



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Universal Education
at BROOKINGS

Learning Metrics Task Force

Recommendations for Universal Learning



A LEARNING CRISIS

According to the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report, at least 250 million primary school-age children around the world are not able to read, write or count well enough to meet minimum learning standards, including girls and boys who have spent at least four years in school.

THE TASK FORCE BY THE NUMBERS

- 30 member organizations
- 186 technical working group members
- 1,700+ consultation participants
- 118 countries

The Global Education Challenge

Over the past fifteen years, major advances have been made in enrolling millions of children into school worldwide.¹ However, those gains have been uneven and learning levels remain unacceptably low. Poor-quality education is jeopardizing the future of millions of children and youth around the world.

This global learning crisis is hitting the poorest, most marginalized children and youth particularly hard. Yet we do not know the full scale of the crisis because measurement of learning outcomes is limited in many countries, and hence difficult to assess at the international level. To deliver on the promise of education to transform lives and confer social, economic, and environmental benefits to society, we must ensure that children and youth develop the knowledge and skills they need to be productive citizens of the world and to attain sustainable livelihoods. ►

Advancing Universal Learning

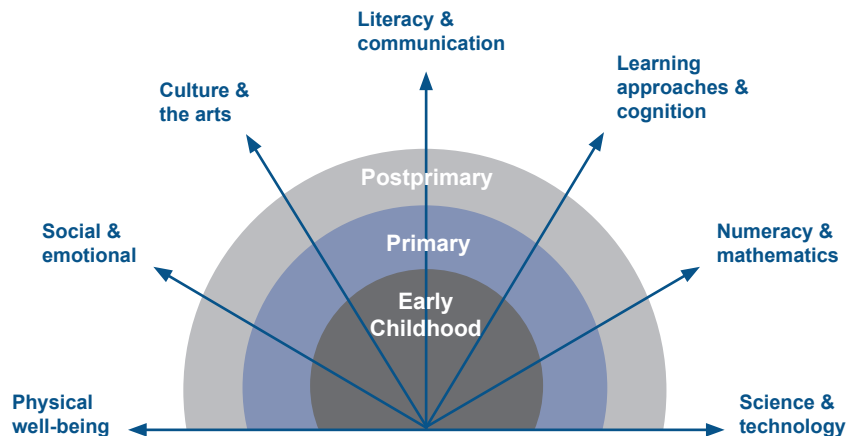
The Learning Metrics Task Force aims to improve the learning experiences of children and youth around the world. Convened by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution, the task force supports the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Education for All (EFA), and Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) and contributes to their fulfillment by:

- Catalyzing a shift in the global education conversation from access to access *plus* learning.
- Building consensus on global learning indicators and actions to improve the measurement of learning in all countries.

Through a highly consultative, multi-stakeholder process conducted over 18 months, the

education community has identified the skills and competencies important for all children and youth to develop, and a set of indicators fundamental to track at the global level.

Figure 1: A Global Framework of Learning Domains



Recommendations from the Learning Metrics Task Force

1 A Global Paradigm Shift

The task force calls for a shift in global focus and investment from universal access to access plus learning. The collection of better data on learning is central to that effort.

2 Learning Competencies

The task force calls upon education systems to offer opportunities to children and youth to master competencies in seven domains of learning (Figure 1). Education systems around the world should focus on these competencies starting from early childhood through lower secondary school.²

3 Learning Indicators for Global Tracking

The task force recommends a small set of learning indicators to be tracked in all countries (Figure 2). These

indicators measure fundamental learning opportunities over a child's educational career. Some indicators within these areas of measurement currently exist, while others need to be developed.

4 Supporting Countries

The task force recommends that support is provided to countries in strengthening their assessment systems and, ultimately, in improving learning levels. An international, multi-stakeholder partnership would ensure better collaboration among existing agencies, fill essential gaps in support to countries, and help sustain a broad coalition of stakeholders with a common vision of learning for all.

5 Equity

Measurement of learning must include an explicit focus on equity, with particular attention to rising inequality within countries. Measures of access and learning, along with data on child characteristics, should be used to ensure equitable learning opportunities (shaped by a range of

Figure 2: Learning Indicators for Global Tracking

Learning for All:	Combine measures of completion and learning (reading proficiency at the end of primary school) into one indicator.
Age and Education Matter for Learning:	Measure timely entry, progression and completion of schooling, and population-based indicators to capture those who do not enter or leave school early.
Reading:	Measure foundational skills by Grade 3 and proficiency by the end of primary school.
Numeracy:	Measure basic skills by end of primary and proficiency by lower secondary school.
Ready to Learn:	Measure acceptable levels of early learning and development across a subset of domains by the time a child enters primary school.
Citizen of the World:	Measure among youth the demonstration of values and skills necessary for success in their communities, countries and the world.
Breadth of Learning Opportunities:	Track exposure to learning opportunities across all seven domains of learning.

factors such as school conditions, teacher quality, etc.) and to reduce disparities in learning outcomes. This requires understanding the characteristics of out-of-school children and youth, the barriers they face, as well as identifying effective strategies to reach children who are furthest behind

6 Assessment as a Public Good

Measures for globally tracked indicators must be considered a public good, with tools, documentation, and data made freely available. No country should be precluded from measuring learning outcomes due to financial constraints.

7 Taking Action

Stakeholders must take action to ensure **the** right to learn for all children and youth and advocate for accessible, transparent systems for measuring learning.

EDUCATION AND THE POST-2015 AGENDA

With a new set of global development goals on the horizon, the education community has been catalyzing a shift in global focus and investment from universal access to ensuring access *plus* learning. The development and education community is united in understanding that efforts to expand enrollment, retention and completion at all levels must be accompanied by policies to measure learning and enhance educational quality. As post-2015 discussions on education begin to focus in on targets and indicators for tracking as well as scaling up national capacity, the recommendations from the Learning Metrics Task Force will help shape the debate.

A Call to Action

ALL STAKEHOLDERS WORKING IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, INCLUDING TEACHERS, SCHOOL LEADERS, LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES, EDUCATION MINISTRIES, AND DONORS:

- Define and measure learning broadly, across multiple domains and educational stages.
- Incorporate measurement of learning in the areas for global tracking into existing programming and evaluation efforts.
- Advocate for accessible, transparent systems for measuring learning.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

- Ensure that priorities in measurement are matched with the appropriate financing.
- Develop and strengthen communities of practice to bring together government and nongovernmental stakeholders to define priorities for assessment.
- Pay particular attention to reaching the most marginalised by understanding who they are, where they live and what their needs are.

CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS:

- Advocate for robust assessment systems that demonstrate the transformative power of reliable data on learning outcomes.
- Raise awareness among parents and communities about learning outcomes and take action to ensure that children are learning.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

- Identify good practices within countries and facilitate shared learning across countries.
- Advocate for better measurement of learning and create regional communities of practice to share technical and financial resources.

MULTILATERAL AGENCIES, especially EFA-convening agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank):

- Ensure that programming reflects the measurement of learning outcomes as a step toward improving overall outcomes for all children, beyond literacy and numeracy.
- Focus on equity when tracking learning at the global level, including analysis for various population groups (e.g. girls and boys, urban and rural children, and children living above and below the poverty line).

DONORS:

- Endorse a broad definition of learning across seven domains of learning.
- Support collection, analysis, dissemination and reporting of assessment data at the country level.
- Conduct monitoring and evaluation in collaboration with national governments and in line with national priorities.

ASSESSMENT INSTITUTIONS AND UNIVERSITIES:

- Share technical expertise and work collaboratively with a diverse group of education stakeholders to develop the necessary new tools for assessing learning.
- Support governments in choosing among the available measures and methods with the help of independent experts.

PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANIES:

- Support the development of innovative assessment tools, new technologies to make data collection more individualized and efficient, open source measures as public goods, and new ways of efficiently collecting and analyzing assessment data that are feasible in low-resource environments.
- Champion task force recommendations in global and national advocacy for improved education systems and better learning outcomes.

With these recommendations, the Learning Metrics Task Force sets forth an ambitious agenda for leveraging assessments to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for all children and youth. The next step is to focus on mobilizing the technical, institutional, and political capacity necessary to implement the recommendations and common goals for measuring learning. Stakeholders are called to join the movement to help re-imagine what is measurable in education and deliver on the promise of education as an engine for opportunity.

For updates on the Learning Metrics Task Force, please visit www.brookings.edu/learningmetrics

To receive email updates on the Learning Metrics Task Force, please email: LearningMetrics@brookings.edu

¹ *The Global Compact on Learning: Policy Guide*, The Center for Universal Education, The Brookings Institution, 2011.

² Given the many and varied areas of specialization students take on in upper secondary school and beyond, the task force decided to limit its recommendations to the lower secondary level and focus on the knowledge and skills all youth need, regardless of the future occupations and learning opportunities they pursue.