The Big6™ Skills

The Big6 is a process model of how people of all ages solve an information problem. From practice and study, we found that successful information problem-solving encompasses six stages with two sub-stages under each:

1. Task Definition
1.1 Define the information problem
1.2 Identify information needed

What is the problem?
What is being asked of me?
What are my questions?

2. Information Seeking Strategies
2.1 Determine all possible sources
2.2 Select the best sources

What do I need to get started?
Where might I find answers?
What types of sources might be more useful?

3. Location and Access
3.1 Locate sources (intellectually and physically)
3.2 Find information within sources

Go on an information gathering expedition!
Search for sources of information.
Locate and access information.

4. Use of Information
4.1 Engage (e.g., read, hear, view, touch)
4.2 Extract relevant information

Engage the information.
Read for purpose: skim, scan, and take notes.
Keep track of sources!

5. Synthesis
5.1 Organize from multiple sources
5.2 Present the information

Organize all my information and my thoughts.
Develop a plan.
Act. Create. Solve.

6. Evaluation
6.1 Judge the product (effectiveness)
6.2 Judge the process (efficiency)

How did it go?
Am I happy with the end result?
Is there anything I would do differently next time?

People go through these Big6 stages—consciously or not—when they seek or apply information to solve a problem or make a decision. It's not necessary to complete these stages in a linear order, and a given stage doesn't have to take a lot of time. We have found that in almost all successful problem-solving situations, all stages are addressed.

In addition to considering the Big6 as a process, another useful way to view the Big6 is as a set of basic, essential life skills. These skills can be applied across situations—to school, personal, and work settings. The Big6 Skills are applicable to all subject areas across the full range of grade levels. Students use the Big6 Skills whenever they need information to solve a problem, make a decision, or complete a task.