



# Empower Students with the Higher-Order Skills Needed for College, Careers, and Life

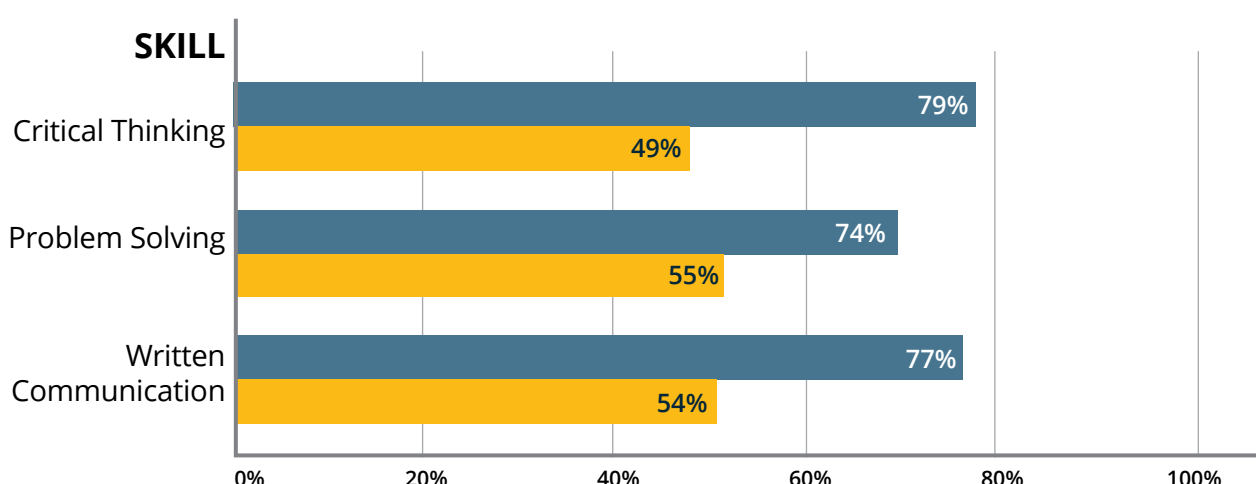
Students need critical thinking, problem-solving, and strong communication skills to succeed in school and their future jobs. Schools play a vital role in building a strong foundation early. Developing these skills before graduation helps students become more adaptable and career-ready, preparing them to thrive in a fast-changing world.

## Employers Value Higher-Order Skills. Are Students Prepared to Meet the Demand?

% of Employers Who Rank the Skill as Most Important



% of Employers Who Find Students Are Not Prepared



Finley, A. P. (2023). *The career-ready graduate: What employers say about the difference college makes*. American Association of Colleges and Universities.

**The disconnect is clear: students aren't graduating with the higher-order skills employers need and expect.**

## Critical Thinking Skills Are Relevant in Every Industry

Every industry values higher-order skills. In fact, 70% of employers now **prioritize real-world skills** over degrees.<sup>1</sup>

### BUSINESS:

Strategic problem solving, effective communication, and decision making



### HEALTHCARE:

Critical thinking, rapid decision making, and patient communication

### ENGINEERING:

Analytical thinking, innovative problem solving, and technical communication



### HUMANITIES:

Critical analysis, creative problem solving, and cross-cultural communication



### MILITARY:

Tactical problem solving, clear communication, and confident decision making



### SKILLED TRADES

(e.g., Electricians, Plumbers): Troubleshooting, critical thinking, and customer communication

**To prepare all students for college and/or the workforce, K-12 education must intentionally teach, deliberately practice, and regularly measure these essential skills.**

Only **43%** of high school graduates entering college are **proficient in critical thinking**.<sup>2</sup>

## How to Teach Students Essential Skills for Lifelong Success

To thrive in school and the workplace, students need more than content knowledge—they need to think critically, solve problems, and communicate effectively. **These skills can be taught through intentional teaching and meaningful practice.**

CAE's Critical Thinking Skills Solution helps schools prepare students for future success by building the skills colleges and employers actively seek through:

- **Engaging critical thinking instructional resources** that strengthen higher-order skills across subject areas
- **Performance-based assessments** that measure critical thinking, problem solving, and written communication skills—providing data you and your students can act on
- **Professional development** that equips educators to teach these skills with confidence and incorporate them into their instruction

[Learn More](#)

<sup>1</sup> Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2021). How college contributes to workforce success: Employer views on what matters most. <https://dgm81phvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/AACUEmployerReport2021.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Van Damme, D., & Zahner, D. (Eds.). (2022). Does higher education teach students to think critically? OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/cc9fa6aa-en>