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## ***Glossary***

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## GLOSSARY

**Assessment**—the systematic process of gathering information about what a student knows, is able to do, and is learning to do. Student assessment is integrated with learning and teaching, thus engaging students, parents, teachers, and administrators (the learning community) in insightful observation, descriptive feedback, reflection, goal setting, adjusting instruction, and celebrating learning.

**Assessment literacy**—a common understanding among partners in the learning community regarding current research-based classroom assessment and evaluation.

**Best practice**—learning and teaching that is theoretically grounded in the research base of current curricula (social constructivism).

**Continuum of learning**—the representation of learners in a multilevel classroom along a Kindergarten to Grade 8 continuum of learning (or part thereof) that evolves naturally as a result of formative assessment. When teachers reflect on their continuum of learning, they have a guide for differentiating instruction in the multilevel classroom. “Grades” may become benchmarks along the continuum of learning, which then facilitates reporting of summative assessments to parents.

**Cooperative learning groups**—heterogeneous groups of approximately four members that are formed for an extended period of time to develop a “micro” community of learners in the multilevel classroom community. This grouping allows for a wide range of ages and abilities to work together. (Also see *flexible groups*.)

**Criteria**—clear descriptors of what a quality process, performance, demonstration, or product looks and/or sounds like. Student-generated criteria are constantly evolving as students make meaning and gain a deeper understanding of concepts.

**Descriptive feedback**—non-evaluative information given to learners to show how they are progressing in relation to criteria and/or to their learning goals. Descriptive feedback is the main outcome of formative assessment and enables reflective thinking for students and teachers.

**Developmental continua**—assessment tools that describe observable behaviours (knowledge, skills and strategies, and attitudes) during learning processes and/or authentic performances. Continua profile student growth and achievement over time. They can be used by students, teachers, and parents to see what learning looks like, to determine next steps or learning goals, and to report student progress and achievement.

**Evaluation**—the process of interpreting assessment information, determining to what extent students have attained learning outcomes and standards, and describing the quality of student learning. Evaluation is used primarily for communicating student achievement.

**Flexible groups**—groups of two to six members that are formed for the purpose of assessment, strategic instruction, practice, or personal inquiry. These groups change frequently, depending upon the needs of the learners. On occasion, individuals may work independently as part of a flexible group. (Also see *cooperative groups*.)

**Form**—the way in which a text is presented, or formatted, for a particular purpose and audience. Some examples of form are: narrative, diary, non-fiction, cinquain, letter, media broadcast, play, dance, and so on.

**Formative assessment**—ongoing assessment information (what teachers see and hear) gathered during instruction to determine what students know and can do and to provide descriptive feedback to improve learning and inform teaching. Feedback is generally directly connected to student learning goals and referenced to student-generated criteria.

**General learning outcomes**—broad statements identifying knowledge, skills and strategies, and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate with increasing competence and confidence from Kindergarten to Senior 4.

**Guiding questions**—the questions that students create to focus their inquiry. These questions evolve from the initial questions at the start of the inquiry.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)**—a written document developed and implemented by a team, outlining a plan to address the individual learning needs of students. Individual education planning is the process by which educators, support personnel, and parents collaborate to meet the needs of students who require a range of accommodations and supports. (See *Individual Education Planning*, Manitoba Education and Training.)

**Initial questions**—the first questions that students ask as they begin their inquiry. These questions arise from students' prior knowledge and curiosity.

**Learning community**—a trusting relationship that develops over time among students, teachers, administrators, and parents as they become engaged in learning and teaching in the multilevel classroom.

**Manipulatives**—hands-on materials for investigating and demonstrating mathematics and science concepts. Manipulatives include authentic materials, artifacts, and commercial models or products.

**Marks**—percentages representing student achievement based on summative assessments and/or evaluations. In Manitoba, students from Grade 6 to Senior 4 are assigned percentages at the end of a school semester or year in all subject areas.

**Multilevel classrooms**—student-centred classrooms in Manitoba in which students learn across two or more grades and are taught by the same teacher for two or more years.

**Observation**—a purposeful, systematic, and cumulative classroom assessment method that focuses on what the learner knows and can do in a variety of authentic contexts in order to inform instruction, improve learning, and assess or evaluate achievement.

**Performance tasks**—authentic processes, performances, demonstrations, or products by which students demonstrate or apply the knowledge, skills and strategies, and attitudes that they have acquired as a result of instruction and practice. Assessment of performance tasks is based on criteria that, for summative assessment, may be extended into a rubric to describe the quality of the performance.

**Portfolio**—a student's purposeful collection of work over time, which serves as the evidence of learning and achievement. Selection is made with regard to student learning goals and/or criteria and involves self-assessment and reflection. Portfolio assessment involves both process and product. Portfolios become powerful student-centred assessment tools to share with the learning community.

**Professional judgement**—teachers' decisions about learning and teaching based on their classroom experience and sound academic knowledge of developmental learning, curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy.

**Rubric**—a set of criteria that describes levels of performance (what it should look or sound like). Rubrics should be developed from student-generated criteria and with student involvement. From Grade 6 through Senior 4, rubrics can be used to measure achievement for summative assessments at the end of a theme, unit, semester, term, or school year, and percentages may be calculated by allocating numeric values to each performance level.

**Specific learning outcomes**—concise descriptions of the knowledge, skills and strategies, and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate at the end of a grade.

**Scaffolding**—instructional approaches or strategies that activate prior knowledge of a topic or concept; or a strategy that provides adjustable and temporary assistance or support to the student in his or her achievement of the learning task.

**Standards test**—an evaluation based on end-of-year learning outcomes and grade-level standards.

**Summative assessment**—the celebration, summary, evaluation, or judgement at the end of a theme, unit, semester, term, or school year based on performance tasks/products and formative assessment data.

**Text set**—a variety of different expository and narrative texts (e.g., stories, picture books, poetry, magazines, images, multimedia) across a wide range of reading abilities to augment content textbooks for inquiry purposes and strategic instruction. A text set may include up to 100 texts on the same topic or theme.

**Workshop**—a timetabled uninterrupted block of time that supports an authentic learning-teaching context for whole-class experiences and instruction, small groups for practice, strategic instruction, independent inquiry or work, and response and reflection.