

Learning Metrics Task Force

Proposed Competencies for Learning Outcomes: Early Childhood, Primary, and Post-Primary

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION: Please send feedback to metrics@globalcompactonlearning.org before August 24, 2012, to be included in recommendations

Background

The Education for All (EFA) goals initiated in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand demonstrated a global commitment to meeting basic learning needs. This commitment was restated in 2000 in Dakar Framework for Action Goal 6: to “[improve] every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.”

Yet today there is growing evidence that millions of children and youth do not have the basic skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in school and life. In response, the Learning Metrics Task Force aims to shift the conversation in education from a very heavy focus on access to access plus learning.

As EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) sunset in 2015, and the UN Secretary-General prepares to launch a global education initiative, there is a window of opportunity for education actors to ensure that learning for all is a central component of the global development agenda. To achieve this, the education community must build consensus on a set of learning goals that can be measured and achieved globally.

The Learning Metrics Task Force

In response to this need, UNESCO and the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings have joined efforts to convene a Learning Metrics Task Force that will investigate the feasibility of identifying common learning goals to inform the post-2015 global development policy discourse and improve overall learning. The task force is led by three co-chairs and is comprised of representatives from UN agencies, regional organizations, national governments, bilateral donors, and civil society organizations who have political influence at the global or regional level, technical knowledge of the evaluation of learning, and capacity to move learning forward on the global development agenda.

Based on recommendations from technical working groups and input from broad global consultations, the task force will make recommendations for learning competencies and measures at the early childhood, primary, and post-primary levels. (Note that for this exercise, “learning” is not just literacy and numeracy but is conceived more broadly.) These recommendations will be designed for use globally, building off and complementing efforts to measure learning that are already underway at national and regional levels. The task force acknowledges, however, that the way in which its recommendations are translated into prescriptions for action will vary across countries.

Currently scheduled for release in September 2013, the final report from the task force will include:

- Recommendations for a set of learning competencies from early childhood through post-primary.
- Recommendations for how the competencies should be measured.
- Recommendations for how countries and regional and global organizations can implement these measures to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for children and youth.

Any effort to develop a shared vision for global learning goals and targets must be open, inclusive, and transparent. To that end, the task force seeks input from a wide variety of stakeholders through a global consultation process to be conducted both online and in person.

Phase 1: Proposed Learning Competencies

In June 2012, a technical working group of international experts from research institutions, governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector companies, and UN agencies met electronically to develop recommendations for learning competencies at the global level. Members were recruited through an open application process and were selected based on their experience developing, implementing, and/or measuring progress toward learning standards. The working group is chaired by Professor Seamus Hegarty, Chair of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

The working group has provided recommendations for competencies at three levels: early childhood, primary, and post-primary. The group will continue to work virtually from June through October 2012 to further develop a recommended set of competencies and describe the rationale for them, and illustrate how these competencies can be measured at the global level. Subsequent working groups will address the measurement tools and methodologies required for assessing learning at the global level and strategies for implementing global learning metrics to improve learning outcomes.

This document describes a proposed outline of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that are important for children and youth to have in the 21st century. The competencies are described in terms of domains, sub-domains, and illustrative indicators that may be used as a basis for measuring progress toward the competencies.

There is much debate in the global education community around the terminology used to describe learning outcomes and assessments. At the global level, terms such as “standards,” “competencies,” “guidelines,” and “outcomes” carry different meanings and connotations. The Learning Metrics Task Force aims to contribute to these discussions on terminology as it builds consensus among the education community. For the purposes of this document, key terms are defined as follows:

- **Competencies:** knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that are learned or developed
- **Domains:** broad categories of learning outcomes
- **Sub-domains:** specific categories of learning outcomes
- **Illustrative outcomes:** examples of how competencies are demonstrated

The proposed competencies should be viewed as one component of an education program. According to the *Dakar Framework for Action* guidance on EFA Goal 6:

“[S]uccessful education programmes require: (1) healthy, well nourished and motivated students; (2) well-trained teachers and active learning techniques; (3) adequate facilities and learning materials; (4) a relevant curriculum that can be taught and learned in a local language and builds upon the knowledge and experience of the teachers and learners; (5) an environment that not only encourages learning but is welcoming, gender-sensitive, healthy and safe; **(6) a clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values;** (7) participatory governance and management; and (8) respect for and engagement with local communities and cultures.”¹ (emphasis added)

While the competencies described here are meant to address point six (6) above, they provide a foundation for subsequent phases of the Learning Metrics Task Force, which will aim to achieve the overall goal of developing recommendations for how assessment of learning can provide a knowledge base through which to assess and improve education systems in the areas listed above.

Proposed Competencies for Early Childhood

The competencies listed here for the early childhood years begin developing in children at birth, but are typically demonstrated in the 2-3 years prior to primary school entry. In addition to these learning outcomes it is critical that systems serving young children first focus on developing conditions for learning during the early years: adequate health and nutrition, parenting supports, and quality early childhood development programs. While these guidelines are offered for typically developing children, it is important to note that children’s developmental trajectories vary widely in the early years.

Domain	Sub-Domains	Illustrative Outcomes
Language and Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language skills • Expressive language skills • Vocabulary 	Communicates effectively in primary language(s) of communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonological awareness • Alphabet knowledge • Print concepts & conventions • Early writing 	Shows beginning knowledge of the primary written language(s) of communication
Cognition and General Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoning & problem solving • Early critical thinking skills 	Able to think through problems and apply strategies for solving them
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number Sense and Operations • Spatial Sense & geometry • Patterns and classification • Measurement & comparison • Representing and interpreting data 	Demonstrates knowledge of basic quantitative and numeric concepts

¹ UNESCO, *The Dakar Framework For Action*, 2000, p. 17.

Domain	Sub-Domains	Illustrative Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry skills • Conceptual knowledge of the natural & physical world 	Shows emerging ability to gather information about the natural and physical world and organize that information into knowledge and theories
Physical Well-being and Motor Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health status • Health knowledge & practice • Gross motor skills • Fine motor skills 	Develops physical well-being in accordance with potential, use of the body, muscle control, and appropriate nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and safety practices
Social and Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of body parts • Empathy • Self-concept • Self-esteem • Emotional knowledge and expression 	Develops positive view of self and others
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-regulation 	Shows culturally appropriate emotional expression, regulation, and knowledge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social competence • Pro-social behaviors • Awareness of and Respect for diversity • Conflict resolution 	Demonstrates positive, culturally-appropriate interactions with peers and adults
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral values • Family/cultural/religious knowledge 	Demonstrates awareness of self in family and community
Approaches to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Initiative • Planning • Problem-solving • Cooperation • Leadership • Creative arts (art, music/movement, drama) 	<p>Takes initiative and shows interest in varied topics and activities</p> <p>Begins and finishes activities with persistence and attention</p> <p>Demonstrates interest and engagement in group experiences</p> <p>Approaches tasks with creativity</p>

Proposed Competencies for Primary

These competencies outline, at the *most basic* level, what all students should know and be able to do after receiving primary education. The resulting competencies are not intended to preclude students who are trying to achieve subsequent education goals. Therefore, depending on the needs of the student population, a country may develop additional indicators that address specific learning needs of its population and national goals.

It is important to note that the timeframe in which children acquire basic literacy skills varies depending on contextual factors such as:

- Nature and quality of the schooling system
- Linguistic issues, including in particular the relationship between mother tongue and language of instruction

Domain	Sub-Domain	Illustrative Outcomes
Language and Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonemic awareness • Phonics 	<p>Masters sounds and symbols in the language of instruction by the end of primary Year 1</p> <p>Segments words into individual phonemes.</p> <p>Decodes simple words</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral fluency • Oral comprehension 	Speaks and understands basic interpersonal and academic language by the end of lower primary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading fluency • Reading comprehension 	<p>Reads grade level text with fluency by the end of lower primary</p> <p>Answers text-based comprehension questions, including text-based inference questions by the end of lower primary</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive vocabulary • Expressive vocabulary 	Uses vocabulary and recognizes sight words for the most frequent words in the language of instruction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies when encountering new words 	Uses strategies for learning new words including decoding, use of pre- and suffixes, context clues, and background knowledge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written expression/ composition • Spelling • Grammar 	<p>Writes simple original texts by the end of lower primary</p> <p>Writes for a variety of purposes by the end of upper primary following accepted norms for language and culture</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading to learn 	Reads for understanding in a variety of genres by the end of upper primary

Domain	Sub-Domain	Illustrative Outcomes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fiction - Non-fiction <p>Reads for specific information</p>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number sense • Operations • Number fluency • Number systems • Estimation 	Demonstrates mastery of number concepts and operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurement • Data analysis and interpretation • Economics and business • Health and science • Computer skills/calculator use 	Applies understanding of numbers to multiple situations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geometry • Sequencing • Patterns 	Demonstrates spatial skills and reasoning
Social and Civic Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical values • Cultural norms • Conflict resolution • Coexistence 	Develops pro-social behaviors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts • Creativity • Music and movement • Drama 	Develops aesthetic values consistent with cultural, contemporary, and historic norms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and international expectations • Social responsibility • Environmental awareness and appreciation 	Develops awareness of and appreciation for the environment, other cultures, nations and the international community
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using keyboard • Email • Web searches 	Develops basic computer literacy skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering • Evaluating information • Communicating 	Develops awareness and appreciation of the role of technology and digital media.

Proposed Competencies for Post-Primary

The competencies listed here are intended for individuals who have studied beyond the primary level. They are designed to be self-contained and inclusive, so that they can represent learning beyond the primary stage for individuals who have studied at that level, or include the primary stage for those who are new to study. It is important to note that all of these outcomes must be understood in the specific context of the individual, and the indicators will manifest in both personal and work-related areas of life.

Domain	Sub-domains	Illustrative Outcomes
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing • Reading • Digital media • Speaking and listening 	Writes meaningfully for a variety of purposes
		Reads with understanding and in order to learn
		Engages effectively with digital technologies and electronic media
		Speaks and listens in a variety of contexts
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal finance • Economics • Business mathematics 	Applies mathematics effectively to everyday activities
		Manages personal and business finances
Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Social responsibility • Civic engagement • Environmental awareness 	Works collaboratively with others
		Engages in civil society
		Responds to the social, cultural, and natural environment in positive ways
Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metacognition • Innovation • Critical decision making 	Applies metacognitive strategies to tasks
		Researches innovative solutions to problems
		Implements critical decision making processes
Workplace skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-direction • Quality of work • Skill development • Reliability 	Shows self-direction and initiative in educational and workplace efforts
		Able to turn ideas into action
		Ensures high quality of work
		Develops and maintains appropriate skill levels
		Demonstrates reliability and effective use of time