

ACS
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOLS



EDUCATION STRATEGY 2020-25

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Executive summary

ACS's Education Strategy describes general intentions which reflect the desired position for our schools in 2025. Its principal objective is to **increase the unique quality and value of the ACS educational experience**. Through the strategy's implementation, we will position the group to respond directly and creatively to geopolitical volatility in our markets and uncertainty in the premium independent international school sector. The strategy aims to deepen an already solid foundation, driving key innovations that set a stage from which we can choose how to extend our impact into the future.

Over the next five years, the Education Strategy intends to **deliver significant change**, including:

- a sharper focus on inspirational teaching that continually improves academic results
- demonstrated public benefit and global competence through a greater range of educational experiences
- an expanded and carefully-monitored notion of what it means to belong to a healthy international learning community
- equitable, distinctive, and systematically implemented support for all students to achieve challenging educational goals.

The strategy and its development are true to our "DNA": an education hallmarked by **quality, community, and internationalism**.

Our highest-level strategic objective is to ensure that we are ready for the future, empowering students to become more **effective, confident and caring**.

The strategy's focus is on transformational learning, driving results through by **inspirational teachers, allied leaders, and demonstrated impact** through the application of education data.

The strategy is organised around **4 objectives**—important thematic opportunities for growth, delivered through **10 challenging projects** that will make a positive difference in student learning outcomes:

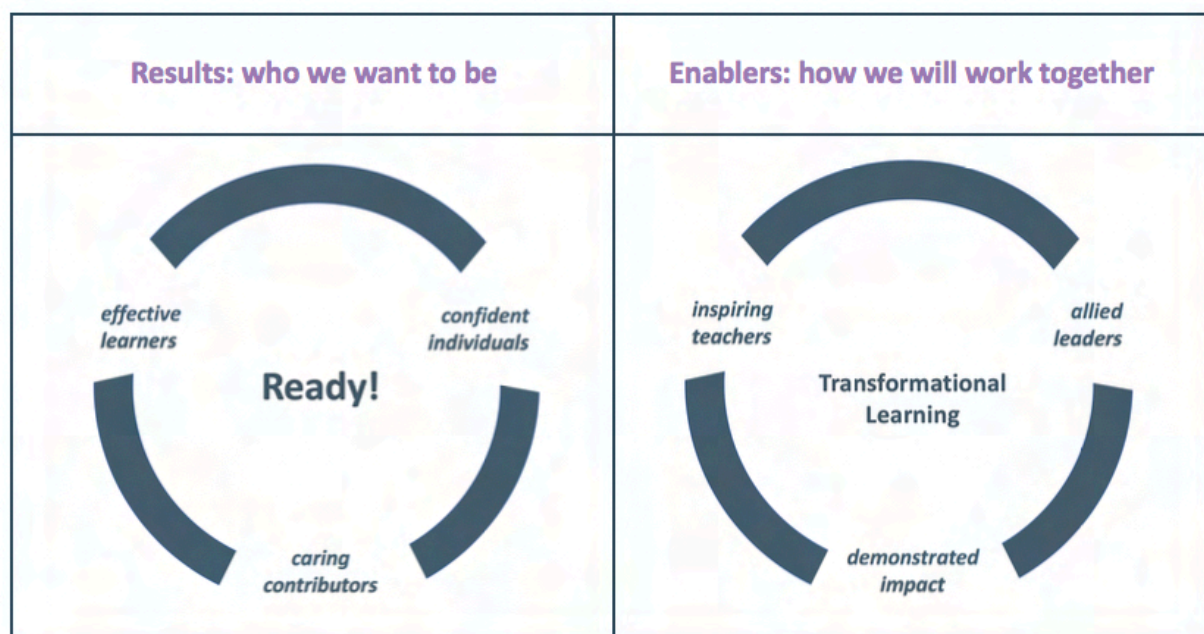
<i>promote personal and academic challenge through deeper learning</i>	advancing teaching excellence
	Early Childhood
<i>recognise personal and workplace skills through learning beyond the classroom</i>	ACS High School Diploma
	Ready! elective courses
	learning results (ESLR) portfolio
	global competence
<i>prioritise health, safety and well-being in our schools</i>	mental health policy and practice
	wellbeing curriculum and infrastructure
<i>celebrate diversity and cultivate a culture of inclusion</i>	Individual Learning Plans
	Multi-Tier Support System

The strategic plan provides for the development of **comprehensive support** to drive its implementation, **reliable reporting systems** to monitor ongoing change, and **key performance indicators** drawn from a robust **Education Quality Framework** by which to judge success.

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Strategy on a page



Introduction

As a charitable organisation, ACS International Schools aim to advance education through learning that inspires all to make a difference. We are committed to delivering exceptional public benefit through dynamic community partnerships and generous provision for financially assisted places. We are not content, however, simply to operate good schools. We also aspire to “increase useful knowledge” by focusing on subjects with educational merit and processes of educational value—both at home and abroad.

Our more than fifty-year heritage is based on solid values of community, quality, internationalism, and continuous improvement (positive change). Now we are charting an ambitious course into our next half-century: reaffirming our commitment to maintain and grow our strong position as a group of leading international schools. Above all, we remain passionate about making sure our students to be ready for whatever comes next in life: further study, the workplace and careers of the future, the global marketplace, civic responsibility, fulfilling personal and family goals.

Our new five-year Education Strategy (2020-2025) outlines the way we intend to help members of the ACS community get ready for a world that demands a new kind of learning:

- ready to build alliances and inspire others to help make a better world
- ready to become continually more effective, confident and caring
- ready to meet the challenging demands of further study and careers of the future
- ready to lead happy, health lives as individuals and members of the community
- ready to excel personally, value diversity, and thrive in complexity.

The development of effective strategy requires both urgency and patience, confidence and humility, dispassionate analysis and professional empathy, constructive criticism and critical appreciation. Through structured collaboration and mutual discovery, we have discerned objectives that we believe are bold enough to be inspiring, meaningful enough to matter, and realistic enough to be achievable. We once more welcome the challenge—for ACS students and ACS schools—of becoming the best possible version of ourselves.

Why a new strategy?

ACS heritage: *Quality education, international orientation, community engagement*

The genesis of ACS was both practical and idealistic. In the same era that saw the foundation of the International Baccalaureate Organisation, ACS aimed to provide a very practical service to the families of American expatriates in London. International schools offered strong and immediately-accessible ‘instant communities’ that also welcome local families who share their outlook, experience and educational philosophy. ACS schools nurture and celebrate key values of quality, internationalism and community. These values have informed—and continue to shape—ACS and its ongoing strategic development.

But what’s worked before, won’t necessarily work tomorrow.

Contemporary context: *An anxious world, and a complicated future*

The last twenty years have borne witness to the explosive growth of international education, driven by rapid globalisation of societies and economies. Developments in communication and transportation have steadily increased global mobility. Recently, more optimistic cosmopolitan outlooks are being challenged. In many internationally-minded institutions, leaders face enormous challenges in defending globally sustainable development, democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and respect for difference. This stress is also felt at very personal levels in contemporary families. The protected space of childhood is often compromised, with a wide range of threats to students’ health, happiness and well-being.

The world is always challenging, and the future is always uncertain. Both the scope and scale of change are accelerating. The future will place new demands on citizens and workers which are increasingly difficult to anticipate. However, some trends are already shaping the emerging global square and employment marketplace. It seems clear that machine learning and data analytics will lead to increasing levels of automation, and an increasingly automated workplace is likely to be disruptive in many sectors. The interface which integrates people and machines will continue to be a dynamic space. Uniquely human competencies will be vital to understand and exercise wisely on behalf of businesses and societies. Complex problems which require collaborative, critical and creative management will further complicate relationships, structures, systems and processes.

Educational outlook: *holistic, flexible, personalised learning*

Schools increasingly function as hubs of extended learning that focus on much more than essential academic knowledge and traditional qualifications. Well beyond the required curriculum, teachers are responsible for empowering students to develop good character, foundational personal and cultural identities, fluent interpersonal and relationship skills, and sophisticated levels of self-management. Through responsive classrooms and a wide range of learning options, schools provide a safe space to explore the unknown, practice optimistic resilience in the face of complexity, competition and the occasional disappointment or failure. demands. Schools must design opportunities for reflection and interaction that help students accept growing levels of responsibility for their individual and collective wellbeing. Education must now encompass competencies and dispositions that are in demand by

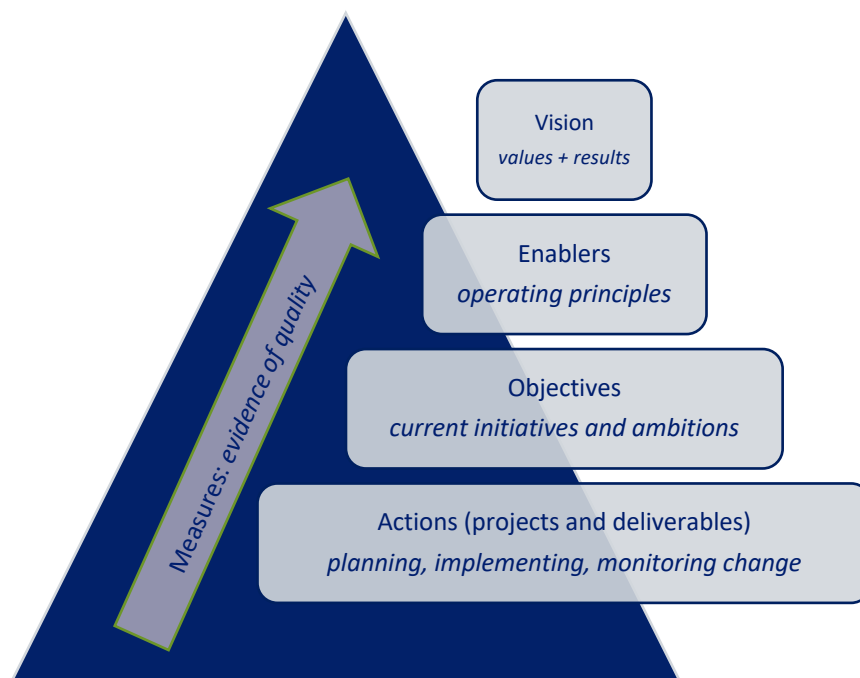
contemporary employers, and necessary for success in dynamic workplace and career-opportunities. Student must be able to choose from a range of personally-fulfilling credentials, courses, trajectories and pathways.

Structuring strategic change

In a schools-based context, the Education Strategy looks to deliver greater efficiency and impact with respect to longstanding, inter-related educational outcomes. Strategic initiatives that broadly re-enforce each can create a healthy, productive and tightly-connected ecosystem that facilitates enduring, positive change. Our strategy comprises interlocking structural components that work together to chart a clear pathway toward demonstrable (in many cases, measurable) success:

- Vision- expected student learning results
- Enablers- shared operating principles
- Objectives- current initiatives and ambitions
- Actions- roadmaps for planning, implementing, monitoring change
- Measures- evidence of quality

The relationship and cascading structure of these components can be depicted in a classic pyramid with ascending levels of abstraction and importance/ descending levels of detail and activity.



Vision: who we are, and what we want to achieve

ACS is a dynamic learning community. We want everyone to be an *effective learner, confident individual and caring contributor*. We welcome people from around the world to create a powerful, shared learning experience. Together we learn how to construct knowledge, master skills and develop attitudes that ensure we're **READY** to make a difference.

Enablers: how we intend to work together

Our operating principles, philosophy of education. We believe in **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING**—developing opportunities that challenge our perspectives and assumptions, and designing experiences that can change us for the better. Our Education Strategy prioritises *inspirational teaching, allied leadership and demonstrated impact* as an interlocking framework.

Objectives: current initiatives and ambitions

ACS Education Strategy focuses on four broad themes around which we are organising our work and establishing our priorities for growth. These objectives represent our most important ambitions over the next five years.

Personal and academic challenge

We aspire for all ACS schools to offer rigorous and relevant learning experiences that engage and challenge students of all ages and academic aspirations. Through a guaranteed and viable curriculum, we aspire to create opportunities for **deeper learning**: connecting school to the wider world, creating and contributing knowledge, and doing authentic work in traditional disciplines.

*We value students' agency and voice, and work together within and beyond the curriculum to help them achieve **ambitious goals**. We expect **excellent results**, meaningful attainment, and personal growth toward mastery of cognitive and non-cognitive knowledge, skills and dispositions.*

Workplace skills and learning beyond the classroom

Through an ACS education, we aspire for every student to demonstrate their growth and achievement across a wide range of learning results. We intend to include structured, meaningful evidence for career exploration/ workplace experience and skills, community engagement, **international mindedness**, independent **lifelong learning**, and cross-cutting competencies (including emotional intelligence, critical thinking and collaboration).

*We will strive to develop exemplary IB Career-related Programmes in two more ACS schools. We will design new **ACS qualifications** that are well-regarded by schools, colleges, universities and other post-secondary educational institutions. We will use adaptive evaluation to live out our learning values and share innovative practice.*

Health, safety & wellbeing

We aspire for all ACS students and staff to work and play in safe learning environments that promote their health and wellbeing. We intend to develop robust curriculum and engaging advisory programmes that foster **personal growth, civic engagement, and sustainable patterns of living**. We will attend carefully to social, emotional and mental health, providing high-quality programmes of relationship and physical education.

We will strive to give every member of the ACS family a happy, balanced school experience, helping every student and staff member develop the skills they need to make good decisions and live healthy lives in local and global communities. We will aim to support our students' and families' individual and collective wellbeing.

Inclusive learning culture

ACS aspires to be a community of belonging in which each student can fully access the curriculum and actively pursue academic and personal success. We intend become an international leader whose schools are recognised for their excellence in learning and teaching with a Multi-Tier Support System for students with identified special education needs, complex language profiles, and advanced ability. We will help each student **develop a challenging and attainable personal learning plan**.

*We will strive to develop welcoming, self-aware, pro-active learning communities that act ethically and compassionately to **manage difference** and **safeguard human rights**—including multicultural/multilingual identities, neurodiversity and protected characteristics.*

Actions: planning, implementing and monitoring change

Our strategic initiatives inform a series of action plans that will be implemented over the next five years.

Teaching excellence	Early Childhood Education	ACS High School Diploma	'Ready!' elective courses	Global competencies
Mental health policy and practice	Wellbeing curriculum and infrastructure	Individual Learning Plans	Personal and workplace skills	Multi-Tier Support System

Led by these ten strategic action projects, the Education Strategy intends to **deliver significant change**, including:

- a robust educational infrastructure and more effective academic operations
- high-profile, outward-facing evidence of ACS's core student learning outcomes
- defined metrics to monitor the consistency and quality of education delivery
- deliberate and effective engagement with the world beyond the classroom
- distinctive, systematically implemented personalised learning.

Measures: which evidence we need to demonstrate results

To monitor school performance and schoolwide learning results more broadly, ACS Education Strategy includes a robust **Education Quality Framework**. This framework comprises a range of metrics which privilege externally derived, measured and benchmarked measures. Our comprehensive quality measures will be implemented over the course of the new strategy, each year, we will establish selected Key Performance Indicators to drive performance, monitor rates of change, and recognise achievement against agreed goals.

Because the success of graduating students has such high visibility and consequence, we will continue to look toward results from our most rigorous flagship international programmes for general evidence of overall educational quality. Across the group, our standing ambition is for 90-95% of our IB Diploma and Career-related Programme candidates to attain their qualification, averaging 33-35 total points for successful DP candidates; and for 75-85% of our AP examination grades to be 3 or higher, with an average score of 3.25.

Because a well-rounded education is about far more than examination results, we also intend to establish benchmarks and improvement targets for important aspects of school climate, community wellbeing, and student engagement.

Finally, because the leaders, workers and citizens of tomorrow need more than academic knowledge and cognitive skills to succeed, we will develop a system to record students' experience and growth of learning that begins but does not end in the classroom. These core competencies and dispositions will be developed through service learning, placed-based education and workplace experience with Friends of ACS.

self-aware	self-belief	resilience	courage
trustworthy	confidence	ethical	reflective
assertiveness	respectful	optimistic	responsible
independent	professional	adaptable	honest
patient	intuitive	ambitious	perceptive
communication	appreciation	teamwork	caring
global	passionate	conscientious	empathy
committed	enterprising	inclusive	dedicated
creative	dynamic	innovative	resourceful
leadership	agile	understanding	insightful

Resources for successful implementation

Strategic plans usually fail not for lack of critical thought, but for want of thoughtful execution. At ACS, responsibility for successfully executing Education Strategy lies at the intersection of school leadership and the group's re-designed Education Strategy Services Team. Day-to-day implementation of the education strategy rests firmly in a coordinated school improvement planning process that integrates feedback from examination results, programme evaluations, statutory inspections, and external accrediting bodies to align with the group's strategic objectives, enablers, initiatives, actions and measures.

Education Strategy Services Team

Since 2014, ACS has wisely been building expertise and experience in a central Education Programmes team. This department represents significant investment in ACS's future, providing a core team of global education leaders to implement strategic development and coordinate operational excellence. ACS's Education Strategy Support unit drives essential change through five principal areas of assistance to our schools:

-  Professional learning and growth
-  Curriculum and assessment
-  Health, safety and wellbeing
-  Data analytics
-  Policy, compliance and accreditation.

School-based planning: collective efficacy and connected autonomy

Each ACS school has its own opportunities to develop multiple centres of excellence, distinctive programmes, and hubs of innovation that can be leveraged across the organisation through informal and formal knowledge transfers. Individual schools will find inspiration and directions of travel from the larger ACS Education Strategy, evolve their own unique learning communities.

We work best together, and our schools are stronger when they are meaningfully connected. Sparked by strategic alignment, other significant cross-campus connections may develop to spur growth in additional dimensions. Some areas of interest being nurtured and discussed include:

- o performing arts
- o after school and extra-curricular programming
- o multilingualism and language learning
- o sustainability.

Integrated strategic development

ACS Education Strategy sits within a larger portfolio of strategic planning initiatives which together comprise a comprehensive suite designed to support a growing and highly-effective learning organisation.

Partnerships

- digital portfolio platform development
- community engagement and cluster-based exchange
- educational technology integration

People

- talent flow and performance management
- teacher and academic leader recruitment, selection and retention
- educator professional development and career progression.

Sharing our progress

We will share our accomplishments, challenges, results, adjustments, and recalibration of strategic growth through annual public reports, in addition to robust management and governance accountabilities. In addition to narrative descriptions of our work, we will share:

Progress toward action project milestones
External academic achievement results
Inspections and programme evaluations
Key measures of strategic values

Each year, ACS will use a group-wide communication focus to highlight strategic priorities and focus attention on key opportunities and resources:

2020/21 Wellbeing: Ready to be happy and healthy
2021/22 Community engagement- Ready to do my part
2022/23 Diversity: Ready to understand and welcome
2023/24 Career and workplace skills: Ready to work
2024/25 Global competence: Ready to go global

Beyond 2025

Rapid change is likely to continue throughout the social and economic contexts in which independent international function. The sector's long-term prospects will be shaped by any number of local, national and global developments. ACS's Education Strategy aims to deliver a robust education system that is positioned to advance, however its future leaders may choose to define its ambitions toward more distant horizons. In all things, the strategy aims to secure a foundation for the delivery of consistent quality through all aspects of educational experience at every levels of early childhood, primary, secondary and vocational education.

(Expected School-wide) Learning Results



**ACS
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOLS**

***Vision
Our Values
Learning Results***

Through learning, inspire all to make a difference

*We encourage
community*

*We promote
excellence
through learning*

*We drive positive
change*

*We enrich the
international
experience*

Every ACS student is preparing for the future by becoming a more

Effective
learner

- directing their own learning with focus and curiosity
- using a range of languages and media
- working with others for a common purpose
- using creativity and imagination to address big questions
- pursuing individual interests with enthusiasm and determination
-

Confident
individual

- navigating challenges with confidence and courage
- addressing personal physical, emotional and social wellbeing
- acting ethically and demonstrating personal integrity
- focusing on the positive in thought and action
- learning and growing through experiences and relationships
-

Caring
contributor

- considering the world, their ideas and experiences
- building respectful relationships with people different from themselves
- making positive contributions to individuals and communities
- modelling ethical global citizenship
- sustaining the ecological systems and resources that support life
-

Expected Schoolwide Learning Results encompass attributes of the IB Learner Profile. They represent aspirations which our learning communities interpret and extend over time. We use them to identify knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions that prepare ACS students to make a difference.

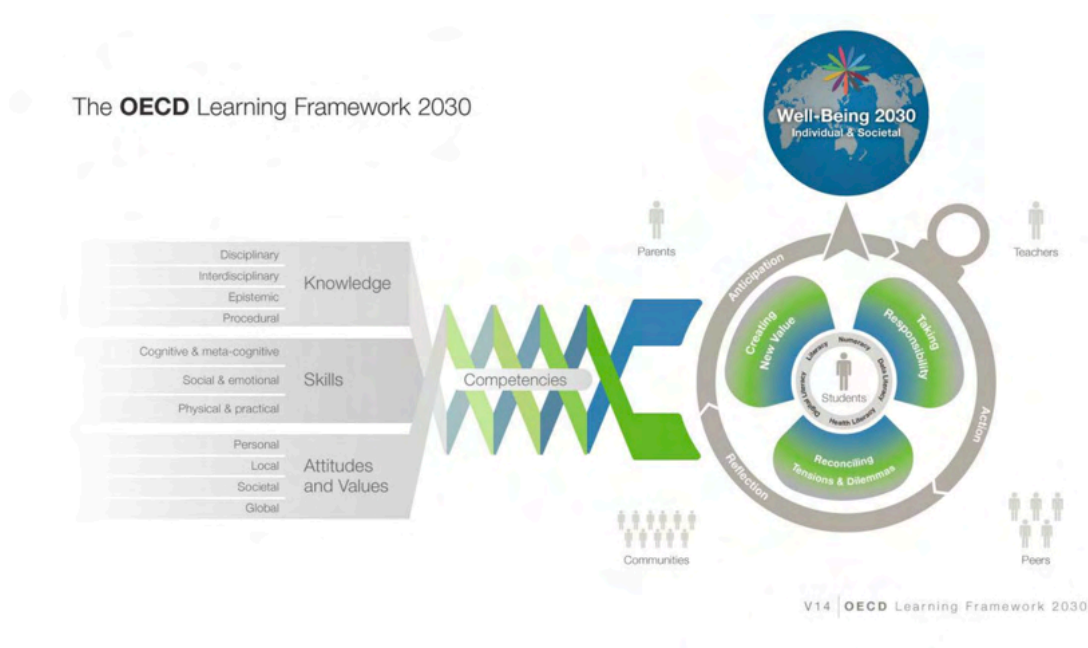
ACS and the World

Education 2030: A Shared Vision

ACS's Education Strategy resonates deeply with the best global thinking about the future of education, an important example of which is the OECD's Education 2030 project.

"We are committed to helping every learner develop as a whole person, fulfil his or her potential and help shape a shared future built on the well-being of individuals, communities and the planet. Children entering school in 2018 will need to abandon the notion that resources are limitless and are there to be exploited; they will need to value common prosperity, sustainability and well-being. They will need to be responsible and empowered, placing collaboration above division, and sustainability above short-term gain. In the face of an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world, education can make the difference as to whether people embrace the challenges they are confronted with or whether they are defeated by them. And in an era characterised by a new explosion of scientific knowledge and a growing array of complex societal problems, it is appropriate that curricula should continue to evolve.

"Education has a vital role to play in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future. Learning to form clear and purposeful goals, work with others with different perspectives, find untapped opportunities and identify multiple solutions to big problems will be essential in the coming years. Education needs to aim to do more than prepare young people for the world of work; it needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens."



<https://d15k2d11r6t6rl.cloudfront.net/public/users/Integrators/5eb55a21-9496-46ce-8161-f092fc9def23/aaie/OECD%202030%20Position%20Paper%20SUMMARY%20%2805.04.2018%29.pdf>

Suggested reading

These publicly-available studies, along with a wide range of academic and practical research, have helped to inform the development of ACS Education Strategy

American Psychological Association Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, *Top 20 Principles from Psychology for PreK-12 Teaching and Learning*

Anna Freud Foundation National Centre for Children and Families, *Ten Steps Toward Staff Wellbeing*

Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning, *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World*

The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, *The Practice Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional and Academic Development*

Center for Curriculum Redesign, *Competencies/ Subcompetencies Framework*.

Centre for Education and Youth, *Careers Education: What Should Young People Learn and When?*

Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (Durham University and The Sutton Trust), *What Makes Great Teaching? Review of the Underpinning Research*

ECIS/ RSA, *International Schools as Creative Catalysts for a New Global Education System*

Michael Fullan and Maria Langworthy, *A Rich Seam: How New Pedagogies Find Deep Learning*

The Health Foundation: *A Healthy Foundation for the Future*

International Bureau of Education, *Future Competences and the Future of Curriculum*

KnowledgeWorks, *Forecast 4.0—The Future of Learning: Redefining Readiness from the Inside Out*.

Microsoft Education, *The class of 2030 and life-ready learning: The technology imperative*

OECD, *Entrepreneurship in Education: What, Why, When, How*

The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, *Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners—The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance: A Critical Literature Review*

World Economic Forum Centre for the New Economy and Society, *The Future of Jobs Report 2018*

Glossary

adaptive evaluation	systems for assessing growth and performance that tailor the nature, extent and focus of evaluation to specific needs of the organisation
agency	having ownership of one's own learning and the action that comes from it; a sense of efficacy that contributes to personal and academic growth
coherent curriculum	an academic program that is well-organised and purposely designed to promote learning, eliminating gaps and repetition through a flexible but progressive and aligned educational experience
collective efficacy	the teaching staff's shared belief that they can positively affect learning beyond the variation of students' levels of privilege, preparation, motivation and ability; a group's belief in its own competence for successful action
course of study	series of educational opportunities and choices students are required to complete before advancing to the next level of study
curriculum	everything that students experience in the educational process, often discussed in terms of its planned, taught, assessed and enacted dimensions
deep learning	in education, the instructional focus on advanced skills required for cognitively-demanding further study and career opportunities
enterprise and entrepreneurship education	functional knowledge and skills that build character, attitude and vision in eco-systems that promotes innovation through designing, launching and running new business opportunities
global competence	skills, values and behaviours that prepare young people to thrive in a diverse, highly-interconnected and interdependent world
guaranteed and viable curriculum	the mechanism, enacted through structures and policies, through which students are assured to have adequate (and equal) opportunity (time and access) to learn
inclusion and diversity	the appreciation and management of difference in the learning community, encompassing cultural and individual variation; protection of legal rights and moral claims for the equality groups and individuals
inquiry-led learning	approaches to education that emphasize the student's active role in the learning process, developing understanding and skill through engagement and exploration
learning results (ESLRs)	statements that describe the desired outcome of education- what students will understand and be able to do as result of their experience; ACS identifies three key learning results: students are becoming more effective learners, confident individuals, caring contributors.
Multi-Tier Support System (MTSS)	an instructional framework that includes broad understanding of all students' educational needs through meaningful assessment data,

	with an integrated system of response to individual students' learning needs
pedagogical content knowledge	the integration of subject-specific understanding and skilled teaching methods that help student access knowledge in structured and spontaneous learning experiences
place-based education	taking advantage of local resources to create authentic, meaningful and engaging personalized learning
qualifications	academic, vocational, or skills-related recognitions of accomplishment of varying difficulties (levels) related to a range of subject matter (including badges, diplomas and degrees from recognised awarding bodies)
recognition	acceptance of the value by accrediting or regulating bodies, including universities and national education authorities
rigour and relevance (in curriculum and assessment)	cognitively demanding and challenging in ways that connect core knowledge and concepts to real-world, complex and open-ended situations—encompassing higher-order thinking, mastery of skills and disciplinary understanding, and application of learning to interdisciplinary problems
service learning	learning that gives students a wide range of experience that benefits others and the community, while advancing curriculum goals—including structured preparation and ethical reflection on impact and personal growth
social and emotional learning	the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions
standards-based grading and reporting	systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting based on students demonstrating understanding of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn, using specific descriptions of what students should know and be able to do in order to make judgments about their proficiency and progress
student voice	using the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of students to inform the learning environment—promoting students' choices, interests, passions, and ambitions for the learning process
student-centred	an orientation to educational experience based on the idea that schools should be designed to enhance student learning, not improve organizational efficiency; approaches to learning that are built from students' needs rather than solely from teachers' objectives
transformational learning	learning that goes beyond transmission of factual knowledge to support changes in beliefs, attitudes, and deep understanding of the world—favouring approaches to teaching that develop critical

	thinking, meaningful personal reflection, and shared experience of changing perspectives
wellbeing	not just the absence of disease or illness, but rather a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors which is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction; a state of health in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community
workplace (21 st century, enterprise, entrepreneurial, non-cognitive) skills	a loose and shifting consensus of broadly-defined knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are critically important to success in today's world, particularly in preparation for post-secondary education as well as contemporary careers and workplaces.

<https://www.edglossary.org> is a respected and easy-to-understand reference for terminology and ideas that influence contemporary education.