

# Skills & Competency Training

## Spring 2022

Note: [Skills Courseworks page](#) contains the most up-to-date syllabus and course links.

## Introduction

CPRL aims to prepare its students to become leaders who are Skilled Generalists.

Skilled Generalists have the specialized knowledge and competencies associated with their professional training and degree. They possess a second set of skills, less commonly addressed in professional schools. They can work in interdisciplinary teams to aggregate their disparate knowledge and competencies to address complex, multidimensional problems that they could not solve using only their profession-specific expertise.

Over several years, faculty and staff at CPRL have identified four categories of Skilled Generalists competencies that support organizational learning and improvement in the public sector. These are:

- Problem Analysis and Solution Generation
- Client-Centered Orientation and Communication
- Cultural Literacy and Fluency
- Teamwork and Team Building
- Project Management

## Skills Overview

The Skills and Competency Training course, or “Skills,” is designed to help students develop these competencies. The course comprises three parts. First, we examine how systems and the people in those systems are critical to identifying and solving problems and pursuing improvement. Next, we discuss the processes, practices, and tools needed to create a problem-solving or improvement strategy. In the third part, we learn how to measure our efforts, make sense of our progress and impact, and identify and solve problems. Across our classes, we explore visual communication, design thinking, and non-profit finance as knowledge and skills that help organize and sustain solutions and improvements. Key ideas from each part are incorporated into later ones, and we maintain a focus on stakeholders.

Content for Skills draws on social science research methods, client-centered clinical and consulting practices, design and systems thinking, and improvement science along with the expertise developed by CPRL, which is reflected in its Evolutionary Learning methodology. These classes are hands-on and applied. Some classes connect to Seminar ideas and project deliverables—but this is not always the case.

We recognize that every student enters CPRL with a particular set of competencies and areas for further development in preparation to be leaders who are Skilled Generalists. We strongly encourage students to be present, focused, and deeply engaged in all Skills classes, sharing knowledge with peers and taking

risks; trying out new actions, roles, competencies, and even personas; and being willing to make mistakes in the process of deepening your professional knowledge and skills. Please see the CPRL Expectations document for more guidance on how to participate in Skills.

Below is the scope and sequence of Skills classes, which is subject to change. To access pre-work for these classes, visit the "[Modules](#)" page.

- Skills 1: The Skilled Generalist
- Skills 2: The Role of Systems in Evolutionary Learning
- Skills 3: Stakeholder Engagement: Interview Protocol
- Skills 4: Stakeholder Engagement: Interviewer Skills
- Skills 5: Theory of Action
- Skills 6: Operationalized Theory of Action (OPTA)
- Skills 7: Measurement Framework
- Skills 8: Making Meaning of Evidence
- Skills 9: Visual Communication
- Skills 10: Problem-Solving Process
- Skills 11: Experiential Prototyping
- Skills 12: Education Non-Profits
- Skills 13: Analyzing and Responding to Result

## Instructor Information

Skills is organized and primarily taught by Kimberly Austin, CPRL Deputy Director of Quality and Improvement. Our teaching assistant is Sangeetha Ramanathan. Skills also includes a few guest speakers who represent different professions and professional experiences.

- Email: Kimberly Austin, [ka2616@columbia.edu](mailto:ka2616@columbia.edu)
- Office Hours: Thursdays, 11:30-1:30. Schedule an appointment using [Google Appointments \(Links to an external site.\)](#).
- The link above goes to Google Appointments. To use it, make sure to go to the date you want on the calendar before selecting a time slot. Be sure to write down your time.
- You can meet for office hours in person in JG304 or by Zoom. The Zoom information is in the invite.
- Appointments are also available by request. Please email Kimberly and the TA with 2-3 dates and times that work for you.

## Contact Information

Primary instructor: Kimberly Austin, Deputy Director of Quality and Improvement at CPRL ([ka2616@columbia.edu](mailto:ka2616@columbia.edu))

Teaching assistant: Sangeetha Ramanathan ([sr3757@columbia.edu](mailto:sr3757@columbia.edu))

## Grading and Attendance

CPRL has a variety of arrangements with participating graduate schools as to the allocation of credits to particular courses. For some graduate schools, all of the credits are counted towards a single course; for other schools, the credits are divided among multiple courses or subject areas. Please contact Cherrelle Hall ([ch3612@columbia.edu](mailto:ch3612@columbia.edu)) to learn how the credits are allocated.

CPRL uses each partner school's grading system (e.g., A, B, C; or H, HP, P) and assigns the grades that are shared with partner schools using the CLS upper-level seminar grading curve, which is below.

	A+	A	A-	B+	B	Other Available Grades: B-, C, F
Seminars, Clinics, Externships	2.09%	31.23%	38.04%	23.6%	4.18%	Assigned as earned

Since Skills is based on participation, all students are required to attend at least 80% of Skills classes to receive a passing grade. In addition to attendance, students are expected to actively participate in Skills according to the following criteria:

- Conscientious participation in classes, including posts on discussion boards, quizzes, and other activities,
- Willingness to experiment with new skills, and
- Quality of feedback to other students.

## COVID-19-Related Notices

CPRL follows Columbia University policies and guidelines. The University is monitoring public health and safety conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and may evolve its policies and guidelines, as conditions change. CPRL will do the same. All CPRL students must regularly check and respond to their Columbia University email to remain current on University policies and guidelines.

When in-person instruction is permitted, Columbia University has encouraged faculty to retain effective innovations developed during the pandemic. To this end, some classes have an asynchronous component that includes videos, discussion board posts, and quizzes. All asynchronous content is due by 8am before the start of classes.

## Assignments

Students must prepare for each class according to the expectations below. There are no graded assignments associated with Skills. We will, however, discuss one of the assignments for Seminar, the Evolutionary Learning Framework, in detail. Students will also receive feedback on select activities completed as part of Skills.

Below is the scope and sequence of Skills classes, which is subject to change.

## Class Recordings

- Audio recordings of in-person classes are available. There is no video option for in-person classes. If you need to access class recordings, follow [these directions](#).

## Skills Objectives and Organization

See the [modules](#) for class objectives, readings, other preparations (e.g., videos and discussion boards), and class agenda.

### Skills 1: The Skilled Generalist

January 19

Objectives: By the end of this class, you will be able to:

- State the purpose of Skills and its learning goals
- Name expectations for Skills
- State mindsets and norms that will help you and the class meet the learning goals of Skills

### Class Prep

#### Skills learning goals and expectations

- Read Skilled Generalist Self-Assessment
- Read CPRL Expectations

#### Improvement teams

- Read: *Leading through Learning*: (1) Introduction and (2) Stage 1
- Read Levin, I. M. (1992). Facilitating quality improvement team performance: A developmental perspective. *Total Quality Management*, 3(3), 307-322.

#### Discussion board

- Using the Skilled Generalist Self-Assessment, name your strengths as a Skilled Generalist and where you hope to grow this semester in your competencies as a Skilled Generalist
- Skim the responses to find people who complement your skills.

## Class Agenda

- Welcome and introduction
- Lecture: Overview of Evolutionary Learning
- Lecture: Introduction to improvement teams and the role norms
- Small group: Review, revise, and practice norms needed to support Evolutionary Learning
- Debrief and next steps
- 

## Skills 2: The Role of Systems in Evolutionary Learning

January 21

In this class, you will:

- Define problems and systems
- Describe how systems react to change
- Practice mapping a system that surrounds a problem

You will also learn about our case study: District Buckeye State.

## Class Prep

### Approaches to organizational improvement

- Read: Bryk, A.S., Gomez, L.M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P.G. (2015). See the system that produces the current outcomes (Chapter 3). In *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Read: *Leading through Learning: Stage 2, Introduction - Section 2.3*

### Video and discussion board

- Watch a video and answer the following questions on the discussion board:
  - Are the participants in this video participating in a system?
  - How do these insights complement, deepen, or contradict the guidance from *Learning to Improve*?
  - How might we apply these insights to improving public school systems?
- Lecture: Introduction to our case study: District Buckeye State
  - Follow-up resource: Seminar 3: The History and Current Reality of Educational Segregation and Inequity in the US

## Class Agenda

- Warm-up
- Lecture: Problem statements
- Small group: Write a problem statement for District Buckeye State
- Lecture: Problems and systems
- Small group: Create the system that surrounds the problem your Small group named
- Whole group discussion

- Complete a form about class norms
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### Skills 3: Stakeholder Engagement: The Interview Protocol

January 26

Throughout this class, you will have the chance to:

- Describe the role of stakeholder engagement in Evolutionary Learning
- Draft an interview protocol that helps to establish a positive relationship with stakeholders and supports Evolutionary Learning

#### Class Prep

##### Improvement and stakeholder engagement

- Read: Bryk, A.S., Gomez, L.M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P.G. (2015). Make the Work Problem-Specific and User Centered (Chapter 1). In *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Read: Supplement to *Leading through Learning: Stakeholder engagement*

##### Case study

- Review Buckeye State plan for stakeholder engagement data
- Optional: Review sample interview protocol

##### Interviewing as one approach to stakeholder engagement

- Read: Glesne, C. (2006). Making words fly: Developing understanding through interviewing. In *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*.

#### Class Agenda

- Lecture: Semi-structured interview protocols
- Small group: Submit draft research question, introduction, and one section of your interview protocol
- Summary of strengths and areas of growth across the draft interview protocols
- Exit Ticket: Revise your protocol, using the feedback you received. Use the Skills Google Drive folder to make your edits.

### Skills 4: Stakeholder Engagement: Interviewer Skills

January 31

In this class, you will:

- Revise your interview protocol
- Practice conducting interviews that establish a relationship of professional trust and confidence with client, stakeholders, or other knowledgeable individuals, while gathering useful information.

## Class Prep

### Interviewing through difference and diversity

- Read: Seidman, I. (1998, 2006). Technique isn't everything, but it is a lot. In *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*, 63-78.

### Case study

- Buckeye State Charter School project, family interview protocol (introduced in Skills 3)

### Video and discussion board

- Watch "Vocal Branding Beyond Words" by Wendy LeBorgne, voice pathologist and vocal athlete expert and answer the following question on the discussion board:
- Where do you want to grow in your delivery of interviews? Post your reply on the discussion board.

## Class Agenda

- Warm-Up
- Whole group discussion: Interview observation
- Report observation ratings here (link forthcoming).
- Lecture: Interview protocol as prototype
- Small group: Practice delivering your protocol
- Whole group discussion and reflection on interview practice

## Skills 5: Theory of Action

### February 4

By the end of this class, you will:

- Define a theory of action (TOA)
- Assess a TOA
- Practice drafting a TOA

## Class Prep

### Theory of action

- Review: Bryk, A.S., Gomez, L.M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P.G. (2015). See the system that produces the current outcomes (Chapter 3). In *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Read: *Leading through Learning: Stage 2, Section 2.4*

### Case study

- Review District Buckeye State problem statement
- Read District Buckeye State's TOA
- Lecture: Context for District Buckeye State's TOA
- Optional resources about controlled choice
  - Controlled choice at San Antonio Independent School District

- Controlled choice in Newark, New Jersey with Newark Enrolls
- Optional resources about culturally responsive and sustaining education
  - New York State Education Department's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Framework

### Evolutionary Learning assignment

- Review Evolutionary Learning (EL) assignment
- Review EL assignment rubric
- Select a case study organization for the EL assignment and submit your team members and assignment partners

### Class Agenda

- Whole class discussion: Analysis of Buckeye State TOA, using CPRL rubric
- Breakout groups: Draft a theory of action for District Buckeye State
- Whole class discussion: Reflections, questions, and next steps
- 

## Skills 6: Operationalized Theory of Action

### February 7

#### In this class, you will:

- Define an operationalized theory of action (OPTA)
- Analyze an OPTA
- Practice developing an OPTA

### Class Prep

#### Logic models and OPTAs

- Read: *Leading through Learning: Stage 2, Section 2.5 - 2.6*
- Review District Buckeye State's partial OPTA
- Video: Components of an OPTA

#### Case study

- Review District Buckeye State theory of action Version 1
- Review District Buckeye State theory of action Version 2
- Read District Buckeye State's OPTA

#### Entry ticket

- Use CPRL's rubric to assess District Buckeye State's partial OPTA.

### Class Agenda

- Warm-up activity: Reflect on results from analysis of Buckeye State
- Whole group discussion: Students make arguments about their assessment
- Breakout groups: Draft one set of actions for one if statement and one set of outcomes for one then statement



- Whole group: Two presentations on OPTAs and questions

## Skills 7: Measurement Framework

February 14

In this class, you will:

- Define the components of the measurement framework
- Learn how to create a measurement framework
- Create indicators and targets

Class Prep

Measurement in continuous improvement efforts

- Read: Bryk, A.S., Gomez, L.M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P.G. (2015). We Cannot Improve at Scale What We Cannot Measure (Chapter 4). In *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Read: Leading through Learning: Stage 3

Case study

- District Buckeye State's measurement framework
- Optional: District Buckeye State Measurement Framework (Excerpt)

Class Agenda

- Warm-Up: The purpose of measurement in Evolutionary Learning
- Warm-Up: Definition of measurement framework and key components
- Think Aloud: Indicators and Q&A
- Think Aloud: Targets and Q&A
- Workshop: Create indicators and targets for District Buckeye State
- Gallery walk
- Exit ticket: Complete the class quiz

## Skills 8: Making Meaning of Evidence

February 16

In this class, you will:

- Learn how to organize and analyze qualitative data and interpret the generated results.

Facilitators

- Adam Royalty, Designer-in-Residence at Columbia Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Design and/or

- Kimberly Austin, Deputy Director at CPRL

## Class Prep

### Making meaning during implementation

- Leading through Learning: Stage 4

## Video

- Listen to Adam Royalty discuss the research tools used by designers.

### Case study and discussion board

- Examine District Buckeye State focus group data.
- After examining the data, identify at least one salient idea (i.e., themes) you see across the groups and support your observation with evidence.

## Class Agenda

- Lecture: Intersection between improvement and design thinking
- Small group: Analyze data from District Buckeye State
- Whole group debrief

## Skills 9: Visual Communication

### February 23

In this class, you will:

- Brainstorm how to use visuals to communicate more effectively
- Spark ideas on how to visually improve the CPRL deliverables you're producing this semester

## Facilitator

- Meghan Snyder, CPRL Project Director

## Class Prep

### Discussion board

- Activity: Review [this report](#) published by TNTIP and consider what makes it appealing. Post your reply on the discussion board.

## Class Agenda

- Provide an overview of visual communication
- Discuss design principles
- Practice analyzing visual communications
- Review resources
- Discuss your questions

## Skills 10: The Problem-Solving Process

March 2

In this class, you will:

- Practice a range of problem-solving tools to address the challenges that arise in the implementation process

Class Prep

**Problems as a routine feature of problem-solving**

- Read: Leading through Learning: Stage 5
- Read: Supplement to *Leading through Learning*: Overview of the problem-solving process.

Class Agenda

- Lecture: Introduction to District Buckeye State's implementation problem
- Activity: Given the problem analysis so far, how would you refine District Buckeye State's implementation problem
- Breakout group: Refine District Buckeye State's problem
- Breakout group: Create an aim statement and generate solutions

## Skills 11: Experiential Prototyping

Match 11

In this class, you will:

- Apply methods to quickly test potential solutions to learn about their strengths and weaknesses.

Facilitators

- Adam Royalty, Designer-in-Residence at Columbia Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Design and/or
- Kimberly Austin, Deputy Director at CPRL

Location

- We will meet at the Design Studio located inside Riverside Church, 645 W 120th St, New York, NY 10027.

Class Prep

- Lecture on prototyping
- Submit a "burning" question related to their project

## Class Agenda

- Topic covered
  - Stakeholder mapping
  - Prototyping
  - Flare and Focus
  - Divergent thinking and analogous thinking
  - Norms that support design thinking

## Skills 12: Education Non-Profits

March 25

In this class, you will be introduced to the basics of launching a nonprofit, with a focus on funding and board governance

### Facilitator

- Sarah Holloway, Lecturer in Discipline of International and Public Affairs, SIPA

### Class Prep

- Reflect on your experiences with non-profit finance and submit questions

## Class Agenda

- Interview with Sarah Holloway. Topics covered:
  - Education non-profits versus for-profit organizations
  - Development and fundraising
  - Oversight and board governance
  - Risks and realities of non-profits

## Skills 13: Analyzing and Responding to Results

March 30

In this class you will:

- Learn how to scale lessons learned
- Summarize key ideas related to improvement within the Evolutionary Learning framework
- Reflect on your past and future experiences

### Class Prep

#### Examining results

- Leading through Learning: Stage 6

#### Case study

- Listen to Episode 2 of “Nice White Parents” from *The New York Times* and Serial

### Discussion boards

- Imagine that the history of IS 293 documented in Nice White Parents is the history of District Buckeye State. How could have district leaders used this history to refine its strategy—in other words its TOA and OPTA—or how it measures its strategy?
- How has your view of school integration as a change idea for improving public schools changed, if at all?

### Class Agenda

- Lecture: Sustaining Lessons Learned
- Breakout session: Given the results, what has District Buckeye learned?
- Lecture: Planning for Continued Learning
- Breakout session: What should District Buckeye State do next?
- Breakout session: What have you learned about designing improvement strategies?
- Closing thoughts

## Other Important Information

- The Skills Courseworks page has the most recent course information and link to readings.
- For class PPTs, see [Google Drive for Skills Spring 2022 \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
  - You will receive access to this link on Jan. 19.
  - The Drive is only accessible by your UNI.
- If the facilitator is not stated, Kimberly Austin, CPRL Deputy Director, is the facilitator.
- All content will be posted at least three business days before class. Many of the missing links depend on your participation in class.
- Course code is LAW\_L8016\_002\_2022\_1 - S PUB EDUC POLICY SEM & PRACT
- To sign up for office hours, see the instructor information provided above.