sympathise with them, e.g. a hippy, senior citizen, small child, immigrant, midwife, teacher, handicapped person and farmer.



Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- know the traffic regulations and traffic signs concerning pedestrians;
- know the safest way to school well and behave correctly at pedestrian crossings and traffic lights;
- practice using a bicycle as a leisure pursuit on playgrounds and paths;
- learn to read instructions and messages on signs;
- learn how to find telephone numbers;
- practice using public transportation under the direction of adults;
- be conscious of dangers at home and in his/her environment;
- be able to describe stores and services in the immediate environment.



Intermediate objectives upon conclusion of life skills in Grade 7

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil should:

- comprehend how emotions affect behaviour and relationships;
- gain the confidence to report on and respond appropriately to abuse and negative input in relationships;
- recognise the physical, mental, emotional and social changes which occur in an individual's life in the process of changing from a child to a youth;
- be able to adopt joint rules together with others in connection with various undertakings;
- be conscious of the value of equal rights and how this is connected to human rights;
- be able to express and give reasons for his/her thoughts, opinions, emotions and expectations towards others;
- have learned to use a variety of methods in relations with others in order to
 - show fairness,
 - be just and polite,
 - resolve differences in a positive manner,
 - withstand negative peer pressure and propaganda from the surrounding environment;
- realise that different customs and rules can apply within families without this affecting mutual respect between them and solidarity with family members;
- be able to evaluate critically the advantages and disadvantages of different alternatives, ideas and answers, and draw conclusions based on this;
- be able to take advantage of creative working methods to apply his/her own ideas and solutions;
- have learned to set objectives in dealing with tasks within or outside of the school;



- be able to acquire healthy consumption patterns and sleeping habits;
- appreciate the influence of role models in shaping lifestyles.

Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil should:

- appreciate the dangers involved in tobacco and alcohol consumption;
- have insight into the main aspects of the Icelandic Constitution, such as human rights, the right to privacy and the threefold division of governing power;
- have learned the main traffic regulations and know the main traffic signs;
- know the principles of accident prevention and response to accidents in the household;
- appreciate the value of environmental protection, both in settled and wilderness areas;
- know the sports and leisure activities, services and cultural activities offered in their locality;
- be able to understand and use a variety of information in the environment on signs and labels;
- realise the cost of his/her own consumption.



Enabling objectives for Grade 5

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- be able to imagine how strong and uncontrolled emotions can burst into violence or other negative and unconsidered behaviour;
- be able to follow a complex system of rules, in work or play, alone or with others;
- be trained in expressing his/her emotions and opinions in front of the class or at larger gatherings;
- learn to apply creative and original methods in solving tasks;
- appreciate that healthy lifestyles, physical exercise and healthy consumption habits are the foundation of physical and mental well-being.

Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- know the traffic rules for pedestrians, cyclists and skaters;
- practice riding a bicycle on walking paths;
- learn to avoid hazards in the home, at school and in the surrounding environment;
- learn how to find information on public transportation;
- learn the value of treating nature with respect;
- learn to plant trees, shrubs, etc. and the value of such vegetation for the environment;
- learn to assess their own spending.



Enabling objectives for Grade 6

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- know that each and every individual has personal and emotional limits which can be exceeded by negative stimuli;
- be able to agree with others on playing rules ensuring equal rights;
- consider what aspects can strengthen and support family solidarity and reinforce family connections;
- practice considering different alternatives from a critical perspective;
- realise the value of caring properly for his/her body and environment, and his/her own and others' possessions.

Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- be able to describe the work he/she has had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with, e.g. parents' jobs;
- be able to take advantage of information from mass media and other media on daily life and issues;
- appreciate various types of expenses, e.g. buying and operating a bicycle or the cost of caring for a pet;
- be able to point out advertisements appealing to children;
- know the working practices, rules, organisation and emphases of his/her school;
- know the main traffic regulations and the most common traffic signs.

Enabling objectives for Grade 7

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- consider various aspects of changing from a child to a youth and appreciate the challenges and pleasures of this period in life;
- realise that human rights are the rules of play in a society of individuals and nations to ensure the equal rights of everyone;
- examine relationships under differing circumstances, for instance, by
 - realising the nature of relationships,
 - having an idea of what emotions and senses they stir,
 - investigating what sort of relationship patterns they are characterised by;
- be able to set him-/herself longer-term objectives, e.g. organising a collection or event to support a certain cause;
- be able to name persons he/she looks up to and respects.



Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- know the dangers involved in consumption of alcohol and tobacco;
- be able to distinguish positive propaganda in advertising and the surroundings from negative;
- be able to evaluate news coverage on children and youth issues;
- be able to describe the main institutions and businesses in the locality;
- be able to describe various jobs and their importance;
- know what the concepts of environmentally friendly and ecological mean in varying contexts;
- know where to seek help when danger approaches and how to respond to a dangerous situation.



Intermediate objectives upon conclusion of life skills in Grade 10

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil should:

- be conscious of the role of emotions in all relationships;
- appreciate the importance and value of positive input;
- appreciate the possible impact and consequences of abuse and negative input for the victim;
- appreciate the meaning of the concepts of gender, sexuality and gender roles, and what part they play in the gender image and sexual experience of individuals;
- be conscious of the varying systems of rules which apply in the relationship between individuals and the environment;
- be capable of making equal rights his/her guiding principle in relationships;
- be able to express and give reasons for his/her thoughts, opinions, emotions and expectations to arrive at a common conclusion;
- show self-discipline and self-confidence in a variety of relationships in daily life, for example, in personal and impersonal relations, dealings with peers, parents, teachers and others;
- be conscious of the role of the family
 - in shaping the attitudes, development and values of children,
 - in looking after their spiritual, physical and material needs and security;
 - be capable of applying critical thought in relationships, creative work, and setting objectives and making decisions;
- understand the value of cultivating his/her initiative and creativity on his/her own premises;



- be able to set objectives and future plans to aim at;
- be conscious of the connection between methodicalness and healthy lifestyles in dealing with pressure, stress and demands of everyday life;
- learn to evaluate the impact of models and stereotypes on the formation of his/her own image and lifestyle.

Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil should:

- have gone through information on courses of study in upper secondary school, in consideration of his/her interest and future plans for work and employment opportunities;
- know of the dangers involved in consumption of habit-forming and narcotic substances and misuse of therapeutic drugs;
- realise the necessity of acting safely and responsibly in traffic to ensure the traffic safety of others;
- know the principal human rights treaties and conventions;
- show independence in enjoying culture and arts for enjoyment and to deepen his/her understanding of him-/herself and others;
- understand the concept of sustainable development and its significance for maintaining an ecological balance;
- know the main institutions in society working for the public good and their roles;
- have sufficient knowledge of his/her environment to be able to obtain necessary information in daily life;
- be capable of assessing the legitimacy of propaganda;
- have knowledge of his/her rights and obligations as a consumer;
- be able to assess his/her own income and expenses and household operation;

Enabling objectives for Grade 8

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- realise that individuals are steadily communicating emotions back and forth and thus expressing their moods and well-being;
- learn to understand that individuals can experience and interpret input from their environment in different ways;
- understand the role of laws and regulations in personal and impersonal relations between individuals, e.g. within the family, at school, at the workplace, and between individuals of different nationalities;
- be able to express and give reasons for his/her thoughts and opinions at a formal gathering;
- learn to assess his/her desires and expectations realistically in order to be able to set personal objectives;
- be able to form mental pictures of varying sorts of difficulties and find his/her own solutions to them.



Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- know what study subjects the school offers to students in Grades 9 and 10;
- know of his/her rights to conclude compulsory school in a shorter period than 10 years;
- know various laws and rules on interpersonal relations;
- learn to assess the disposition of their own income, having regard for necessary and other expenditures;
- know the recognised labelling of environmentally friendly products;
- be able to acquire necessary information on goods, services and travel;
- be able to compile his/her own budget for savings and investment;
- be able to assume responsibility for his/her own safety when travelling;
- know most of the mandatory, prohibition and instruction signs in traffic;
- know the civil defence rules for proper response to natural disasters and a state of emergency.



Enabling objectives for Grade 9

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- learn how to protect his/her personal and emotional limits against undesirable input and abuse;
- learn to assess whether certain actions and behaviour exceed the limits set by laws and regulations;
- acquire skills in impersonal relations;
- learn to critically examine his/her own desires, expectations and special situation to acquire additional self-knowledge;
- be conscious of his/her right to keep dreams and opinions to him-/herself and cultivate values on own premises;
- be aware of social conditions in order to be able to assess whether and how he/she becomes part of them, e.g. to withstand pressure to do something against his/her better knowledge.



Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- know the dangers involved in consumption of habit-forming and narcotic substances;
- know what options are available in Grade 10;
- have an opportunity to become acquainted with aspects of business and industry;
- know the main channels of modern propaganda;
- be able to explain the role of the legislative, judicial and executive power;
- be conscious of the importance of law enforcement in maintaining law and order;
- know the country's main service institutions;
- be able to discuss factors which can contribute to the nation's welfare;
- be able to evaluate his/her obligations and responsibility towards fellow citizens;
- be able to compile a budget for fixed household expenses.



Enabling objectives for Grade 10

Self-knowledge, communication, creativity and lifestyle

A pupil shall

- be conscious that moral competence and responsibility, mutual respect and individual rights are the main ethical measures of the gender image, sexual experience and sexual behaviour of each individual;
- be conscious of the ideal of equal rights as a guiding perspective in all relations, of its value and limitations;
- be conscious of the responsibility and direction of parents in
 - raising their children,
 - shaping their values,
 - communicating culture between generations;
- be able to set realistic goals to work towards in life;
- assess in an independent manner his/her own life values and lifestyle, independent of society's models and stereotypes.



Society, environment, nature and culture

A pupil shall

- be able to utilise his/her knowledge of study and work options;
- acquire an understanding of the working world in connection with selecting a course of study or work;
- know the dangers involved in abuse of drugs intended for therapeutic purposes;
- be able to analyse and discuss the impact of advertising and understand covert media propaganda;
- be able to use the main mass media and evaluate their news coverage;
- be able to explain the difference between private and public enterprise;
- be able to calculate the cost of instalment purchases of household durables and understand a bank statement;
- know various methods of savings and investments;
- pursue meaningful leisure activities and follow suitable safety precautions in their leisure time;
- know the various laws and regulations intended to encourage protection of the man-made and natural environment;
- have acquired responsible views and practices towards the immediate environment and Icelandic nature;
- be conscious of the dangers of speed and from all vehicles in traffic;
- have learned how to respond properly at the scene of an accident and provide first aid.

