



## 21st-century skills

*21st-century skills* is the term used to describe the combination of specific skills, content knowledge, expertise, and literacies that are essential for today's graduates.

## Aboriginal

*Aboriginal* is a term defined in the Constitution Act of 1982 that refers to all indigenous people in Canada, including “Indians” (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit people. More than one million people in Canada identified themselves as Aboriginal on the 2006 Census, and are the fastest growing population in Canada.

## adaptations

*Adaptations* are teaching and assessment strategies specially designed to accommodate students' needs so they can meet the learning standards in an area of learning and demonstrate proficiency in its concepts.

## areas of learning

*Areas of learning* are discipline-based fields of knowledge. Science, Arts Education, and Social Studies, for example, are all areas of learning that comprise learning from multiple disciplines. Areas of learning contain the learning standards that make up BC's provincial curriculum. Each area of learning contributes particular understandings and competencies to the development of educated citizens.

## Big Ideas

*Big Ideas* are statements that are central to one's understanding in an area of learning. A Big Idea is broad and abstract. It contains key concepts that generally are timeless and transferable to other situations. Big Ideas are the key concepts, principles, and theories that are used to organize knowledge within an area of learning. A Big Idea is a statement of an idea that is central to an area of learning or across disciplines and that links numerous understandings into a coherent whole.

Big Ideas:

- include concepts, principles, and theories that are key to understanding disciplinary knowledge
- help students build a conceptual framework or schema for understanding increasingly sophisticated ideas and information
- may be transferrable to other topics across disciplines or areas of learning
- are not specific pieces of factual information, such as a name, date, or formula
- are not isolated bits of information disconnected from larger concepts or principles
- should lead to further understanding and be open to questioning or inquiry

For example, understanding that all matter is composed of particles is key to understanding more sophisticated ideas, such as the kinetic theory of matter, the nature of different states of matter, and the understanding that temperature is a measure of the kinetic energy of the particles in a substance.



**Communication competency**

The *Communication competency* encompasses the set of abilities that students use to impart and exchange information, experiences, and ideas; explore the world around them; and understand and effectively engage in the use of digital media. The Communication competency provides a bridge between students' learning, their personal and social identity and relationships, and the world in which they interact.

**competency**

*Competency* represents the combined skills, processes, behaviours, and habits of mind that learners use to make sense of the world.

**concept**

A *concept* is a mental construct or idea that organizes a pattern or commonality across a category of objects, events, or properties. Concepts are often divided into concrete concepts (concepts identifiable by surface features, like car or bird) and abstract concepts (concepts with more intangible characteristics, like emotion or family).

**concept-based curriculum**

A *concept-based curriculum* uses concepts to define standards of knowledge and skills associated with a given area of learning. It is focused on the key concepts, principles, and generalizations that are used to organize knowledge and solve problems within and across disciplines.

A concept-based curriculum:

- is built around higher-order learning standards and big ideas, allowing a more in-depth exploration of topics in order to build deeper understanding
- replaces the study of factual information with the development of conceptual understanding and disciplinary skills
- offers opportunities for transfer of learning
- is not a list of topics to cover in isolation from one another

A concept-based curriculum allows for connections between big ideas, such as exploring the concept of reoccurring patterns, and comparing and contrasting how patterns appear in works of literature or in geographical features.

**constructivism**

*Constructivism* views learners as actively constructing their own knowledge and understanding of the world through experience and reflection, rather than passively receiving information. New information is linked to prior knowledge through experiential, inquiry-based, project-based, and other forms of active learning.

**continuous progress**

*Continuous progress* refers to students' learning progression according to their own individual rate of development. A continuous progress approach views each learner's progress in terms of sequences of learning rather than fixed grade-level requirements.

**continuous view**

*Continuous view* refers to presentation of Curricular Competency learning standards, and in some cases Content learning standards, as a continuum by grade or grade band.

## Core Competencies

*Core Competencies* are a set of intellectual, personal, and social competencies that students develop to engage in deeper learning and to support lifelong learning through the course of their schooling. The Core Competencies are embedded in each area of learning, and are activated through the learning experiences and activities. In BC, the Core Competencies are the Communication competency, Thinking competency, and Social and Personal competency.

## Curricular Competencies

*Curricular Competencies* are the skills, strategies, and processes that students develop over time. They reflect the “Do” in the Know-Do-Understand model of curriculum. The Curricular Competencies are built on the Thinking, Communicating, and Personal and Social competencies relevant to disciplines that make up an area of learning.

For example, the Curricular Competencies in Mathematics are organized using a problem-solving scheme, based on work from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Other examples are Social Studies, where Curricular Competencies are organized using inquiry and historical thinking processes, and English Language Arts, where Curricular Competencies are organized around how we use language to comprehend and connect with others and how we create and communicate through language.

## deeper learning

*Deeper learning* refers to learning that emphasizes the use of key disciplinary concepts, principles, and generalizations to think critically, solve problems, and communicate ideas.

Deeper learning:

- develops students’ understanding and promotes thinking about and applying their learning in meaningful ways
- helps students build an increasingly sophisticated conceptual understanding of how knowledge has been constructed within a particular topic or discipline
- helps students build generalizations and mental models of the world that allow them to make sense of new information and connect it to prior knowledge
- goes beyond rote learning or surface learning, where a student may memorize a procedure or formula, but does not actually understand the underlying principle
- goes beyond passively receiving content and involves students in actively developing and explaining their knowledge
- is not assessed by the ability to recall specific content or explanations

For example, in Mathematics, deeper learning means students are able to see the underlying principles of a problem and not be confused by surface changes, like switching from an equation to a word problem. In Social Studies, deeper learning means students are able to recognize and explain similarities and differences between what they have learned about revolutions in history and current events in the Middle East.

## differentiated instruction

*Differentiated instruction* is an approach to learning in which instruction and assessment are based on the specific needs, interests, developmental level, and other learning preferences of the individual student.

**digital literacy**

*Digital literacy* builds on traditional definitions of literacy. It involves the interest, attitude, and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital technology and communication tools to access, manage, integrate, analyze, and evaluate information; construct new knowledge; create; and communicate with others.

**discipline**

A *discipline* is a field of study with a unique body of specialist knowledge, theories, and concepts and with specific terminology and methods. For example, biology, chemistry, and physics are disciplines within Science. Arts Education comprises the disciplines of dance, drama, music, and visual arts.

**diversity**

*Diversity* is a concept that refers both to our uniqueness as individuals and to our sense of belonging or identification within a group or groups. Diversity refers to the ways in which we differ from each other. Some of these differences may be visible (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability), while others are less visible (e.g., culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic background).

Goals or purposes for diversity include:

- taking into account the different beliefs, customs, practices, languages, behaviours, and physical differences of individuals and cultural groups
- encouraging understanding, acceptance, mutual respect, and inclusion in order to make school communities and society as a whole more equitable for all people

**facts**

*Facts* are specific pieces of information about people, places, situations, and things. Facts are organized into topics, which support concepts and generalizations.

**First Nations**

A *First Nation* is the self-determined political and organizational unit of the Aboriginal community that has the power to negotiate, on a government-to-government basis, with BC and Canada. Currently, there are 615 First Nation communities in Canada, which represent more than 50 nations or cultural groups and about 60 Aboriginal languages. This term does not have a legal definition but should be used instead of the term “Indian,” which is inaccurate, and offensive to many.

**First Peoples**

*First Peoples* refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada, as well as indigenous peoples around the world.

**goal**

A *goal* is a statement of intention about what students should learn and understand in an area of learning. Goals may be used as criteria for selecting content, instructional approaches, and assessment strategies and techniques.

**habits of mind**

*Habits of mind* are characteristics of intelligence or sets of behaviours that people engage in when they are confronted with problems. Different disciplines may have different habits of mind, captured in the Curricular Competency learning standards. For example, in Science, habits of mind include sustained curiosity; a valuing of questions; an openness to new ideas and consideration of alternatives; an appreciation of evidence; an awareness of assumptions and a questioning of given information; a healthy, informed skepticism; a seeking of patterns, connections, and understanding; and a consideration of social, ethical, and environmental implications.

## horizontal connections

*“Horizontal connections”* is a term coined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in the document *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice*. The term is used in reference to the importance of teachers giving consideration to both discipline and interdisciplinary learning to link what students learn to the wider environment and society as a means of fostering deeper learning.

## inclusion

*Inclusion* is the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with integration and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others.

## Indigenous

*Indigenous* has become more used recently provincially, federally, and internationally to replace “Aboriginal,” but the terms are frequently used interchangeably. The term “Indigenous” more closely focuses on being from/belonging to a particular place, territory or land (i.e., originating in and naturally living, growing, or occurring in a region or country).

## Individual Education Plan (IEP)

*Individual Education Plan (IEP)* is a documented plan developed for a student with special needs that describes individualized goals, adaptations, modifications, and the services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

## inquiry

*Inquiry* is the mindset that students use to build their own knowledge and understanding through an active, open-minded exploration of a meaningful question, problem, or issue. Inquiry is considered to be a process where students:

- ask questions, conduct research, and produce some type of product to demonstrate their understanding (the product does not have to mark an end point and can be the starting point for further inquiry)
- actively engage in building knowledge and deeper understanding of key concepts
- employ disciplinary thinking to develop important skills, such as formulating good questions, planning inquiries, gathering and analyzing information, and communicating their findings
- explore challenging questions, problems, or issues that can be approached and answered in many different ways

Inquiry does not follow a set process or program. Different authors and organizations have proposed many different models of inquiry. Further, inquiry does not mean that there are “no wrong answers” or that “anything goes.” Rather, it requires students to provide justification for their thinking, changing the discussion from “right or wrong” to “more or less justified.”

Inquiry can be more or less guided and structured depending on what teachers need students to learn or to demonstrate. Inquiry should be scaffolded to match the background knowledge and abilities of the students.

## inquiry-based approaches

Inquiry-based approaches include:

- **Project-based learning:** In project-based learning (PBL), students go through an extended process of inquiry in response to a complex question, problem, or challenge. While allowing for some degree of student "voice and choice," rigorous projects are carefully planned, managed, and assessed to help students learn key academic content; practise skills such as collaboration, communication, and critical thinking; and create high-quality, authentic products and presentations.
- **Case method:** A case-based approach engages students in discussion of specific scenarios that resemble or typically are real-world examples. This method is learner-centred, with intense interaction between participants as they build their knowledge and work together as a group to examine a case. Real-world or authentic contexts expose students to multiple viewpoints and help them see why people may want different outcomes. Students can also see how a given decision will impact different participants, both positively and negatively.
- **Problem-based learning:** Problem-based learning is based on the messy, complex problems encountered in the real world as a stimulus for learning and for integrating and organizing learned information in ways that will ensure recall and application to future problems. Problems are raised at the start of the topic, before students have been taught some of the relevant knowledge. By actively engaging with the problem, students develop skills in finding information and in identifying what information they still need and possible sources of that information. Students are able to connect what they are learning in class to their own lives and important issues in their world.
- **Scientific inquiry:** In scientific inquiry, students identify questions based on their observations of the natural world, plan and conduct scientific inquiries to answer their questions, process and analyze the data and information they collect to draw conclusions, evaluate their experimental procedures, communicate their findings, and explore ways to apply their results to innovative projects.
- **Design-based learning:** Design-based learning engages students when they make a product. In the process, students empathize with potential users to understand needs and identify design opportunities. Then they define their design opportunity by identifying features and possible constraints, generating creative ideas and evaluating them, prototyping, testing, making changes and testing again, making their final product, and then sharing it in some way (e.g., showing to others, allowing use by others, giving away, or marketing and selling).

## integration

*Integration* is one of the major strategies used to achieve inclusion. With integration, students with special needs are included in educational settings with their peers who do not have special needs, and are provided with the necessary accommodations, determined on an individual basis, to enable them to be successful there. The principle of "placement in the most enabling learning environment" applies when decisions are made about the extent to which an individual student is placed in regular classrooms or assigned to an alternate placement.

## interdisciplinary learning

*Interdisciplinary learning* is an integrated, deliberate, and mindful approach that connects the disciplinary knowledge and competencies from more than one area of learning to examine a theme, experience, or topic and/or investigate an issue or problem.

Interdisciplinary learning enables students to develop deeper understanding through:

- expanding their capacity to understand multiple viewpoints on a given topic — students can acquire an appreciation of the differences between disciplines in how to approach and solve a problem
- extending structural disciplinary knowledge, both factual (declarative knowledge) and process-based (procedural knowledge), to solve complex problems
- integrating conflicting insights from alternative disciplines — different disciplines attempt to understand the same or related problems, but each discipline adopts different ways to analyze and evaluate the viability of their insights

Interdisciplinary learning can include the implementation of integrated curriculum. This occurs when learning experiences combine the Curricular Competencies and Content from more than one area of learning, resulting in deeper learning in each area. Learning experiences that, for example, result in students' increased capacity in Arts Education and Social Studies would feature Curricular Competencies and Content from each area that serve one another for the benefit of student learning.

## Inuit

*Inuit* are Aboriginal peoples whose origins are different from people known as "North American Indians." The Inuit generally live in northern Canada and Alaska. In recent years, the term "Inuit" has replaced the term "Eskimo."

## learning environments

A *learning environment* is the combined social, physical, psychological, relational, and pedagogical contexts within which learning takes place.

## learning standards

A *learning standard* is an explicit statement of what students are expected know, understand, and be able to do in a given grade and area of learning. In BC, learning standards are of two types:

- Curricular Competency learning standards are explicit statements of what students are expected to be able to do in a given grade and area of learning.
- Content learning standards define what students should know in a given area of learning at a particular grade level. They define the core knowledge (facts and concepts) essential to the development of Big Ideas for that area of learning in that grade.

In previous curricula, these expectations were presented as learning outcomes.

## literacy

*Literacy* is the ability to make meaning from text and express oneself in a variety of modes. This includes comprehending, making connections, critically analyzing, and creating and communicating for a variety of purposes.

**Métis**

*Métis* is a person of French and Aboriginal ancestry belonging to or descended from the people who established themselves in the Red, Assiniboine, and Saskatchewan River valleys during the 19th century, forming a cultural group distinct from both European and Aboriginal peoples. The Métis were originally based around fur trade culture, when French and Scottish traders married First Nations women in the communities they traded with. The Métis created their own communities and cultural ways distinct from those of the First Nations. This term has also come to mean anyone of First Nations mixed ancestry who self-identifies as Métis.

**modifications**

*Modifications* are instructional and assessment-related decisions made to accommodate a student's educational needs, consisting of individualized learning goals and outcomes that are different from the learning outcomes of a course or area of learning. Modifications should be considered for those students whose special needs are such that they are unable to access the curriculum (i.e., students with limited awareness of their surroundings, students with fragile mental/physical health, students medically and cognitively/multiply challenged). Using modifications for students not identified as having special needs should be a rare practice.

**numeracy**

*Numeracy* is the willingness and ability to interpret and apply mathematical understanding to solve problems in complex situations, and the perseverance to analyze and communicate these solutions in ways that are relevant to the given context.

**Personal and Social competency**

The *Personal and Social competency* is the set of abilities that relate to students' identity in the world, both as individuals and as members of their community and society. The Personal and Social competency encompasses the abilities that students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world.

**personalized learning**

*Personalized learning* is student-centred education tailored to individual needs. It is responsive to the passions and interests of teachers and students. In personalized learning, the methods, approaches, and learning environments address the interests, learning needs, and aspirations of learners.

**place**

*Place* is any environment, locality, or context with which people interact to learn, create memory, reflect on history, connect with culture, and establish identity. The connection between people and place is foundational to First Peoples perspectives of the world.

**rationale**

The *rationale* in provincial curriculum defines the area of learning, identifies the disciplines on which it is based, and explains the significance of the area of learning to students and to society.

**school-based team**

A *school-based team* is an ongoing team of school-based personnel that has a formal role to play as a problem-solving unit in assisting classroom teachers in developing and implementing instructional and/or management strategies and coordinating support resources for students with special needs within the school.



**self-directed learning**

*Self-directed learning* is an approach to learning in which students select, manage, and assess their own learning activities. Students may have the autonomy to select learning activities according to their personal preferences.

**Special Education**

*Special Education* refers to a range of student support services provided by school districts to respond to the educational needs of its students, particularly those who are gifted or have a disability.

**students with special needs**

*Students with special needs* are students who have a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, or behavioural nature; have a learning disability; or have exceptional gifts or talents, as defined in the Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines, Section E.

**text**

A *text* is any piece or combination of oral, written, visual, or digital communication.

**Thinking competency**

The *Thinking competency* encompasses the knowledge, skills, and processes we associate with intellectual development. It is through their competency as thinkers that students take subject-specific concepts and content and transform them into a new understanding. Thinking competence includes specific thinking skills as well as habits of mind and metacognitive awareness.

**topic**

A *topic* brings together a set of facts. Topics themselves are not transferable to other contexts, but they contain concepts, which are transferable. For example, natural disasters is a topic that includes factual knowledge about earthquakes, tornados, and tsunamis, but it leads to the concept of interactions between humans and the environment, which is transferable to other areas of learning.

**visual texts**

*Visual texts* may include oral, written, or visual elements, such as dramatic presentations, graphic novels, films, atlases, Internet sites, advertisements, websites, or videos. A visual text makes meaning with images, or with meaningful patterns and sequences. For example, a diagram uses images, while a flow chart arranges information in meaningful sequences.

**ways of knowing**

*Ways of knowing* refers to the various beliefs about the nature of knowledge that people have; they can include, but are not limited to, Aboriginal, gender-related, subject/discipline specific, cultural, embodied, and intuitive beliefs about knowledge.

**worldview**

A *worldview* is the perspective or lens through which one interprets the world.

**Note: Assessment terminology will be added in the near future.**