

# Glossary



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## **adaptation**

A change made in the teaching process, resources, assignments, or pupil products to help a student achieve the expected learning outcomes.

## **adult-guided learning experience**

A learning experience that emerges from the teacher's goals and the Kindergarten curriculum, but is shaped by the children's active engagement.

## **alignment**

Refers to social and pedagogical experiences and processes that are common across the early childhood development (ECD) community, based upon research about the developmental characteristics and learning of children from birth through eight years of age. Alignment of children's learning and development is enhanced when Early Years educators (in schools and other ECD settings) and parents work together to support children in early learning programs and at home.

## **appropriate educational programming**

A collaborative school-family-community process whereby school communities create learning environments and provide resources and services responsive to the lifelong learning, social, and emotional needs of all students.

## **assessment**

The systematic process of gathering information about what a child knows, is able to do, and is learning to do. Student assessment is integrated with learning and teaching, thus engaging the children, parents, teachers, and administrators (the learning community) in insightful observation, descriptive feedback, reflection, goal setting, adjusting instruction, and celebrating learning.

## **backward design**

An approach to planning with the end in mind (i.e., the learning outcomes). This approach is the reverse of the traditional approach (where planning begins with the topics in the textbook or other resources, and leads to student activities and assessment of what has been learned). Backward design begins with identifying the desired results of learning, determining acceptable evidence, and planning learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins and McTighe).

## **child-centred practices**

Educational practices that begin with what educators know about the children and their own interests and needs, rather than teacher-directed processes focused solely on a predetermined curriculum. See **emergent curriculum**.

## **child-guided learning experiences**

Learning experiences that emerge from children's own interests and actions, with intentional teacher support. See **emergent curriculum**.

**co-construction**

Children’s learning that occurs when they interact with other children and their teachers as they collaboratively work together. Also referred to as **collaborative interactions**.

**collaboration**

Working together toward agreed-upon goals within school policies and practices (adults); negotiating and working toward common goals while playing together (children).

**continuity**

Occurs when the new learning environment builds on children’s previous experiences.

**curriculum**

A pedagogical framework organized to support important goals and outcomes. Curriculum consists of “all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki*, cited in Australia Department of Education 47).

**developmental domains (holistic development)**

Refers to children’s holistic development, which can be considered across five interwoven and equally important domains or areas: physical health and well-being, emotional maturity, social competence, language and thinking skills, and communication skills and general knowledge.

**developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)**

Can be considered a pedagogical approach to Manitoba’s Kindergarten curriculum that is informed by what is known about child development and educational effectiveness. It is culturally sensitive, inclusive, focused on the whole child, and play-based, and is intentionally designed to promote young children’s optimal learning and development. A developmentally appropriate approach to teaching is based upon the understanding that children are active learners who construct their own knowledge by interacting with their classmates, their teacher, other key adults in their lives, and a rich environment and rich learning experiences.

**differentiated instruction**

A method of instruction or assessment that alters the presentation of the curriculum for the purpose of responding to the learning diversity, interests, and strengths of students.

**discontinuity**

Occurs when changes are abrupt and/or systems unconnected, and children and families experience little support or assistance in handling those changes.

**diversity\***

Encompasses all the ways in which human beings are both similar and different. Honouring diversity means understanding and accepting the uniqueness of all individuals as well as respecting their differences. It is ultimately about acceptance and respect for difference on an individual and group basis. When we recognize and respect the diversity of Kindergarten children and their families, we help to promote children's social and emotional health and a caring classroom where everyone feels included and equal.

**documentation (pedagogical)**

An ongoing process of observing, recording, and reflecting on children's learning and development. As a vehicle for learning, documentation bridges the understanding of children and adults, and honours the idea of co-construction. It allows teachers to use their own professional judgment and a thorough familiarity with the curriculum, child development, and knowledge about the children in the class to make developmentally appropriate decisions and to make play-based learning more transparent for the children and their families.

**early childhood development (ECD)**

In Manitoba, the acronym ECD is often used to refer to early childhood development, which sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, and health. Recent research shows that "children's early years are an important time in brain development and a key factor in determining success later in life" (Healthy Child Manitoba, *Early Childhood Development*). The ECD community refers to the many partners who care about young children, including persons connected to early learning and child care services, Healthy Child Manitoba programs for families, Early Years schools, and First Nations education allies.

**early identification**

The process used to identify students with exceptional learning needs in preschool, Kindergarten, the Early Years, or as early as possible in students' education before or after their entry into school.

**Elders**

The respected keepers of knowledge and traditions to whom First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities look for advice and wisdom.

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\* The four terms marked with an asterisk (\*) signal the importance of departmental initiatives toward building acceptance and respect for human differences, eliminating systemic barriers and impediments to educational equity, and building inclusive school cultures, in both policy and practice.

**emergent curriculum**

Teachers' emergent educational plans based upon their deep understanding of the Kindergarten curriculum outcomes and their appreciation for each child's unique zone of proximal development and personal interests. An emergent curriculum approach encourages children to explore their own current interests and passions. Planning begins when a teacher sees a child's interest beginning to emerge. The teacher is open to many possibilities and plans a positive, authentic learning experience around and beyond that interest. Teachers need a good understanding of curriculum outcomes so that they recognize when there is a match with the child's interests. See **child-centred practices** and **child-guided learning experience**.

**engagement (family or parental)**

A reciprocal commitment of educators and families to one another for the benefit of the children.

**English as an additional language (EAL) learners**

Students whose first or primary language(s) is other than English and who require specialized programming and/or additional services to develop English language proficiency and to realize their potential within Manitoba's school system. An EAL student may be someone who has come from another country or who was born in Canada.

**environmental print**

Refers (in early literacy) to the print of children's everyday lives, such as easy-to-recognize signs, and familiar labels and logos. For many emergent readers, environmental print helps bridge the connection between letters and first efforts to read.

**equity\***

A concept that flows directly from a concern for equality and social justice in a democratic society. Educational equity refers most broadly to a condition of fairness with respect to educational opportunities, access, and outcomes for all people. Departmental initiatives towards equity are intended to remove barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices.

**evaluation**

The process of interpreting assessment information, determining to what extent children have attained learning outcomes and standards, and describing the quality of their learning. Evaluation is used primarily for communicating student achievement.

**fine motor skills**

The abilities required for activities that involve concentration and small, precise thumb, finger, hand, and wrist movements (e.g., stringing beads, building with interlocking blocks, holding a crayon or pencil).

**flow**

A psychological construct, first described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, referring to a state of engrossed concentration when it seems as though time has stopped. For young children, this flow may occur when they are playing and learning in their zone of proximal development, when there is just enough challenge to keep them interested, but not so much that they become frustrated. When children or adults are in a state of flow, they feel satisfied, happy, and even joyful.

**graduated risk**

Intentionally offers children developmentally appropriate exposure to risky play. When children have control over the degree of their exposure to risk, they have the chance to develop mastery-oriented thoughts (I can do this!); this type of play helps reduce children's anxiety and fear about trying new things. Perseverance in facing challenges and solving problems has been found to transfer to academic endeavours. Teachers (and school leaders) mediate the risk by making sound decisions based upon risk benefit.

**gross motor skills**

The abilities required to control the large muscles of the body for walking, running, sitting, crawling, and other activities.

**holistic development (developmental domains)**

Refers to children's holistic development, which can be considered across five interwoven and equally important domains or areas: physical health and well-being, emotional maturity, social competence, language and thinking skills, and communication skills and general knowledge.

**inclusion\***

A way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. Fundamentally, it is about everyone. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members and seeks to ensure that all students live full lives and learn to live together with others. Through the recognition of the rights of those with differing abilities, contexts, and needs, and active support for fulfilling those rights, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. Building community is a core ideal of inclusion and, therefore, caring about and enhancing the well-being of every member of the community and of the collective is essential. Inclusion is much more than the physical location or placement of learners. Social inclusion is embracing of diversity, advocacy, and transformation. See **diversity**.

**Indigenous knowledge**

Refers to the diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, traditions, perspectives, practices, and products, transmitted over time and through the generations. Indigenous knowledge is a valid way to understand the world; Indigenous and Western knowledge are complementary. (For more information, see Alaska Native Science Commission.)

### **individual education plan (IEP)**

A written document developed and implemented by a team, outlining a plan to address a child's unique learning needs. The written IEP may range in length from one page documenting student-specific adaptations developed by a student's teacher(s) in consultation with the parent(s), to a lengthier documentation of a student's programming outlining student-specific outcomes developed by a larger team that may also include resource, clinical, and other student services supports. The term *IEP* is inclusive of other acronyms such as individual transition plan (ITP), behaviour intervention plan (BIP), assisted learning plan (ALP), and so on.

### **individualized programming**

Programming intended for children whose cognitive disabilities are so severe or profound that they do not benefit from participating in curricula developed or approved by Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. The IEP outlines highly individualized learning experiences that are functionally appropriate.

### **inquiry**

Grows out of children's natural inclination to question the world. Inquiry is fuelled by children's curiosity and shaped and reshaped as the process forges ahead with new understandings and questions. It is a shared responsibility.

### **inquiry-based learning**

Learning that "grows out of students' natural inclination to question the world. Inquiries may be brief, resolved by referring to a book in the library or an Internet search, or they may lead students to an in-depth study that engages them for an entire year or more. Building classrooms around inquiry engages students, integrates process and content from all disciplines, and fosters self-directed learning" (Manitoba Education and Youth, *Independent Together* 6.3).

### **integrated curriculum**

Holistic and meaningful connections within and across subject areas. Young children do not learn about subjects in distinct or separate blocks; rather, they learn holistically across all their developmental domains and learn best when the natural connections between the various Kindergarten curricula can be woven together and experienced as a whole. For example, while children are weaving, learning outcomes in mathematics (patterns), science (colour), visual arts (3-D art), and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives (learning about Métis culture) can all be met in a seamless, holistic way.

### **intentional teaching**

Involves educators who have clear goals and learning outcomes in mind for the types of learning experiences offered to Kindergarten children, based on what they know about children's development and what they observe in their classroom. Intentional teachers use this kind of information to help select strategies for teaching and learning and determine how they set up their environment, how they authentically assess children's learning, and how they interact with the children and engage with their families.



**learning invitation**

An experience intentionally organized by the teacher to invite children's curiosity and desire to explore and problem-solve, often in an extended way, and typically with peers in small groups where cooperation and co-construction of knowledge can be facilitated. A learning invitation is sometimes referred to as a **provocation**.

**learning landscapes**

A metaphor used to conceptualize curriculum and curriculum development of knowledge "as a complex organic network organized in living fields, territories or 'landscapes,'" which is a shift "away from knowledge pictured as fragmented pieces put together, one piece at a time, in a linear fashion on an assembly line" (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education 6). The learning landscapes metaphor is closely related to **integrated curriculum, holistic development**, and multiple ways of knowing.

**loose parts**

Open-ended materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple and imaginative ways. They may include various items from the natural and human-made world, such as ropes, string, bales of hay, tree stumps or logs, sand, gravel, shells, balls, buckets, baskets, cups, buttons, swaths of fabric of different textures, cardboard boxes, and so on.

**metacognition**

The ability to think about thinking. When children can plan ahead about what they would like to do today or this week, or when they can talk about what they know already and what they would like to learn about, or evaluate how they did on an activity, they are demonstrating metacognition.

**modification**

Changes in the number or the content of the learning outcomes a student with a significant cognitive disability is expected to meet in the provincial curriculum, as determined by the student support team.

**norm-referenced assessment**

Assessing each child's performance in terms of other children's performance (i.e., the normative sample).

**observation**

A purposeful, systematic, and cumulative classroom assessment method that focuses on what the learner knows and can do in a variety of authentic contexts in order to inform instruction, improve learning, and assess or evaluate achievement.

**partnerships**

Formal and informal relationships and processes in which educators participate to support children's early learning and development. They are most effective when partners share a common vision, goals, and expectations, and commit to open communication and mutual respect.

**pedagogy**

A philosophical approach to the way teachers promote children's development and learning. Play-based learning in the Kindergarten curriculum demonstrates a child-centred pedagogy.

**project approach**

An in-depth inquiry by several children or the whole class that often occurs over an extended period of time and responds to children's own interests (see **emergent curriculum**). The topic for a project must be personally meaningful, discovery-based, build on and extend the children's prior knowledge, involve collaboration, and provide the opportunity to represent learning. Many projects culminate with a celebration or the opportunity to showcase learning in some way.

**provocation**

An experience intentionally organized by the teacher to invite children's curiosity and desire to explore and problem-solve, often in an extended way, and typically with peers in small groups where cooperation and co-construction of knowledge can be facilitated. A provocation is sometimes referred to as a **learning invitation**.

**running record**

Continuous documentation of a child's behaviour over a specific block of time.

**scaffolding**

Intentionally making decisions and taking actions that build upon (or scaffold on) children's prior knowledge and skills, to further their learning.

**school community**

Includes several constituents, including local businesses, early childhood development and cultural organizations, government services (local, provincial, federal), social service agencies, job-training services, recreational services, and health services. It also encompasses school administrators, teachers, and other staff, students and their families, school board members, parent advisory councils, and others invested in the school's welfare and success.

**school readiness**

Can be conceptualized as a child's developmental health at school entry.

**screening**

The process of collecting data to decide whether more intensive assessment is necessary.

**self-regulation**

The ability to stay calmly focused and alert.

**sustainability\***

Just and equitable sustainable development. Sustainability relates to the application of science and innovation, policies, and personal and collective practices to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, while living within the limits of the supporting ecosystems. This view of sustainable development puts a priority on justice and equity, while at the same time maintaining the importance of the environment and the global life support system.

**task orientation**

Is supported by large blocks of time when children carry out their plans to their conclusion.

**teachable moments**

Unplanned opportunities that arise in the classroom when a teacher has an ideal chance to offer insight to children.

**theory of mind**

Refers to a child's growing awareness that his or her thoughts may differ from those of other persons and that each individual can hold his or her own point of view.

**transdisciplinary**

A model by which professionals support one another through continuous staff development, joint team functioning, role release, and role substitution.

**transition**

A supportive learning experience that helps to organize children as they move from one learning situation or system to another. Effective transitions promote continuity between these settings (e.g., from home to Kindergarten, between Kindergarten and child care services, and from the Kindergarten year to Grade 1).

**universal design**

The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

**zone of proximal development (ZPD)**

Refers to the cusp of a child's emerging skills. While tasks within this zone may prove too difficult for a child to handle alone, with coaching and support from "more knowledgeable others," the child can perform the task successfully.