



**King Abdulaziz School**

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**Approaches to Learning (ATL) Guide**

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**King Abdulaziz Middle School and the International Baccalaureate (IB)  
Middle Years Programme (MYP)**

The MYP emphasizes intellectual challenge, encouraging students to make connections between their studies in traditional subjects and the real world. It fosters the development of skills for communication, intercultural understanding and global engagement - qualities that are essential for life in the 21st century.

King Abdulaziz Middle School is an IB MYP candidate School offering the Middle Years Programme. IB Schools share a common philosophy: a commitment to high quality, challenging, international education that King Abdulaziz Middle School believes is important for our students.

**IB Mission Statement**

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with school, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and life-long learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

**King Abdulaziz Middle School Mission Statement**

King Abdulaziz School strives to cultivate dynamic educational experiences that prepare students for life. It aims at providing stimulating academic programme and a friendly learning environment that enable students to reach their full potential intellectually, physically and emotionally. King Abdulaziz School prepares students to be open to other perspectives, values and traditions whilst recognizing their own identity and taking pride in their cultural heritage.

**KAS Vision Statement**

To inspire the individual potential of all students and enable them to become principled, proficient, inquiring, and caring lifelong learners.

## Approaches to Learning (ATL)

### *“Learning how to Learn”*

Through Approaches to Learning in IB programmes, students develop skills that have relevance across the curriculum that help them *‘learn how to learn’*. ATL skills can be learned and taught, improved with practice and developed incrementally. They provide a solid foundation for learning independently and with others. ATL represent the skills that students need in order to become self-regulated, intrinsically motivated learners.

ATL skills help students prepare for, and demonstrate learning through, meaningful assessment. They provide a common language that students and teachers can use to reflect on, and articulate on, the process of learning. IB programmes identify 5 ATL skill categories, expanded into developmentally appropriate skill clusters; there are 10 developmentally appropriate Middle Years Programme (MYP) ATL skill clusters (*MYP: FPIP*, 2014, p. 20 & 97).

<b>IB Skill Category</b>	<b>MYP Skill Clusters</b>
Communication	I. Communication
Social	II. Collaboration
Self-management	III. Organization IV. Affective V. Reflection
Research	VI. Information Literacy VII. Media Literacy
Thinking	VIII. Critical IX. Creative X. Transfer

In the Diploma Programme (DP), as well as in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP), these cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills are grouped into the same five ATL categories. Although these skills areas are presented as distinct categories, there are obviously close links and

areas of overlap between them, and it is intended that these categories should be seen as interrelated. It is also the intention that these ATL skills should be seen as linking closely with the attitudes and dispositions identified in the IB learner profile. The learner profile is the IB mission statement translated into a set of learning outcomes for the 21st century. It is an easily communicated set of ideals that can inspire, motivate and focus the work of schools and teachers, uniting them in a common purpose ([www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)).

### **Approaches to Learning and Research**

The development of ATL skills such as thinking skills and communication skills is frequently identified as a crucial element in preparing students effectively for life beyond school. A 2007 survey of 400 hiring executives of major US corporations identified their top four requirements of new recruits as being oral and written communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, professionalism and work ethic, and teamwork and collaboration skills (Trilling and Fadel 2009). Similar skills lists have been developed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and are also the subject of numerous books such as *The Global Achievement Gap* (Wagner 2010). Yet many students struggle with some of the basic skills of effective learning. For example, good note-making has been positively correlated with academic achievement, yet research suggests that many university students have difficulty even with the fundamental skill of making notes from lectures or texts (Kiewra 1985, O'Donnell and Dansereau 1993).

Developing students' ATL skills is about more than simply developing their cognitive skills. It is also about developing affective and metacognitive skills, and about encouraging students to view learning as something that they "do for themselves in a proactive way, rather than as a covert event that happens to them in reaction to teaching" (Zimmerman 2000: 65).

By developing ATL skills and the attributes of the learner profile, DP students can become "self-regulated learners" (Kaplan 1998). Self-regulated learners have learned how to set learning goals, ask good questions, self-interrogate as they learn, generate motivation and perseverance, try out different learning processes, self-monitor the effectiveness of their learning, reflect on achievement, and make changes to their learning processes where necessary (Zimmerman and Schunk 1989, de Bruin et al. 2011, Wolters 2011).

The term "skill" is therefore used in a broad sense in the DP to encompass cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills. Cognitive skills include all the information-processing and thinking skills, often called "study skills" in a school environment. Affective skills are the skills of behavior and emotional management underpinning attitudinal factors such as resilience, perseverance and self-motivation, which often have a large role to play in educational achievement. Metacognitive skills are the skills that students can use to monitor the effectiveness of their learning skills and processes, to better understand and evaluate their learning. Although these skills may be in use when manifesting a certain natural ability or talent, they are different to both of these because proficiency in any skill can be increased through the deliberate use of techniques and strategies, feedback and challenge. Skills are therefore highly teachable ([www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)).

## Approaches to Learning in the MYP

ATL MYP skill clusters reflect “*dynamic, internally controlled . . . processes that positively influence a student’s tendency to approach, engage with, expend effort on, and persist in learning tasks in an ongoing, self-directed manner*” (McCombs, 1984). ATL play a large role in MYP both formative and summative assessment.

The focus of ATL in the MYP is on helping students to develop the self-knowledge and skills they need to enjoy a lifetime of learning. ATL skills empower students to succeed in meeting the challenging objectives of MYP subject groups and prepare them for further success in rigorous academic programmes like the high school level, IB Diploma Programme (DP).

In the MYP, ATL encompasses both general and discipline-specific skills. Many ATL skills are applicable to all MYP subject groups; these general ‘tools for learning’ can be tailored to meet specific needs of students and schools. In order to develop ATL skills and facilitate effective and efficient learning, students need models, clear expectations, development benchmarks (or targets) and multiple opportunities to practice. While ATL skills are not formally assessed, or graded, in the MYP, they contribute to students’ achievement in all subjects. Teachers should provide students with regular, specific feedback on the development of the ATL skills through learning engagements and that provide formative assessment.

The most effective way to develop ATL is through ongoing, process-focused disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Teachers can use a wide range of content, developed through MYP key and related concepts and global contexts, as a vehicle for teaching effective learning strategies. Likewise, ATL skills can be powerful tools for exploring significant content. This dual focus (content and process, knowledge and skills) promotes student engagement, deep understanding, transfer of skills and academic success (*MYP: FPIP, 2014, p. 20*).

### MYP Schools

All teachers in MYP schools are responsible for integrating and explicitly teaching ATL skills. Over time, students should develop clear and sophisticated understandings of how they learn best and how they can evaluate the effectiveness of their learning. This kind of self-regulated (independent and autonomous) learning helps students:

- Reflect purposefully on their learning (metacognition)
- Understand the diversity of human learning needs
- Evaluate and provide evidence of their learning
- Meet MYP subject group aims and objectives
- Share responsibility for creating productive, cooperative and safe learning environments
- Develop the confidence to try new strategies and explore new concepts and contexts for learning
- Prepare for further study and responsible participation in local and global communities

ATL skills are informed by, and support the development of, the attributes of the IB Learner Profile (*MYP: FPIP*, 2014, p. 21).

MYP schools can develop their own ATL planning based on MYP units, student needs, and local circumstances and requirements (*MYP: FPIP*, 2014, p. 97).

### **ATLs and King Abdulaziz Middle School (KAS)**

KAS employs an MYP, concept-driven curriculum that uses ATL skills effectively and enables all students to become stronger, more self-regulated learners. Some of the key questions to be answered by KAS students with respect to ATLs include:

- What are my present skills in this area and what evidence do I have of my development?
- What skills can I improve?
- What new skills can I learn and acquire?

When specific ATL skills become an explicit focus for teaching and learning, students can begin to take responsibility for their own development. Over time, students can identify themselves and their competence in any learning strategy using articulate terms. KAS uses the following articulation terms with regard to the development and progression of ATL skills:

- **Introducing** - students are introduced to the skill, can observe others performing the skill and then practice the skill in similar contexts
- **Practicing** – students continue to practice the observed skill in both familiar, as well as unfamiliar contexts to evidence transfer of learning
- **Developing** – students copy others who use and model or emulate the skill and use the skill with scaffolding and guidance
- **Extending** – students employ the skill independently, confidently and effectively through demonstration, students can show others how to use the skill and accurately assess how effectively the skill is being used through self-regulation and reflection

## ATL Skills Framework

### IB Skill Category - **Communication**

#### MYP Skill Cluster – **I. Communication Skills**

*How can students communicate through interaction?*

#### **Exchanging thoughts, messages and information effectively through interaction**

- o Give and receive meaningful feedback
- o Use intercultural understanding to interpret communication
- o Use a variety of speaking techniques to communicate with a variety of audiences
- o Use appropriate forms of writing for different purposes and audiences
- o Use a variety of media to communicate with a range of audiences
- o Interpret and use effectively modes of nonverbal communication
- o Negotiate ideas and knowledge with peers and teachers
- o Participate in, and contribute to, digital social media networks
- o Collaborate with peers and experts using a variety of digital environments and media
- o Share ideas with multiple audiences using a variety of digital environments and media

*How can students demonstrate communication through language?*

#### **Reading, writing and using language to gather and communicate information**

- o Read critically and for comprehension
- o Read a variety of sources for information and for pleasure
  - o
- o Make inferences and draw conclusions
  - o
- o Use and interpret a range of discipline-specific terms and symbols
  - o
- o Write for different purposes
  - o
- o Understand and use mathematical notation
  - o
- o Paraphrase accurately and concisely
  - o



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preview and skim text to build understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul> </li> <li>Take effective notes in class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul> </li> <li>Make effective summary notes for studying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul> </li> <li>Use a variety of organizers for academic writing tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul> </li> <li>Find information for disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiries, using a variety of media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul> </li> <li>Organize and depict information logically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Structure information in summaries, essays and reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<b>IB Skill Category - Social</b>	
<b>MYP Skill Cluster – II. Collaborative Skills</b>	
<i>How can students collaborate?</i>	<p><b>Working effectively with others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use social media networks appropriately to build and develop relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Practice empathy</li> <li>○ Delegate and share responsibility for decision-making</li> <li>○ Help others to succeed</li> <li>○ Take responsibility for one’s own actions</li> <li>○ Manage and resolve conflict, and work collaboratively in teams</li> <li>○ Build consensus</li> <li>○ Make fair and equitable decisions</li> <li>○ Listen actively to other perspectives and ideas</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Negotiate effectively</li> <li>○ Encourage others to contribute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Exercise leadership and take on a variety of roles within groups</li> <li>○ Give and receive meaningful feedback</li> <li>○ Advocate for one’s own rights and needs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

IB Skill Category – **Self-management**

MYP Skill Cluster – **III. Organization Skills**

*How can students demonstrate organization skills?*

**Managing time and tasks effectively**

- o Plan short and long-term assignments; met deadlines
  - o Create plans to prepare for summative assessments (examinations and performances)
  - o Keep and use a weekly planner for assignments
  - o Set goals that are challenging and realistic
  - o Plan strategies and take action to achieve personal and academic goals
  - o Bring necessary equipment and supplies to class
  - o Keep an organized and logistical system of information files/notebooks
  - o Use appropriate strategies for organizing complex information
  - o Understand and use sensory learning preferences (learning styles)
  - o Select and use technology effectively and productively

MYP Skill Cluster – IV. Affective Skills

*How can students manage their own state of mind?*

**Managing state of mind o**

Mindfulness

- practice focus and concentration
- practice strategies to develop mental focus
- practice strategies to overcome distractions
- practice being aware of body-mind connections

o Perseverance

- demonstrate persistence and perseverance
- practice delaying gratification
- Emotional management
- practice strategies to overcome impulsiveness and anger
- practice strategies to prevent and eliminate bullying
- practice strategies to reduce stress and anxiety

o Self-motivation

- practice analyzing and attributing causes for failure
- practice managing self-talk
- practice positive thinking
- o Resilience
- practice ‘bouncing back’ after adversity, mistakes and failures
- practice ‘failing well’
- practice dealing with disappointment and unmet expectations
- practice dealing with change

MYP Skill Cluster – V. Reflection Skills

*How can students be reflective?*

**(Re)considering the process of learning: choosing and using ATL skills**

- o Develop new skills, techniques and strategies for effective learning
  - o Identify strengths and weaknesses of personal learning strategies (self-assessment)
  - o Demonstrate flexibility in the selection and use of learning strategies
  - o Try new ATL skills and evaluate their effectiveness
  - o Consider content
    - What did I learn about today?
    - What don't I yet understand?
    - What questions do I have now?
  - o Consider ATL skill development
    - What can I already do?
    - How can I share my skills to help peers who need more practice?
    - What will I work on next?
  - o Consider personal learning strategies
    - What can I do to become a more efficient and effective learner?
    - How can I become more flexible in my choice of learning strategies?
    - What factors are important for helping me learn well?
  - o Focus on the process of creating by imitating the works of others
  - o Consider ethical, cultural and environmental implications
  - o Keep a journal to record reflections

IB Skill Category - **Research**

MYP Skill Cluster – **VI. Information Literacy Skills**

*How can students demonstrate information literacy?*

**Finding, interpreting, judging and creating information**

- o Collect, record and verify data
  - o Access information to be informed and inform others
  - o Make connections between various sources of information
  - o Understand the benefits and limitations of personal sensory learning preferences when accessing, processing and recalling information
  - o Use memory techniques to develop long-term memory
  - o Present information in a variety of formats and platforms
  - o Collect and analyze data to identify solutions and make informed decisions
  - o Process data and report results
  - o Evaluate and select information sources and digital tools based on their appropriateness to specific tasks
  - o Understand and use technology systems
  - o Use critical-literacy skills to analyze and interpret media communications
  - o Understand and implement intellectual property rights
  - o Create references and citations, use footnotes/endnotes and construct a bibliography according to recognized conventions
  - o Identify primary and secondary sources

MYP Skill Cluster – VII. Media Literacy Skills

*How can students demonstrate media literacy?*

**Interacting with media to use and create ideas and information**

- o Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize and ethically use information from a variety of resources and media (including digital social media and online networks)
- o Demonstrate awareness of media interpretations of events and ideas (including digital social media)
- o Make informed choices about personal viewing experiences
- o Understand the impact of media representations and modes of presentation
- o Seek a range of perspectives from multiple and varied sources
- o Communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats
- o Compare, contrast and draw connections among (multi)media resources

IB Skill Category - **Thinking**

MYP Skill Cluster – VIII. Critical-Thinking Skills

**How can students think critically?**

**Analyzing and evaluating issues and ideas**

- o Practice observing carefully in order to recognize problems
- o Gather and organize relevant information to formulate an argument
- o Recognize unstated assumptions and bias
- o Interpret data
- o Evaluate evidence and arguments
- o Recognize and evaluate propositions
- o Draw reasonable conclusions and generalizations
- o Test generalizations and conclusions
- o Revise understanding based on new information and evidence
- o Evaluate and manage risk
- o Formulate factual, topical, conceptual and debatable questions
- o Consider ideas from multiple perspectives

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Develop contrary or opposing arguments</li> <li>o Analyze complex concepts and projects into their constituent parts and synthesize them to create new understanding</li> <li>o Propose and evaluate a variety of solutions</li> <li>o Identify obstacles and challenges</li> <li>o Use models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues</li> <li>o Identify trends and forecast problems</li> <li>o Troubleshoot systems and applications</li> </ul>
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<b>MYP Skill Cluster – IX. Creative-Thinking Skills</b>	
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<p><i>How can students be creative?</i></p>	<p><b>Generating novel ideas and considering new perspectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Use brainstorming and visual diagrams to generate new ideas and inquiries</li> <li>o Consider multiple alternatives, including those that might be unlikely or impossible</li> <li>o Create novel solutions to authentic problems</li> <li>o Make unusual or unexpected connections between objects and/or ideas</li> <li>o Design improvements to existing machines, media and technologies</li> <li>o Design new machines, media and technologies</li> <li>o Make guesses, as ‘what if’ questions and generate testable hypothesis</li> <li>o Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products or processes</li> <li>o Create original works and ideas; use existing works and ideas in new ways</li> <li>o Practice flexible thinking – develop multiple opposing, contradictory and complementary arguments</li> <li>o Practice visible thinking strategies and techniques</li> <li>o Generate metaphors and analogies</li> </ul>
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**MYP Skill Cluster – X. Transfer Skills**

*How can students transfer skills and knowledge across disciplines and subject groups?*

**Using skills and knowledge in multiple contexts**

- Use effective learning strategies in subject groups and disciplines
- Apply skills and knowledge in unfamiliar situations
- Inquire in different contexts to gain a different perspective
- Compare conceptual understanding across multiple subject groups and disciplines
- Make connections between subject groups and disciplines
- Combine knowledge, understanding and skills to create products or solutions
- Transfer current knowledge to learning of new technologies
- Change the context of an inquiry to gain different perspectives



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[www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)