



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Defining Cross-Curricular Competencies

Transforming Curriculum and Assessment

January 2013

This document presents working (draft) definitions of the cross-curricular competencies and elaborates on the definitions presented in [Enabling Innovation: Transforming Curriculum and Assessment](#). The paper is intended to encourage dialogue and discussion about student learning in British Columbia. Your feedback is invited.

Progress on Development of Cross-Curricular Competencies An Update

What has been done with regard to the development of cross-curricular competencies?

In the last few months, the development of the definitions of the cross-curricular competencies has been the focus. The attached draft of the definitions has been prepared for discussion.

Are the current definitions of cross-curricular competencies final?

No. The definitions will remain in draft while feedback is gathered. Discussions and feedback will help shape the definitions and build understanding.

What's next?

The following activities will be taking place: discussing/gathering feedback on the definitions from educators and the public and developing student samples and developmental continua to support teaching, learning and assessing.

Will progress on the cross-curricular competencies be required to be reported? How?

It is anticipated that reporting on competencies will be considered an important part of communicating student learning. Further discussion and consultations will help inform the directions.

What kind of support and resources will be available for teachers?

With education partners, the Ministry will initiate a process to co-develop resources for teachers, including continua, samples and examples of developing **cross-curricular** competencies in students' day-to-day learning.

How will students be required to demonstrate these cross-curricular competencies for graduation?

The graduation requirements are currently under review across the province. The review will address this question.

Are all students required to work on the development of the cross-curricular competencies?

The Ministry's goal is that the **cross-curricular** competencies will be inclusive of all students. The Ministry will work with educators and other professionals to co-develop resources to support students.

How do I give feedback or inquire about getting involved?

Email your feedback, comments, questions or enquiries to curriculum@gov.bc.ca

Defining Cross-Curricular Competencies

What are cross-curricular competencies?

At the heart of the definition of the cross-curricular competencies is the principle that education should lead to the development of the whole child—intellectually, personally, and socially. In a world of growing diversity and challenge, schools must do more than help students master the sets of knowledge and skills acquired through the standard subject areas. They must prepare students fully for their lives as individuals and as members of society, with the capacity to achieve their goals, contribute to their communities and continue learning throughout their lives.

The cross-curricular competencies are the set of intellectual, personal, and social skills that all students need to develop in order to engage in deeper learning—learning that encourages students to look at things from different perspectives, to see the relationships between their learning in different subjects, and to make connections to their previous learning and to their own experiences, as members of their families, communities, and the larger society.

The conceptual framework described here envisions three broad **cross-curricular** competencies: thinking competency; personal and social competency; and communication competency.

Thinking competency, which encompasses critical, creative, and reflective thinking, represents the cognitive abilities that students develop through their studies. Personal and social competency represents the personal, social and cultural abilities that students develop as individuals and members of society. Communication competency represents the abilities students need to interact and learn effectively in their world.

Together, these three **cross-curricular** competencies represent a holistic and unifying approach to learning, spanning all courses and grades in the common purpose of enriching students' learning experience and preparing students for the future.

These **cross-curricular** competencies are interconnected; and they are not three linear and discrete entities.

The development of the definition of the cross-curricular competencies is informed by the principles embedded in the Goals of Education, the Educated Citizen and the First Peoples' Principles of Learning. As well, it is informed by national and international initiatives on essential 21st century skills and by research conducted by academic researchers in a number of areas, including critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, social and personal responsibility, and Aboriginal perspectives on **cross-curricular** competencies.

A list of references used in the development of the competencies will be available on the Ministry website.

Importance of Context in Defining the Cross-curricular Competencies

In the cross-curricular competencies framework, education is considered to influence and be influenced by the context in which it occurs. That is, it takes place within the unique context of each student's life, occurring in interaction with the student's experiences outside the classroom. In this way, students' learning within the school system has the potential to enrich their whole development, as that unfolds in their school years and in preparation for their future lives and further learning.

From this perspective, it is necessary both to value the different contexts of students' lives and learning environments and to define competencies in a way that is open to different cultural and social interpretations. For example, in the context of Aboriginal learners, the cross-curricular competencies may be interpreted in a way that respects the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional aspects of a whole and healthy being. Other cultural contexts may require similar or unique cultural interpretations in order to be meaningful within the context of students' whole lives.

The **cross-curricular** competencies are also assumed to be sensitive to students' individual needs, recognizing differences among learners in a way that allows for personalization of learning. Within this personalized model, the competencies are seen as flexible and adaptable to the unique learning style, needs, gifts and passions that each student brings to the classroom.

Context will also influence the way the **cross-curricular** competencies are demonstrated in different subject areas. For example, critical thinking will be framed differently and concerned with different problems in science, social studies, language arts, mathematics, and other subjects. Similarly, the development of communication or social awareness and responsibility will look different in the context of different subjects. This contextual dimension to the **cross-curricular** competencies should guide practice in learning, teaching and assessing.

Proposed Definitions: the Cross-Curricular Competencies

The proposed cross-curricular competencies represent a holistic and integrated vision of learning. Each represents a part of the overall development of each child, while at the same time, progress in one may also indicate progress in the others. While recognizing the interrelatedness of the **cross-curricular** competencies, it is still necessary to define and describe them separately in order to understand what each represents and requires in terms of curriculum and assessment.

There are three cross-curricular competencies, each with a number of sub-domains:

- **Thinking Competency**
 - Critical thinking
 - Creative thinking
 - Reflective thinking
- **Personal and Social Competency**
 - Positive personal and cultural identity
 - Personal awareness and responsibility
 - Social awareness and responsibility
- **Communication Competency**
 - Language and symbols
 - Digital literacy

In the following section, each sub-domain of the cross-curricular competency is described in three parts:

- a definition that summarizes the key features of the sub-domain
- a description of how the sub-domain is characterized for the purposes of assessment
- a description of how the development of the sub-domain may be supported through learning and teaching

Thinking Competency

Thinking competency represents the knowledge, skills and processes we associate with intellectual development. It is through their competency as thinkers that students take subject-specific content and transform it into new understanding. Thinking competency includes specific thinking skills as well as habits of mind and metacognitive awareness. Together, these components of thinking competency represent the abilities students need to undertake deep and lifelong learning.

What are the sub-domains of thinking competency?

- critical thinking
- creative thinking
- reflective thinking

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is the thoughtful examination of a question for the purpose of discerning what is reasonable to believe or do in a given situation.

A critical thinker is inquisitive, aware of biases, flexible, honest, persistent, willing to reconsider, and focused on inquiry and asking questions.

Students are enabled to become critical thinkers when they are asked to formulate questions, gather information, consider different points of view, and then determine a judgment or conclusion based on criteria and evidence. Teachers can foster critical thinking by providing students with challenging and ill-defined problems to solve; by guiding them to confront their own beliefs and ideas; by asking them to question, debate, draw distinctions, and perform other thinking tasks; and by encouraging them to develop critical thinking strategies specific to individual subject areas as well as those that can be transferred to new learning contexts.

Creative thinking

Creative thinking is the act of generating and implementing ideas that are novel and innovative to the context in which they are generated.

A creative thinker is curious and open minded, has a sense of wonder and joy in learning, and demonstrates a willingness to think divergently and tolerate complexity. A creative thinker uses imagination, inventiveness, resourcefulness and flexibility and is willing to take risks to imagine beyond existing knowledge in order to generate and implement innovative ideas.

Students are enabled to think creatively through opportunities that allow them to take initiative, exercise choice, explore ideas and options, question and challenge, make connections, and imagine and visualize the possibilities. Teachers can foster creative thinking by welcoming students' unexpected answers, questions, and suggestions; delaying judgment until students' ideas have been thoroughly explored and expressed; offering students opportunities to work with diverse materials in various ways; and supporting and scaffolding students as they explore new and unusual ideas.

Reflective thinking

Reflective thinking is the ability to reflect on one's own thinking and learning processes, to ask what worked and did not work in a given situation, to make connections to existing knowledge, and to identify what one can do differently next time in order to learn more effectively.

A reflective thinker is aware of the processes involved in learning, capable of thinking about their own thinking in a given situation, relate it to other experiences, and identify ways to improve or adapt their approach to learning. A reflective thinker employs critical and creative thinking in order to construct their own understanding of what they are learning and to effect deep and lasting learning.

Students are enabled to become reflective thinkers when reflection is included as a regular part of their learning, when they are asked to connect new learning experiences to previous ones, and when they are encouraged to consider how they know what they have learned and to set new goals for future learning. Teachers can foster reflective thinking by helping students analyze their learning processes, identify goals for new assignments, and understand the role of reflective thinking as part of their personal and social development.

Personal and Social Competency

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. Personal and social competency encompasses the abilities students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world. Personal and social competency is a responsibility the school system shares with families and communities.

What are the sub-domains of personal and social competency?

- positive personal and cultural identity
- personal awareness and responsibility
- social awareness and responsibility

Positive personal and cultural identity

A positive personal and cultural identity is the awareness, understanding and appreciation of one's own ancestry, culture, language, belief and perspective in a multi-cultural society.

Students who have a positive personal and cultural identity value their personal and cultural narrative and understand how it shapes their identity. Supported by a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity, they become confident individuals who take satisfaction in who they are and what they can do to contribute to their own well-being and the well-being of their family, community and society.

Students are enabled to develop a positive personal and cultural identity through opportunities to understand themselves and the social and cultural influences that have shaped them, to explore their strength and limitations, their feelings about themselves, their choices and how they affect their lives, and their goals for the future. Teachers can foster the development of a positive identity in students by encouraging students to explore their personal and cultural story, to make connections between their learning and their personal goals, and to respect their personal choices.

This sub-domain of personal and social competency is a shared responsibility of family, community, and school. It is meant to be respectful of, and sensitive to, different cultural perspectives and the family's primary role in fostering a positive personal and cultural identity in students.

Personal awareness and responsibility

Personal awareness and responsibility is the ability to understand and take responsibility for one's actions, including one's learning, to make constructive and ethical decisions about one's personal and social behaviour, and to accept consequences and understand how one's actions affect one's own well-being and that of others.

Students who demonstrate personal awareness and responsibility are able to set goals, monitor progress, regulate emotions, respect their own rights and the rights of others, manage stress and persevere in difficult situations. They keep themselves healthy and physically active, are financially literate, demonstrate self-respect and express a sense of personal well-being.

Students are enabled to develop personal awareness and responsibility through a learning environment in which each individual feels safe and understood, has opportunities to identify and manage emotions, and accept consequences for the choices they make. Teachers can foster personal awareness and responsibility by providing students with opportunities to identify their strengths and limitations, to set and monitor their

progress toward personal goals, to learn about and practise healthy living, and to reflect on the consequences of their actions on themselves and others.

Social awareness and responsibility

Social awareness and responsibility is the ability to cooperate and collaborate with others, empathize with and appreciate the perspective of others, and create and maintain healthy relationships within one's family, community, and society.

Students who demonstrate social awareness and responsibility are active, caring and responsible members of their community. They make decisions based on the benefit to all, show respect for everyone's rights and show empathy and a sense of ethical care as they consider differing views. They collaborate effectively with others, demonstrate a strong sense of community-mindedness and take actions to support diversity. They have the ability to co-operate with others, to manage and resolve conflicts, and to negotiate interactions with others from different backgrounds

Students are enabled to develop social awareness and responsibility through an environment that values co-operation and collaboration and in which students experience empathy and social well-being. Teachers can foster social awareness and responsibility by providing opportunities for students to participate in authentic service initiatives in the school and community, responding to human rights issues, identifying ways of improving the classroom and school environments, establishing and maintaining healthy relationships, behaving ethically, and working to identify positive solutions.

Communication Competency

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

What are the sub-domains of communication competency?

- language and symbols
- digital literacy

Language and symbols

Using language and symbols to communicate is the ability to exchange information, experiences, and ideas through many modes, including written and spoken language, symbols, movement, gesture, body language and images, in order to make meaning and to create and maintain relationships with the goal of building a common understanding.

Students who use language and symbols competently keep in mind a clear sense of purpose, audience and context. They interpret and use language, symbols, numbers, images, movement, facial expressions and technologies in a range of situations for a variety of audiences, including specific communities and disciplines. They recognize how choices of language, symbol, movement, gesture and image affect people's understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications. They are able to adapt communication modes and styles to various contexts and understand and appreciate the role of communication in building relationships and creating community.

Students are enabled to become competent language and symbol users through activities that allow them to see how language and community are inextricably related; how language shapes culture and culture shapes language. Teachers can foster the effective use of language and symbols through opportunities for students to create, analyze, interpret, and reflect on ideas presented in written, oral, visual, and digital forms; for informative and imaginative purposes; and both formally and informally within literacy, mathematical, scientific, social and artistic contexts.

Digital literacy

Digital literacy is the awareness and skilled and appropriate use of digital media and communication tools as part of learning, social participation, and professional preparation.

Students who are literate in the use of digital media are confident in their ability to create and communicate knowledge digitally. They are able to adapt to new ways of accessing, evaluating, and using digital information and bring a critical perspective in creating and using digital content. They demonstrate awareness of the privacy, ethical and personal safety issues related to digital media and the implications of these for their futures.

Students are enabled to develop digital literacy by activities across the curriculum that incorporate digital literacy and by providing opportunities for students to engage critically and creatively with digital media. Teachers can foster digital literacy by providing opportunities for students to develop confidence in their skills, individually and in collaboration with others, and both within and outside the classroom, while encouraging awareness of the ethical, privacy, and safety issues of digital media.

Next Steps

1. Feedback on Definitions of Cross-curricular Competencies

This paper defines the cross-curricular competencies and will remain a draft while feedback is gathered from education partners and the public on the clarity and relevancy of the definitions. It is important to shape the definitions and build understanding of the competencies through open dialogues and discussions. Further revisions of the definitions may be needed based on feedback through trials and experiences.

2. Process for Incorporating Cross-curricular Competencies into Curriculum Design

The cross-curricular competencies are considered an integral part of BC's curriculum redesign. As such, they will be imbedded in the curricula, wherever possible and as appropriate.

Educators and other education partners will have opportunities to get involved in the various phases of the development. Ministry staff will work collaboratively with the participating educators, districts and regions to define the tasks and provide support and guidance.

3. Process for Co-Development of Continua for Competencies

With its education partners, the Ministry will co-develop continua for cross-curricular competencies intended to support assessment and reporting. These continua will be supported with sample tasks, student exemplars and other resources. As the continua are developed, schools and school districts around the province will have opportunities to participate in these developments, classroom trials, refinement and validation.

Timeline

An overall timeline is in process. The following outlines the work done to date and proposes a timeline for immediate upcoming developments:

Curriculum and Assessment Framework Advisory Group	December 2011 to April 2012
Regional Sessions	February to June 2012
Research and work sessions in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal perspectives on competencies• Communication• Critical thinking, creative thinking• Personal and social responsibility	May to August 2012
Development of cross-curricular competencies definition paper	September to December 2012
Post the competencies definition paper	January 2013
Cross-curricular competency continua, sample tasks and student exemplars	January 2013 to December 2013 (initial draft)

Feedback

For feedback, comments, questions or to get involved, please email curriculum@gov.bc.ca