

GLOSSARY for SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS¹

ABILITY GROUPING

The term **ability grouping** is used to describe assigning students with similar skills to learning groups.

ABSENCE

This term refers to any part of a school day when a student is not in school.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR

Educators use the term **academic advisor** to describe the member of the teaching staff assigned to provide school advice and guidance to students.

ACADEMIC LANGUAGE/LITERACY

Academic language refers to the oral, written, auditory, and visual language proficiency required to learn effectively in schools and academic programs—i.e., it's the language used in classroom lessons, books, tests, and assignments, and it's the language that students are expected to learn and achieve fluency in. Frequently contrasted with "conversational" or "social" language, academic language includes a variety of formal-language skills—such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, syntax, discipline-specific terminology, or rhetorical conventions—that allow students to acquire knowledge and academic skills while also successfully navigating school policies, assignments, expectations, and cultural norms. Even though students may be highly intelligent and capable, for example, they may still struggle in a school setting if they have not yet mastered certain terms and concepts, or learned how to express themselves and their ideas in expected ways.

While the term is most commonly applied to language-specific skills, competency in academic language also bleeds into a wide variety of related non-linguistic skills that are difficult or impossible to separate out from language ability, including foundational academic skills (organizing, planning, researching), cognitive skills (critical thinking, problem solving, interpreting, analyzing, memorizing, recalling), learning modes (questioning, discussing, observing, theorizing, experimenting), and work habits (persistence, self-discipline, curiosity, conscientiousness, responsibility), in addition to other forms of literacy required to succeed in modern schools, such as technological literacy, online literacy, media literacy, or multicultural literacy, among others (see *21st century skills*).

¹ These definitions have been adapted from information provided by the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. Department of Education website, Ed Source, the Glossary for Education Reform, the College Board, various testing companies, the Legislative Counsel Bureau, the Washington State PTA Dictionary of Education Terms, the North Central Regional Education Laboratory, the Oxford Reference Dictionary of Education, the American Association of Curriculum Development Lexicon of Learning, School Wise Press, and the Nevada Department of Education.

In the United States, the term is often applied to English-language learners who need to develop English proficiency concurrently with academic language to succeed in schools where English is the primary language of instruction. All students, however, need to acquire academic language to thrive and succeed in academic settings, particularly students with cognitive or developmental delays, students who may live in unsupportive, dysfunctional, or unstable environments, and children from high-poverty, low-education, and otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds who enter school without basic language and literacy skills.

By the time they begin school, most children have developed the ability to communicate interpersonally, and students continue to develop conversational-language skills throughout their education. For native-English speakers, the development of academic language builds progressively on conversational skills, but the challenge for English-language learners is to learn both conversational and academic language concurrently.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The term **academic support** may refer to a wide variety of instructional methods, educational services, or school resources provided to students in the effort to help them accelerate their learning progress, catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school. When the term is used in educational contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, it may be difficult to determine precisely what “academic support” is referring to. The terms *support* or *supports* may also be used in reference to any number of academic-support strategies.

In practice, academic support encompasses a broad array of educational strategies, including tutoring sessions, supplemental courses, summer learning experiences, after-school programs, teacher advisors, and volunteer mentors, as well as alternative ways of grouping, counseling, and instructing students. Academic support may be provided to individual students, specific student populations (such as non-English speakers or disabled students), or all students in a school.

State and federal policies may require schools to provide academic support to certain student populations, such as identified special-education students, or schools may voluntarily create support programs to address specific performance results or trends, such as large numbers of dropouts, course failures, behavioral problems, etc. While the term *academic support* typically refers to the services provided to underperforming students, it may be used in reference to “enrichment” programs and more advanced learning opportunities provided to higher-achieving students.

ACCELERATION

In education, the term **acceleration** refers to a wide variety of educational and instructional strategies that educators use to advance the learning progress of students who are struggling academically or who have fallen behind—i.e., strategies that help these students catch up to their peers, perform at an expected level for their ages and grades, or meet required learning standards.

Academic acceleration is often considered to be an alternative to some forms of remediation that may be designed to deliver less academic content to students at a slower pace. Critics of the “less and slower” forms of remediation tend to argue that the practice is insufficient and ineffective, since students will not only keep falling further behind their peers with each passing year, but they may never catch up or meet expected learning standards before completing their education, which may also place them at a greater risk of dropping out.

ACCOMMODATION

Educators use the term **accommodation** to describe a device, material, or support process that will enable a student with disabilities to accomplish a task efficiently.

ACCREDITATION

In education, **accreditation** is the term used to describe official recognition that a person or an organization meets specific requirements to be able to deliver instruction.

ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Closely related to *learning gap* and *opportunity gap*, the term **achievement gap** refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minorities, for example, or students from higher-income and lower-income households.

While particular achievement gaps may vary significantly in degree or severity from group to group or place to place, achievement gaps are defined by their consistency and persistence—i.e., achievement gaps are not typically isolated or passing events, but observable and predictable trends that remain relatively stable and enduring over time. While it is possible that some educators may use *achievement gap* in reference to individual student achievement, it is more likely that a term such as *learning gap* will be used: *achievement gap* nearly always refers to disparities of achievement between or among student groups.

The most commonly discussed achievement gap in the United States is the persistent disparity in national standardized-test scores between white and Asian-American students, two groups that score higher on average, and African-American and Hispanic students, two groups that score lower on average. Another achievement gap that has received considerable attention in recent years is the lagging performance of American students on international tests in comparison to students from other developed countries. Although disparities in test scores tend to be the most discussed, scrutinized, and reported achievement gaps, educational performance and attainment disparities may appear in a wide variety of data sets, including graduation rates, college-enrollment rates, college-completion rates, course grades, dropout rates, absenteeism rates, and disciplinary infractions, among many other possible categories of student-achievement data tracked by government agencies, districts, and schools.

The following list provides a representative sample of the major student subgroups that tend to exhibit achievement gaps:

- White and minority students;
- Male and female students;
- Students from higher-income and lower-income households and communities;
- Native English-speaking students and students who are learning English or who cannot speak English, including recently arrived immigrant or refugee students (see *English Language Learner*);
- Nondisabled students and students with physical or learning disabilities;
- Students whose parents have earned a college degree and students whose parents have not earned a college degree (these students are often called *first-generation* if they decide to enroll in college); and
- American students and students from other countries.

A growing body of educational research is devoted to studying the underlying causes of achievement gaps and the strategies educators are employing to address them. Yet the causes are often so complex and overlapping that it is nearly impossible to determine all the factors that may give rise to particular achievement gaps or contribute to their persistence. The following list, however, is a representative selection of a few underlying causes identified by educators and researchers:

- Poverty, income inequality, and lower socioeconomic status contributing to reduced access to educational opportunities, familial support, good nutrition, healthcare, and other factors that tend to contribute to stronger educational achievement.
- Minority status giving rise to racism, prejudice, stereotyping, ethnic bias, and institutionalized predispositions—such as the tendency in schools to lower academic expectations for minorities or enroll them in less-challenging courses—that may negatively affect educational achievement. For a related discussion, see *stereotype threat*.
- Lower-quality schools, ineffective teaching, student overcrowding, dilapidated school facilities, and inferior educational resources, programs, and opportunities in economically disadvantaged schools and communities.
- The disproportionate representation of minority and lower-income students in the lowest-achieving schools, lower-level academic classes, and courses taught by the least experienced or effective teachers.
- Parent and family factors such as low educational attainment, unemployment, or familial instability contributing to reduced academic motivation, disrupted education, or lower educational and career aspirations.
- Little or no English-language understanding, fluency, or literacy contributing to educational underperformance, decreased academic motivation, or higher dropout rates.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Educators use the term **accommodations** to describe changes in the way tests are designed or administered to respond to the special needs of students with disabilities and English learners.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability means holding key individuals and groups responsible for student achievement through the systematic collection, analysis, use, and reporting of valid and reliable information. The standards movement has allowed accountability systems to become performance-based. Once academic content standards are defined, and school and student progress measured against them, performance can be measured and evaluated.

The Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) is the Nevada school, district, and state accountability system — based on statewide stakeholders’ values and collaboratively designed with Nevada school district and national experts in assessment and accountability. The NSPF represents an important advance in Nevada’s education reform agenda and is driven by core values of credibility, fairness, accuracy, feasibility, and transparency. Since the approval of Nevada’s ESEA Waiver Flexibility Request in August 2012, communication and outreach by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) has been continuous to support districts and schools in transitioning to the new Framework.

The NSPF analyzes and reports school performance based on *multiple measures of student achievement*, as opposed to the single proficiency measure in AYP. Drawing upon the rich

information in the Department's longitudinal data system, the NSPF produces a more meaningful analysis of school performance, looking at progress in student proficiency, growth, reduction of performance gaps for special populations, and other indicators. Reporting on schools' needs and successes across a host of meaningful progress indicators enables more effective and efficient alignment of supports and resources within customized school performance plans. Further, the NSPF ensures that rewards are provided to sustain and celebrate high performance when it has been demonstrated.

ACT [formerly the American College Test]

The **ACT** has been found to be one reliable predictor of student academic success in college; that is, students with high ACT scores usually make better college grades than students with low ACT scores. ACT scores are typically one of a cluster of considerations used by college/university admission officers—along with other factors such as student grades and courses—to determine admission.

This is a nationally norm-referenced test.

- Four academic subtests of the ACT use multiple choice items to measure abilities in the academic areas traditionally identified with college preparatory high school programs: English, mathematics, reading, and science.
- Spelling, vocabulary, and rote recall of rules of grammar are NOT tested.
- Memorization of complex formulas and extensive computation are not required.
- The use of calculators is permitted on the mathematics test. The number of questions answered correctly is first determined, then that raw score is converted to scale scores that have the same meaning for all forms of the tests. The scale scores range from 1 (low) to 36 (high) for each of the four tests and for the Composite. The Composite is the average of the four test scores, rounded to the nearest whole number.

ACTION PLAN

An **action plan** is a plan created to organize a district- or school-improvement effort. It may take the form of an internal school document or a website that can be viewed publicly. Action plans may be reviewed and revised annually—based on progress made over the course of the preceding year or to reflect evolving school goals and values—but multiyear action plans are also common.

Action plans typically include information such as the following:

- A school's improvement goals, such as targets for improved student test performance or graduation rates;
- The specific actions or strategies a school will undertake to achieve its goals;
- The roles and responsibilities assigned to staff members;
- The project timeline or the deadlines to be met;
- The resources allocated to its execution;
- The milestones or growth targets expected to be achieved at specific stages of the plan's execution; and
- The data or other forms of evidence that will be collected for the purposes of action research or project evaluation.

While the "plan of action" concept is straightforward, the design, use, and purpose of action plans may differ significantly from district to district or school to school. That said, there are generally two basic forms of action plan:

- A **systemic action plan** is designed to organize a comprehensive or multifaceted educational-improvement plan focused on systems-level changes—major redesigns of the structure and operations of a district or school, particularly its academic program. A systemic plan would map out and organize the complexities of coordinating such an initiative, typically for the purpose of making sure that the plan is coherently designed (all the parts are feasible and work together), aligned in both purpose and execution (all the parts make sense and are focused on achieving the same goals), and understood and agreed on by all those responsible for its execution.
- A **project-specific action plan** is similar in all major features to a systemic action plan, except that its scope would be limited to a district program, grant-funded initiative, academic department, or some other subordinate part of a school system. The potential downside of a project-specific action plan is that it may fail to take into account potential effects on the larger system, or its execution may result in redundancies or other unforeseen conflicts with preexisting plans or programs.

ACTION RESEARCH

In schools, **action research** refers to a wide variety of evaluative, investigative, and analytical research methods designed to diagnose problems or weaknesses—whether organizational, academic, or instructional—and help educators develop practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently. Action research may also be applied to programs or educational techniques that are not necessarily experiencing any problems, but that educators simply want to learn more about and improve. The general goal is to create a simple, practical, repeatable process of iterative learning, evaluation, and improvement that leads to increasingly better results for schools, teachers, or programs.

Action research may also be called a *cycle of action* or *cycle of inquiry*, since it typically follows a predefined process that is repeated over time. A simple illustrative example:

- Identify a problem to be studied;
- Collect data on the problem;
- Organize, analyze, and interpret the data;
- Develop a plan to address the problem;
- Implement the plan;
- Evaluate the results of the actions taken;
- Identify a new problem; and
- Repeat the process.

Unlike more formal research studies, such as those conducted by universities and published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals, action research is typically conducted by the educators working in the district or school being studied—the participants—rather than by independent, impartial observers from outside organizations. Less formal, prescriptive, or theory-driven research methods are typically used when conducting action research, since the goal is to address practical problems in a specific school or classroom, rather than produce independently validated and reproducible findings that others, outside of the context being studied, can use to guide their future actions or inform the design of their academic programs.

That said, while action research is typically focused on solving a specific problem (high rates of student absenteeism, for example) or answer a specific question (Why are so many of our ninth graders failing math?), action research can also make meaningful contributions to the larger body of knowledge and understanding in the field of education, particularly within a relatively closed system such as school, district, or network of connected organizations.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP)

Holding schools accountable for the performance of all students is a cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Under this law, this accountability is based upon whether schools, districts, and states are making **adequate yearly progress (AYP)** toward the goal of bringing 100% of their students at least to academic proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Progress in reading/language arts and in mathematics must be shown for all student subgroups, including economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficiency students as well as students in major racial and ethnic groups. Performance on reading and math assessments is the main indicator of whether AYP is being met, but graduation rates and at least one additional indicator for elementary and middle schools (decided by the state) must also be included.

Nevada and 41 other states and the District of Columbia are currently operating under requests for flexibility from certain provisions of the outmoded No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Nevada's ESEA Flexibility Waiver was granted in 2012, renewed in 2014, and expires at the end of school year 2014-2015. The ESEA Waiver has allowed Nevada to put in place effective education improvement initiatives. It strengthens Nevada's capacity to implement a clear plan to improve standards-based instruction and to assess student, educator, school, district, and State performance. Without an extension of the ESEA Waiver, Nevada would be required under federal law to meet the requirements of NCLB; AYP would again be the measure of school performance. Under AYP, all schools would need to demonstrate that 100% of students passed the State assessments during school year 2013-2014. Few, if any, Nevada schools would meet the 100% proficiency expectation.

The federal government's role in this area was earlier defined under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA stated that its purpose was to strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the nation's elementary and secondary schools.

ADMINISTRATION EXPENDITURES

The term **administration expenditures** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe expenditures for school administration (the school principal's office), general administration (the superintendent and board of education and their immediate staff), and other support services, such as LEA planners/researchers, personnel, fiscal services, warehousing, and other activities of the LEA.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)

This term describes education for adults whose inability to speak, read or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to procure or retain employment commensurate with their abilities; designed to help them be less dependent on others; to improve their abilities to benefit from occupational training, to increase their opportunities for more productive and profitable employment and to make them better able to meet their adult responsibilities. Courses at or below the eighth grade level in the language arts, including English for Speakers of Other Languages, mathematics, natural and social sciences, consumer education, and other courses enable an adult to attain basic or functional literacy.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP)

The Advanced Placement Program is a cooperative educational endeavor between secondary schools and colleges/universities. Since its inception in 1955, the Program has provided motivated high school students with the opportunity to take college-level courses in a high school setting. Students who participate in the Program not only gain college-level skills, but in many cases they also earn college credit while they are still in high school. AP courses are taught by dedicated and enthusiastic high school teachers who follow course guidelines and use curriculum developed and published by the College Board. Some Nevada school districts require all students who are enrolled in AP courses to take the AP exams for those courses.

ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION (AVID)

AVID is an in-school academic support program for students in grades fourth through twelfth that prepares them for college eligibility and success. One of the basic premises is placement of academically average students in advanced classes. AVID is intended to level the playing field for minority, rural, low-income and other students without a college-going tradition in their families. AVID is for all students; however, it targets those in the academic middle.

ADVISORY GROUP

This term is used to describe a small group of students who meet regularly with a school staff member to discuss school work and requirements.

ALIGNMENT

The term **alignment** is widely used by educators in a variety of contexts, most commonly in reference to reforms that are intended to bring greater coherence or efficiency to a curriculum, program, initiative, or education system.

When the term is used in educational contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, it may be difficult to determine precisely what *alignment* is referring to. In some cases, the term may have a very specific, technical meaning, but in others it may be vague, undecipherable jargon. Generally speaking, the use of alignment tends to become less precise and meaningful when its object grows in size, scope, or ambition. For example, when teachers talk about “aligning curriculum,” they are likely referring to a specific, technical process being used to develop lessons, deliver instruction, and evaluate student learning growth and achievement.

On the other hand, some education reports, improvement plans, and policy proposals may refer to the “alignment” of various elements of an education system without describing precisely what might be entailed in the proposed alignment process. And, of course, some “alignments” may be practical, thoughtful strategies that produce tangible improvements in schools and student learning, while others may be unspecific “action items” that never get acted on, or they may be strategies that show promise in theory, but that turn out to be overly complex and burdensome when executed in states, districts, and schools.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

The term **alternative assessment** is used to describe ways other than standardized tests to get information about what students know and where they need help, such as oral reports, projects, performances, experiments, and class participation.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

This civil rights law was passed in 1990 and prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, public service, and public accommodations.

ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE (AMO)

In education, the **annual measurable objective** is a term to describe the annual target for the percentage of students whose test scores must be proficient or above in English/language arts and mathematics. Meeting the AMO is the first step toward demonstrating adequate yearly progress under the federal law No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

ASSESSMENT

In education, the term **assessment** refers to the wide variety of methods that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students from preschool through college and adulthood.

While assessments are often equated with traditional tests—especially the standardized tests developed by testing companies and administered to large populations of students—educators use a diverse array of assessment tools and methods to measure everything from a four-year-old’s readiness for kindergarten to a twelfth-grade student’s comprehension of advanced physics. Just as academic lessons have different functions, assessments are typically designed to measure specific elements of learning—e.g., a student’s perceived ability or readiness to learn; the successful acquisition of particular skills and knowledge; the understanding and recall of facts; or the ability to analyze and comprehend various types of texts and readings.

Assessments are also used to identify academic weaknesses and strengths so that educators can provide specialized academic support, educational programming, or social services. In a word, the act of assessing student learning not only takes many forms, but it generally requires an assortment of sophisticated strategies and techniques. Consequently, when the word *assessment* is used without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, it may be difficult to determine precisely what the term is referring to.

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Asynchronous learning is a general term used to describe forms of education, instruction, and learning that do not occur in the same place or at the same time. The term is most commonly applied to various forms of digital and online learning in which students learn from instruction—such as prerecorded video lessons or game-based learning tasks that students complete on their own—that is not being delivered in person or in real time. Yet asynchronous learning may also encompass a wide variety of instructional interactions, including email exchanges between students and teachers, online discussion boards, and course-management systems that organize instructional materials and correspondence, among many other possible variations.

Digital and online learning experiences can also be *synchronous*. For example, educational video conferences, interactive webinars, chat-based online discussions, and lectures that are broadcast at the same time they given would all be considered forms of synchronous learning.

AT-RISK

The term **at-risk** is often used to describe students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school. The term may be applied to students who face circumstances that could jeopardize their ability to complete school, such as homelessness, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, transiency (as in the case of migrant-worker families), or other conditions, or it may refer to learning disabilities, low test scores, disciplinary problems, grade retentions, or other learning-related factors that could adversely affect the educational performance and attainment of some students. While educators often use the term *at-risk* to refer to general populations or categories of students, they may also apply the term to individual students who have raised concerns—based on specific behaviors observed over time—that indicate they are more likely to fail or drop out.

When the term is used in educational contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, it may be difficult to determine precisely what “at-risk” is referring to. In fact, “at-risk” can encompass so many possible characteristics and conditions that the term, if left undefined, could be rendered effectively meaningless. Yet in certain technical, academic, and policy contexts—such as when federal or state agencies delineate “at-risk categories” to determine which students will receive specialized educational services, for example—the term is usually used in a precise and clearly defined manner. For example, states, districts, research studies, and organizations may create at-risk definitions that can encompass a broad range of specific student characteristics, such as the following:

- Physical disabilities and learning disabilities;
- Prolonged or persistent health issues;
- Habitual truancy, incarceration history, or adjudicated delinquency;
- Family welfare or marital status;
- Parental educational attainment, income levels, employment status, or immigration status; and/or
- Households in which the primary language spoken is not English;

In most cases, “risk factors” are situational rather than innate. With the exception of certain characteristics such as learning disabilities, a student’s perceived risk status is rarely related to his or her ability to learn or succeed academically, and largely or entirely related to a student’s life circumstances. For example, attending a low-performing school could be considered a risk factor. If a school is underfunded and cannot provide essential services, or if its teaching quality and performance record are poor, the school could conceivably contribute to higher rates of student absenteeism, course failures, and attrition.

AUTISM

Autism is a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction generally evident before age 3, which adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines and unusual responses to sensory experience.

AVERAGE CLASS SIZE

Educators and policymakers use the term **average class size** to describe the number of students in classes divided by the number of classes. Because some teachers, such as reading specialists, have assignments outside the regular classroom, the average class size is usually larger than the pupil-teacher ratio.

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (ADA)

For purposes of funding and accountability, the term **average daily attendance** is used to describe the total number of days of student attendance divided by the total number of days in the regular school year.

BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLAN (BIP)

The **behavior intervention plan** is developed by the Individual Education Team (IEP) to address behavior that interferes with a special education child's progress in school. The IEP team develops this plan following the completion of the Functional Behavioral Assessment to identify antecedents, behaviors, and consequences that need to be considered in the intervention plan to improve behavior. This plan should become part of the current IEP.

BENCHMARKS

Educators use the term **benchmarks** to indicate a detailed description of a specific level of student achievement expected of students at particular ages, grades, or developmental levels; academic goals set for each grade.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

This term is used to describe an in-school program for students whose first language is not English or who have limited English skills. Bilingual education provides English language development plus subject area instruction in the student's native language. The goal is for the child to gain knowledge and be literate in two languages.

BLOCK SCHEDULE

A **block schedule** is a system for scheduling the middle- or high-school day, typically by replacing a more traditional schedule of six or seven 40–50 minute daily periods with longer class periods that meet fewer times each day and week. For example, a typical block-schedule class might last 90 or 120 minutes and meet every other day instead of daily.

School-by-school variations in block-scheduling systems are numerous, but the most common formulations include:

- A **"4 x 4" block schedule** in which students take four 90-minute classes every day and finish a course in one semester rather a full school year;
- An **"A/B" or "alternating-day" block schedule** in which students take eight 90-minute classes that meet every other day;
- A **"trimester" schedule** in which students take two or three core courses at a time, with each class meeting daily, over three 60-day trimesters;
- A **"75-15-75-15" schedule** in which students take four 75-minute classes every day and finish courses in a semester, with each semester followed by an intensive 15-day learning-enrichment course or remedial program. Another variation is the "75-75-30" schedule, which uses only a single 30-day intersession rather than two 15-day intersessions; or
- A **"Copernican" schedule** in which students have longer classes for core academic subjects during one half of the school day and shorter daily periods for electives such as physical education or music during the second half of the day.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Bloom's taxonomy is a classification system used to define and distinguish different levels of human cognition—i.e., thinking, learning, and understanding. Educators have typically used Bloom's taxonomy to inform or guide the development of assessments (tests and other evaluations of student learning), curriculum (units, lessons, projects, and other learning activities), and instructional methods such as questioning strategies.

Original Taxonomy

Bloom's taxonomy was originally published in 1956 by a team of cognitive psychologists at the University of Chicago. It is named after the committee's chairman, Benjamin Bloom (1913–1999). The original taxonomy was organized into three domains: Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor. Educators have primarily focused on the Cognitive model, which includes six different classification levels: *Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation*. The group sought to design a logical framework for teaching and learning goals that would help researchers and educators understand the fundamental ways in which people acquire and develop new knowledge, skills, and understandings. Their initial intention was to help academics avoid duplicative or redundant efforts in developing different tests to measure the same educational objectives. The system was originally published under the title *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain*.

Some users of the taxonomy place more emphasis on the hierarchical nature of the framework, asserting that the first three elements—*Knowledge, Comprehension, and Application*—represent lower levels of cognition and learning, while *Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation* are considered higher-order skills. For this reason, the taxonomy is often graphically represented as a pyramid with higher-order cognition at the top.

While Bloom's taxonomy initially received little fanfare, it gradually grew in popularity and attracted further study. The system remains widely taught in undergraduate and graduate education programs throughout the United States, and it has also been translated into multiple languages and used around the world.

Revised Taxonomy

In 2001, another team of scholars—led by Lorin Anderson, a former student of Bloom's, and David Krathwohl, a Bloom colleague who served on the academic team that developed the original taxonomy—released a revised version of Bloom's taxonomy called *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. The "Revised Bloom's Taxonomy," as it is commonly called, was intentionally designed to be more useful to educators and to reflect the common ways in which it had come to be used in schools.

In the revised version, three categories were renamed and all the categories were expressed as verbs rather than nouns. *Knowledge* was changed to *Remembering*, *Comprehension* became *Understanding*, and *Synthesis* was renamed *Creating*. In addition, *Creating* became the highest level in the classification system, switching places with *Evaluating*. The revised version is now *Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating*, in that order.

BOND MEASURE

The term **bond measure** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe a method of borrowing used

by school districts to pay for construction or renovation projects. A bond measure typically requires a 55 percent majority to pass. The principal and interest are repaid by local property owners through an increase in property taxes.

BRAIN-BASED LEARNING

Brain-based learning refers to teaching methods, lesson designs, and school programs that are based on the latest scientific research about how the brain learns, including such factors as cognitive development—how students learn differently as they age, grow, and mature socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Brain-based learning is motivated by the general belief that learning can be accelerated and improved if educators base how and what they teach on the science of learning, rather than on past educational practices, established conventions, or assumptions about the learning process. For example, it was commonly believed that intelligence is a fixed characteristic that remains largely unchanged throughout a person’s life. However, recent discoveries in cognitive science have revealed that the human brain physically changes when it learns, and that after practicing certain skills it becomes increasingly easier to continue learning and improving those skills. This finding—that learning effectively improves brain functioning, resiliency, and working intelligence—has potentially far-reaching implications for how schools can design their academic programs and how teachers could structure educational experiences in the classroom.

BRIGANCE DIAGNOSTIC COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF BASIC SKILLS

(Brigance—First Grade Admission Test)

The 1997 Session of the Nevada Legislature mandated that a child who has not attended an approved kindergarten program (public school, licensed private school, home schooled with the school district approval, or rural home kit) must pass the Brigance or First Grade Admission Test. The Brigance measures attainment of basic academic skills. This is a nationally norm-referenced test published by Curriculum Associates, Inc.

CAPACITY

Educators typically use the term **capacity** in reference to the perceived abilities, skills, and expertise of school leaders, teachers, faculties, and staffs—most commonly when describing the “capacity” of an individual or school to execute or accomplish something specific, such as leading a school-improvement effort or teaching more effectively. The term may also encompass the quality of adaptation—the ability of a school or educator to grow, progress, or improve. Common variations include *educator capacity*, *leadership capacity*, *school capacity*, and *teacher capacity*, among others.

The phrase “building capacity”—a widely used bit of education jargon—refers to any effort being made to improve the abilities, skills, and expertise of educators. If the purpose is to reduce a school’s reliance on outside contractors or services, for example, educators may say they want to “build internal capacity.” When these terms and phrases are used in education contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, it may be difficult to determine precisely what the term is referring to. In fact, some educational professionals, literature, and resources will call on school leaders to “build capacity” in a specified area without ever describing precisely what capacities should be improved or exactly how they might be improved.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

The term **capital outlay** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe direct expenditures for construction of buildings, roads, and other improvements and for purchases of equipment, land, and existing structures. In addition, this term includes amounts for additions, replacements, and major alterations to fixed works and structures. Expenditures for repairs to fixed works and structures are, however, classified as current expenditures for operations.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and technical education is a term applied to schools, institutions, and educational programs that specialize in the skilled trades, applied sciences, modern technologies, and career preparation. It was formerly (and is still commonly) called *vocational education*; however, the term has fallen out of favor with most educators.

Career and technical programs frequently offer both academic and career-oriented courses, and many provide students with the opportunity to gain work experience through internships, job shadowing, on-the-job training, and industry-certification opportunities. Career and technical programs—depending on their size, configuration, location, and mission—provide a wide range of learning experiences spanning many different career tracks, fields, and industries, from skilled trades such as automotive technology, construction, plumbing, or electrical contracting to fields as diverse as agriculture, architecture, culinary arts, fashion design, filmmaking, forestry, engineering, healthcare, personal training, robotics, or veterinary medicine.

Career and technical education may be offered in middle schools and high schools or through community colleges and other postsecondary institutions and certification programs. At the secondary level, career and technical education is often provided by regional centers that serve students from multiple schools or districts. For example, the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services in New York administers a network of 37 regional career and technical education centers that serve students throughout the state. Many states have similar regional centers or statewide networks that operate as part of the public-school system.

In some cases, career and technical education is provided through a high school, where it may or may not be an integrated part of the school's regular academic program. Students may also attend separate career and technical institutions for part of the school day, or a regional center may be the primary school of enrollment, where students take both academic and career and technical courses. In other cases, career and technical programs may take the form of a distinct "school within a school," such as a theme-based academy, that offers an interdisciplinary or career-oriented program in which academic coursework is aligned with specific career paths, such as culinary arts, nursing, or engineering.

CARNEGIE UNIT

The **Carnegie unit** is a system developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that based the awarding of academic credit on how much time students spent in direct contact with a classroom teacher. The standard Carnegie unit is defined as 120 hours of contact time with an instructor—i.e., one hour of instruction a day, five days a week, for 24 weeks, or 7,200 minutes of instructional time over the course of an academic year.

In most public high schools, course credits are still largely based on the 120-hour Carnegie-unit standard. Most states and American high schools require students to earn between 18 and 24 credits—with each credit representing one Carnegie unit—to be eligible for a diploma. Yet some high schools are moving away from the traditional grading, crediting, grade-promotion, and graduation systems based on contact hours with a teacher. In these schools, grades, credits, and decision about grade promotion and graduation are based on students demonstrating proficiency in meeting required learning standards.

CARL PERKINS/PERKINS GRANT

The **Carl D. Perkins Vocational–Technical Education Act** Amendments of 1998 (Public Law 105–332) was originally signed into law on October 31, 1998. With the recent enactment of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, Congress has demonstrated overwhelming bipartisan support to continue the country’s federal investment in career and technical education. The new Act strengthens key components of the previous legislation, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998.

Some of those components include the following:

- Development of programs of study for career and technical education to implement model course sequences to guide students from secondary to postsecondary education according to the model established under tech prep;
- Professional development to ensure career and technical education teachers are well-trained, fully qualified, and will employ effective teaching strategies that ensure career and technical education programs achieve their fullest academic and career goals;
- Connections and partnerships to ensure programs meet business and industry needs to help fill the growing need for skilled workers;
- Advancement of the integration of academics in all career and technical education programs to help improve the academic performance of all students;
- Establishment of valid and reliable assessments and accountability systems to effectively measure and document student achievement in career and technical education;
- Improvement of career and technical education programs to ensure they are providing students with experiences in all aspects of the industry using state-of-the-art technology; and
- Provisions and needed support services to ensure all students, especially those with special needs, have opportunities to succeed in career and technical education programs.

CATEGORICAL AID

The term **categorical aid** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe funds from the state or federal government granted to qualifying schools or districts for specific children with special needs, certain programs such as class size reduction, or special purposes such as transportation. In general, schools or districts must spend the money for the specific purpose. All districts receive categorical aid in varying amounts. This aid is in addition to the funding schools receive for their general education program.

CERTIFICATE/CREDENTIAL

This term is used to describe a state-issued license certifying that the teacher has completed the necessary basic training courses and passed the teacher exam. It is also used to describe the state-issued license that an administrator receives.

CERTIFICATED/CREDENTIALLED EMPLOYEES

The term **certificated/credentialed employees** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe school employees who are required by the state to hold teaching credentials, including full-time, part-time, substitute, or temporary teachers and most administrators. A teacher who has not yet acquired a credential but has an emergency permit or a waiver to teach in the classroom is included in the count.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

In education, the term **charter schools** is used to describe publicly funded schools that are exempt from many state laws and regulations for school districts. They are run by groups of teachers, parents, and/or foundations.

CHILD FIND

The term child find describes the assessment center used by several school districts for evaluation to identify un-served students with disabilities as required by IDEA.

CLASS RANK

The term **class rank** refers to the hierarchical ranking of students based on academic performance or grade point average. Rankings may be expressed in numerical order (first, second, third, top ten, etc.) or as percentiles (top ten percent, top twenty-five percent, etc.). Class rank is typically determined at the end of middle school or high school, and it is used to determine academic honors such as valedictorian (first in the class) and salutatorian (second in the class). While schools do not typically make an entire set of rankings for a graduating class public, it is quite common for schools to publicly announce and celebrate top-ranked students, particular those who end up in the “top ten” or top-tenth percentile.

CLASS SIZE

Class size is a measure of the average number of students in any given course in a school or education system, and it is often expressed as a ratio of students to teachers—e.g., 25 to 1, or 25 students for every one teacher. The term *class size* may also refer to the total number of students in a particular grade level, or “class,” in a school.

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION

In general, the **term class size reduction** refers to a state-funded program for kindergarten through third grade classes to ensure that there are no more than 20 students per teacher. A separate program supports some smaller classes for core subjects in ninth grade.

Following an interim study of pupil-to-teacher ratios, the 1989 Nevada Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 964 (Chapter 864, *Statutes of Nevada*) to establish a class-size reduction

program. The measure, codified as *Nevada Revised Statutes* 388.700 through 388.720, was scheduled to proceed in several phases beginning with the early grades and continuing in all grades, up to and including high school.

The first phase reduced the ratios in selected kindergarten and first grade classes for the 1990–1991 school year. The next phase was designed to reduce second grade ratios, followed by third grade ratios, and additional kindergarten reductions. After achieving the target ratio of 15 pupils to 1 teacher in the primary grades, the original program proposed that the pupil-to-teacher ratio be reduced to a 22-to-1 ratio in grades 4 through 6, followed by a reduction to no more than a 25-to-1 ratio in grades 7 through 12. Assembly Bill 964 provided that the State Board of Education may grant a school district a variance from the limitation on the number of pupils per class for good cause, including the lack of available financial support specifically set aside for the reduction of pupil-teacher ratios.

Class-Size Flexibility Outside Clark and Washoe Counties

Until the 2005 Legislative Session, class-size reduction had only been addressed in grades K through 3. Based upon a pilot program in the Elko County School District, the 2005 Legislature enacted Senate Bill 460 (Chapter 457, *Statutes of Nevada*), which provided flexibility in implementing improved pupil-to-teacher ratios in grades 1 through 6 for school districts other than those in Clark and Washoe Counties. Pupil-to-teacher ratios were limited to not more than a 22-to-1 ratio in grades 1 through 3, and not more than a 25-to-1 ratio in grades 4 through 6.

The 2009 Legislature approved the continuation of funding for class-size reduction for the 2009–2011 Biennium. This funding would have maintained pupil-to-teacher ratios within statutory guidelines through all elementary grades. Instead, the 26th Special Session of the Legislature convened on February 23, 2010, to address the State’s ongoing fiscal crisis. The Legislature passed A.B. 4 (Chapter 7, *Statutes of Nevada 2010, 26th Special Session*) which temporarily revised provisions governing class-size reduction to allow school districts flexibility in addressing budget shortfalls. This legislation became effective on March 10, 2010, and was intended to sunset on June 30, 2011. However, the enactment of A.B. 579 (Chapter 370, *Statutes of Nevada 2011*) and S.B. 522 (Chapter 382, *Statutes of Nevada 2013*) temporarily continued the provisions for two more years, through June 30, 2015.

As the economy improved, the 2013 Nevada Legislature was able to address class-size reduction. Together, S.B. 522 and A.B. 2 had the following impacts on class-size reduction:

- In grades K through 2, the statutory class size ratio increased from 15:1 to 16:1;
- In grade 3, the ratio increased from 15:1 to 18:1; For purposes of calculating these ratios, a teacher who teaches multiple classes may only be counted once;
- School districts that exceed the prescribed ratio in any quarter must request a variance from the State Board of Education for the following quarter, and the State Board must, in turn, report this information to the Interim Finance Committee;
- School districts must post on their websites and provide to Nevada’s Department of Education a quarterly report of the average daily attendance in their schools and the ratio of pupils per licensed teacher in grades K through 3. The report must also detail whether a school has an approved alternative class-size reduction plan and if there are any variances from the authorized class-size ratios; and
- Class-size reduction funding was appropriated as follows:
 - ✓ In Fiscal Year (FY) 2013–2014, \$25.5 million to reduce kindergarten class sizes and \$161.7 million to reduce class sizes in grades 1 through 3; and In FY 2014–2015, \$27.9 million to reduce kindergarten class sizes and \$166.5 million to reduce class sizes in grades 1 through 3.

From the program’s beginnings in 1990 through FY 2014–2015, Nevada will have expended nearly \$2.5 billion for the direct costs of funding class-size reduction, excluding any local capital expenditures or operating investments. [From the LCB Fact Sheet prepared by Todd Butterworth, September 2013]

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES

The term **administration expenditures** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe expenditures involving school employees who are not required to hold teaching credentials, such as bus drivers, secretaries, custodians, instructional aides, and some management personnel.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management refers to the wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class. When classroom-management strategies are executed effectively, teachers minimize the behaviors that impede learning for both individual students and groups of students, while maximizing the behaviors that facilitate or enhance learning. Generally speaking, effective teachers tend to display strong classroom-management skills, while the hallmark of the inexperienced or less effective teacher is a disorderly classroom filled with students who are not working or paying attention.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

A **classroom observation** can be either a formal or an informal observation of teaching while it is taking place in a classroom or other learning environment. Typically conducted by fellow teachers, administrators, or instructional specialists, classroom observations are often used to provide teachers with constructive critical feedback aimed at improving their classroom management and instructional techniques. School administrators also regularly observe teachers as an extension of formal job-performance evaluations.

Classroom observations may be called *learning walks*, *teacher observations*, *walkthroughs*, and many other things, and they may be conducted for shorter or longer periods of time—from a few minutes to a full class period or school day. Educators may also use a wide variety of classroom-observation methods—some may be nationally utilized models developed by educational experts, while others may be homegrown processes created by the educators using them. In many cases, observation notes are recorded using common templates or guidelines that describe what observers should be looking for or what the observed teacher would like feedback on.

Increasingly, educators are conducting and recording classroom observations using digital and online technologies—such as smartphones, tablets, and subscription-based online systems—that can provide educators with observational functionality and data analytics that would not be possible if paper-based processes were used.

CLASSROOM- AND SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Classroom-based assessments may be daily instructional assessments, which are teacher-developed. They may include quizzes, tests, instructional worksheets, or other forms of assessment. They should be tied to the standards for the content area with which students are working. **School-based assessments** are based upon district-provided

assessment items tied directly to the standards and intended to provide feedback that will enable the teacher to target deficiencies immediately.

CLOSED CAMPUS

The term **closed campus** usually indicates that the school has one point of entry and a sign-in procedure as safety measures. It also refers to a high school that does not allow students to leave the campus for lunch or does not allow students to come and go without permission during the school day.

CLUSTER

This term is used by educators to describe placing small groups of students together for instruction, especially students who are gifted and talented.

CO-CURRICULAR

Co-curricular refers to activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students are learning in school—i.e., experiences that are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum.

Co-curricular activities are typically, but not always, defined by their separation from academic courses. For example, they are ungraded, they do not allow students to earn academic credit, they may take place outside of school or after regular school hours, and they may be operated by outside organizations. That said, these traditional distinctions between academic and co-curricular programs are being eroded in some schools—see *learning pathways* for a more detailed discussion.

COHERENT CURRICULUM

The term **coherent curriculum**, or *aligned curriculum*, refers to an academic program that is (1) well organized and purposefully designed to facilitate learning, (2) free of academic gaps and needless repetitions, and (3) aligned across lessons, courses, subject areas, and grade levels (a curriculum, in the sense that the term is typically used by educators, encompasses everything that teachers teach to students in a school or course, including the instructional materials and techniques they use).

In most cases, the term refers to the alignment of learning standards and teaching—i.e., how well and to what extent a school or teacher has matched the content that students are actually taught with the academic expectations described in learning standards—but it also refers to coherence among all the many elements that are entailed in educating students, including assessments, standardized tests, textbooks, assignments, lessons, and instructional techniques.

COHORT

Often used in research literature and technical reporting, the term **cohort** refers to a group of individuals who have something in common. In education, cohort is typically applied to students who are educated at the same period of time—a grade level or class of students (for example, the graduating class of 2004) would be the most common example of a student cohort. Cohorts may also be divided into demographic or statistical categories, or subgroups, by age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, or English-language proficiency, among other categories. Educators often track academic data related to specific student

groups, such as standardized-test scores or graduation rates, and the performance of these cohorts is often compared to other cohorts.

COLLEGE-READY

The term **college-ready** is generally applied to (1) students who are considered to be equipped with the knowledge and skills deemed essential for success in university, college, and community-college programs, or (2) the kinds of educational programs and learning opportunities that lead to improved preparation for these two- and four-year collegiate programs..

COMMON PLANNING TIME

In schools, **common planning time** refers to any period of time that is scheduled during the school day for multiple teachers, or teams of teachers, to work together.

In most cases, common planning time is considered to be a form of professional development, since its primary purpose is to bring teachers together to learn from one another and collaborate on projects that will lead to improvements in lesson quality, instructional effectiveness, and student achievement. Generally speaking, these improvements result from (1) the improved coordination and communication that occurs among teachers who meet and talk regularly, (2) the learning, insights, and constructive feedback that occur during professional discussions among teachers, and (3) the lessons, units, materials, and resources that are created or improved when teachers work on them collaboratively. While common planning time may be used for other purposes in some schools and situations—for example, staff members may use the time to coordinate an academic program or school-improvement initiative—the term is predominately associated with teaching-related planning and work.

COMMON STANDARDS

In education, the term **common standards** predominately refers to learning standards—concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education—that are used to guide public-school instruction, assessment, and curricula within a country, state, school, or academic field. That said, there are different types of common standards in education that may be used in a variety of ways.

In brief, standards are considered “common” when (1) a single set of standards is used throughout an education system, state, district, or school, and (2) when they are applied and evaluated in consistent ways, whether they are learning standards for students or professional standards for educators. For example, standardized tests are one method used to consistently evaluate whether students from different schools and states have achieved expected learning standards.

COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

Community-based learning refers to a wide variety of instructional methods and programs that educators use to connect what is being taught in schools to their surrounding communities, including local institutions, history, literature, cultural heritage, and natural environments. Community-based learning is also motivated by the belief that all communities have intrinsic educational assets and resources that educators can use to

enhance learning experiences for students. Synonyms include *community-based education*, *place-based learning*, and *place-based education*, among other terms.

COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING

Competency-based learning refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. In public schools, competency-based systems use state learning standards to determine academic expectations and define “competency” or “proficiency” in a given course, subject area, or grade level (although other sets of standards may also be used, including standards developed by districts and schools or by subject-area organizations). The general goal of competency-based learning is to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential to success in school, higher education, careers, and adult life. If students fail to meet expected learning standards, they typically receive additional instruction, practice time, and academic support to help them achieve competency or meet the expected standards.

COMPREHENSIVE LIFE SKILLS (CLS)

These are programs for students with disabilities focusing on independence and life skills.

COMPUTER-ADAPTIVE TEST

Computer-adaptive tests are designed to adjust the level of difficulty—based on the responses provided—to match the knowledge and ability of a test taker. If a student gives a wrong answer, the computer follows up with an easier question; if the student answers correctly, the next question will be more difficult. Considered to be on the leading edge of assessment technology, computer-adaptive tests represent an attempt to measure the abilities of individual students more precisely, while avoiding some of the issues often associated with the “one-size-fits-all” nature of standardized tests.

For students, computer-adaptive testing offers a shorter testing session with a smaller number of questions, since only those questions considered appropriate for the student are offered. On the other hand, test developers have to create a larger pool of test items so that testing systems have enough questions to match the varied abilities of all students taking the exam. The most current forms of computer-adaptive testing are typically administered online, and because the scoring is computerized, teachers and students can get test results more quickly than with paper-and-pencil tests.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

This term is used to describe a strategy that schools use to prevent and address behavior problems by using peer counselors, mediators, or a school curriculum or program. It usually includes a set of expectations for behavior.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

A term widely used by educators, **content knowledge** refers to the body of information that teachers teach and that students are expected to learn in a given subject or content area, such as English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies. Content knowledge generally refers to the facts, concepts, theories, and principles that are taught

and learned, rather than to related skills—such as reading, writing, or researching—that students also learn in academic courses.

CORE COURSE OF STUDY

Also called *core curriculum*, **core course of study** refers to a series or selection of courses that all students are required to complete before they can move on to the next level in their education or earn a diploma. In high schools, a core course of study will typically include specified classes in the four “core” subject areas—English language arts, math, science, and social studies—during each of the four standard years of high school. Since elementary and middle schools generally offer students a predetermined academic program with fewer optional courses, the term *core course of study* nearly always refers to requirements in high school programs.

CREDIT BY EXAM (CBE)

These assessments are provided in some Nevada school districts so that students may demonstrate their capability to pass an exam that covers the standards and/or skills of a specific content area and earn credit toward high school graduation. These are criterion-referenced tests.

CREDIT RECOVERY

Credit recovery is a term used to describe a wide variety of educational strategies and programs that give high school students who have failed a class the opportunity to redo coursework or retake a course through alternate means—and thereby avoid failure and earn academic credit. In some cases, credit recovery is touted as a dropout-prevention strategy. The most familiar form of credit recovery is perhaps summer-school programs that allow students to recover credit from courses they have failed during the regular school year.

CRITERION-REFERENCED TEST (CRT)

The CRT is an assessment that measures a student’s performance on specific content standards or skills in a content area rather than in comparison to the performances of other test takers in the state or in the nation.

CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is a term used by educators to describe forms of learning, thought, and analysis that go beyond the memorization and recall of information and facts. In common usage, critical thinking is an umbrella term that may be applied to many different forms of learning acquisition or to a wide variety of thought processes. In its most basic expression, critical thinking occurs when students are analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, or synthesizing information and applying creative thought to form an argument, solve a problem, or reach a conclusion.

Critical thinking entails many kinds of intellectual skills, including the following representative examples:

- Developing well-reasoned, persuasive arguments and evaluating and responding to counterarguments;
- Examining concepts or situations from multiple perspectives, including different cultural perspectives;
- Questioning evidence and assumptions to reach novel conclusions;

- Devising imaginative ways to solve problems, especially unfamiliar or complex problems;
- Formulating and articulating thoughtful, penetrating questions; and/or
- Identifying themes or patterns and making abstract connections across subjects.

CURRENT EXPENDITURES

The term **current expenditures** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe expenditures for the day-to-day operation of schools and school districts, including expenditures for staff salaries and benefits, supplies, and purchased services.

CURRICULUM

The term **curriculum** refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. In dictionaries, *curriculum* is often defined as the courses offered by a school, but it is rarely used in such a general sense in schools. Depending on how broadly educators define or employ the term, curriculum typically refers to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning. An individual teacher’s curriculum, for example, would be the specific learning standards, lessons, assignments, and materials used to organize and teach a particular course.

CURRICULUM MAPPING

Curriculum mapping is a process for collecting data that identifies the core content for each subject area in order to improve communication and instruction in all areas of the curriculum. A curriculum map is useful in helping teachers understand what is taught and when in all subject areas and grade levels. A curriculum map is also useful in assisting teachers in creating unified interdisciplinary units that foster students’ understanding of concepts, ideas, and activities across many subject areas.

DEBT

The term **debt** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe long-term credit obligations of the school system or its parent government and all interest-bearing short-term (repayable within one year) credit obligations. The term excludes non-interest-bearing short-term obligations, inter-fund obligations, amount owed in a trust agency capacity, advances, and contingent loans from other governments, and obligations to individuals from school system employee-retirement funds.

DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

The term **demonstration of learning** refers to projects, presentations, or products through which students “demonstrate” what they have learned, usually as a way of determining whether and to what degree they have achieved expected *learning standards* or *learning objectives*. A demonstration of learning is typically both a learning experience in itself and a means of evaluating academic progress and achievement.

DIFFERENTIATION

Differentiation refers to a wide variety of teaching techniques and lesson adaptations that educators use to instruct a diverse group of students, with diverse learning needs, in the same course, classroom, or learning environment. Differentiation is commonly used in “heterogeneous grouping”—an educational strategy in which students of different abilities, learning needs, and levels of academic achievement are grouped together. In heterogeneously grouped classrooms, for example, teachers vary instructional strategies and use more flexibly designed lessons to engage student interests and address distinct learning needs—all of which may vary from student to student. The basic idea is that the primary educational objectives—making sure all students master essential knowledge, concepts, and skills—remain the same for every student, but teachers may use different instructional methods to help students meet those expectations.

Teachers who employ differentiated instructional strategies will usually adjust the elements of a lesson from one group of students to another, so that those who may need more time or a different teaching approach to grasp a concept get the specialized assistance they need, while those students who have already mastered a concept can be assigned a different learning activity or move on to a new concept or lesson. In more diverse classrooms, teachers will tailor lessons to address the unique needs of special-education students, high-achieving students, and English-language learners, for example. Teachers also use strategies such as formative assessment—periodic, in-process evaluations of what students are learning or not learning—to determine the best instructional approaches or modifications needed for each student.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

In general usage, the term **direct instruction** refers to (1) instructional approaches that are structured, sequenced, and led by teachers, and/or (2) the presentation of academic content to students by teachers, such as in a lecture or demonstration. In other words, teachers are “directing” the instructional process or instruction is being “directed” at students.

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR AND ON BEHALF OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This term is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe expenditures for public education that are spent directly by the state government. State expenditure for staff retirement programs is the most common form of direct support. States often report these expenditures as lump sums to the National Center for Education Statistics, which distributes the amounts to specific functions and objects.

DISABILITY

The term **disability** is used to describe any physical or mental condition that affects or prevents one’s ability to develop, achieve, and/or function in an educational setting at a normal rate.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Educators use the term **disruptive behavior** to describe any student’s behavior that interferes with or impedes a teacher’s ability to teach and other students’ abilities to learn.

DROPOUT RATE

According to the Nevada Department of Education’s informational materials, the overall school/program dropout rate is based upon 9–12 grade students who dropped out of school during the previous school year. The dropout statistic applies to schools/programs with any of grades 9-12.

Technically, a dropout is an individual who:

- Was enrolled in a school program at some time during the previous school year (or was expected to return to school during the previous school year from summer);
- Was not enrolled by December 1 of the current school year;
- Has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved instructional program; and
- Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
 - ✓ Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program;
 - ✓ Temporary absence due to suspension or school-approved illness; or
 - ✓ Death.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

The term **dual enrollment** refers to students being enrolled—concurrently—in two distinct academic programs or educational institutions. The term is most prevalently used in reference to high school students taking college courses while they are still enrolled in a secondary school (i.e., a *dual-enrollment student*), or to the programs that allow high school students to take college-level courses (i.e., a *dual-enrollment program*). For this reason, the term *early college* is a common synonym for dual enrollment.

When students are dually enrolled in courses at two separate educational institutions, they may or may not receive academic credit at one or both of the schools. If students do have the opportunity to earn academic credit at both institutions, the term *dual credit* may also be used (see discussion below). In some cases, the college credits students earn through a dual-enrollment experience can be used to satisfy high school graduation requirements, and in other cases the high school will not allow the course, for a variety of possible reasons, to satisfy credit requirements for graduation. High school students may also elect to take a college course independently, and they will therefore be “dually enrolled,” but the high school may not have facilitated or been involved in the decision. In most cases, the college credits earned by dual-enrollment students are recognized at the collegiate level and can qualify as completed course credits after a high school student is accepted into a postsecondary degree program (the acceptance of credit, however, is always an individual institutional decision).

DUAL-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Dual-language education, formerly called *bilingual education*, refers to academic programs that are taught in two languages. (Since the term *bilingual education* has negative associations, it is now more commonly called *dual-language education*, among other terms.) While dual-language education has existed in the United States for roughly two centuries, and it reached its height of popularity in the 1970s, the use of dual-language education in public schools has declined significantly in recent decades due to legislative actions that have sought to limit its use, conflicting research on its benefits, pedagogical

and ideological disagreements, and diminished funding and resources supporting the approach.

DUE PROCESS

This is a term associated with special education used to describe the process where parents may disagree with the program recommendations of the school district. The notice must be given in writing within 30 days. IDEA provides two methods for resolving disputes: mediation or fair hearing.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC)

This special education program is for early intervention with students with disabilities, ages 3-5.

EARLY SUCCESS SCREENING (ESS)

ESS is a 20-minute screening (not a test) used in some school districts for children who are not yet six years of age.

The screening checks the child's eye-hand coordination, fine motor control, language abilities, auditory and visual memory, and large muscle control.

This screening gives the parent an idea about the development of the child. It gives the child an opportunity to meet the kindergarten teacher one-on-one.

The kindergarten teacher gains a mini-picture of her class when screening is complete. Screening enables the kindergarten teacher to identify children who are in need of further assessment to ensure a successful kindergarten year and school experience.

EDUCATION SYSTEM

The term **education system** generally refers to public schooling, not private schooling, and more commonly to kindergarten through high school programs. Schools or school districts are typically the smallest recognized form of "education system" and countries are the largest. States are also considered to have education systems.

Simply put, an education system comprises everything that goes into educating public-school students at the federal, state, or community levels:

- Laws, policies, and regulations;
- Public funding, resource allocations, and procedures for determining funding levels;
- State and district administrative offices, school facilities, and transportation vehicles;
- Human resources, staffing, contracts, compensation, and employee benefits;
- Books, computers, teaching resources, and other learning materials; AND
- And, of course, countless other contributing elements.

While the term *education system* is widely and frequently used in news media and public discourse, it may be difficult to determine precisely what the term is referring to when it is used without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation.

Like the teaching profession, education systems are, by nature, extremely complex and multifaceted, and the challenges entailed in reforming or improving them can be similarly complex and multifaceted. Even reforms that appear to be straightforward, simple, or easily

achieved may, in practice, require complicated state-policy changes, union-contract negotiations, school-schedule modifications, or countless other conditions.

ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY EDUCATION

This term is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to encompass programs providing instruction, or assisting in providing instruction for students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first through twelfth grades, and ungraded programs.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENDITURES

This term is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe expenditures made in addition to gross salary that are not paid directly to employees. Employee benefits include amounts paid by, or on behalf of, an LEA for retirement contributions, health insurance, social security contributions, unemployment compensation, worker's compensation, tuition reimbursements, and other employee benefits.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNER

English Language Learners, or ELLs, are students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.

The federal government provides limited additional funding for states and school districts in the form of Title III grants for supplementary services for **English Language Learner** students. These students are sometimes called Limited English Proficient.

ENTERPRISE OPERATIONS

The term **enterprise operations** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe all amounts of money paid out by a school system, net of recoveries and other correcting transactions, other than for retirement of debt, purchases of securities, extension of loans, and agency transactions. Expenditures include only noncash transactions such as the provision of perquisites or other in-kind payments.

EQUITY

In education, the term **equity** refers to the principle of *fairness*. While it is often used interchangeably with the related principle of *equality*, equity encompasses a wide variety of educational models, programs, and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal. It has been said that "equity is the process; equality is the outcome," given that equity—what is fair and just—may not, in the process of educating students, reflect strict equality—what is applied, allocated, or distributed equally.

Inequities occur as when biased or unfair policies, programs, practices, or situations contribute to a lack of equality in educational performance, results, and outcomes. For example, certain students or groups of students may attend school, graduate, or enroll in postsecondary education at lower rates, or they may perform comparatively poorly on

standardized tests due to a wide variety of factors, including inherent biases or flaws in test designs.

EVIDENCE-BASED

A widely used adjective in education, **evidence-based** refers to any concept or strategy that is derived from or informed by objective evidence—most commonly, educational research or metrics of school, teacher, and student performance. Among the most common applications are *evidence-based decisions*, *evidence-based school improvement*, and *evidence-based instruction*. The related modifiers *data-based*, *research-based*, and *scientifically based* are also widely used when the evidence in question consists largely or entirely of data, academic research, or scientific findings.

If an educational strategy is evidence-based, data-based, or research-based, educators compile, analyze, and use objective evidence to design an academic program or guide the modification of instructional techniques. For example, ninth-grade teachers in a high school may systematically review academic data on incoming freshman to determine which students may need some form of specialized assistance and which students may be at greater risk of dropping out or struggling academically. By looking at absenteeism, disciplinary infractions, and course-failure rates during middle school, teachers can identify students who are more likely to struggle in ninth grade, and they can then proactively prepare academic programs, services, and learning opportunities to reduce the likelihood that those students will fail or drop out. In this case, educators are taking an evidence-based approach to instructing and supporting students in ninth grade. (This specific example is often called an “early warning system.”)

EXHIBITION

In education, the term **exhibition** refers to projects, presentations, or products through which students “exhibit” what they have learned, usually as a way of demonstrating whether and to what degree they have achieved expected learning standards or learning objectives. An exhibition is typically both a learning experience in itself and a means of evaluating academic progress and achievement.

EXPANDED LEARNING TIME

Also called *extended learning time*, the term **expanded learning time** refers to any educational program or strategy intended to increase the amount of time students are learning, especially for the purposes of improving academic achievement and test scores, or reducing learning loss, learning gaps, and achievement gaps. For this reason, expanding learning time could be considered a de facto reform strategy, since expanding learning time is typically needed or proposed only when students are not performing or achieving at expected levels. (One exception would be optional learning-enrichment programs, which may increase the amount of time students are learning, but that may also be viewed as elective or non-required opportunities for students to enhance or further their education.)

Extended (or expanded) school days and school weeks are also used as a strategy for increasing the amount of time students receive instruction; engage in learning opportunities in areas such as sports and arts; learn through non-traditional experiences such as apprenticeships or internships; or get academic support as part of their school days or years.

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR (ESY)

The **extended school year** is a program for students with disabilities developed as part of the IEP process in accordance with IDEA to serve students beyond the 180-day school year.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - ✓ School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - ✓ Other schools to which a student is transferring;
 - ✓ Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - ✓ Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
 - ✓ Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - ✓ Accrediting organizations;
 - ✓ To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - ✓ Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - ✓ State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

When questions arise about FERPA and its often complex interpretation(s), NASB strongly encourages school board members to contact the superintendent or his/her designee.

FEDERAL REVENUES

The term **federal revenues** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe revenues from the federal government, including direct grants-in-aid to schools or agencies, funds distributed through a state or intermediate agency, and revenues in lieu of taxes to compensate a school district for nontaxable federal institutions within the district's boundaries.

FISCAL YEAR

This term is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe the twelve-month period to which the annual operating budget applies. At the end of the fiscal year, the agency determines its financial condition and the result of its operations.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Formative assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. Formative assessments help teachers identify concepts that students are struggling to understand, skills they are having difficulty acquiring, or learning standards they have not yet achieved so that adjustments can be made to lessons, instructional techniques, and academic support.

The general goal of formative assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning *while it's happening*. What makes an assessment "formative" is not the design of a test, technique, or self-evaluation, per se, but the way it is used—i.e., to inform in-process teaching and learning modifications.

FREE AND APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE)

Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance, including federal funds. Section 504 provides that: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance"

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) enforces Section 504 in programs and activities that receive funds from ED. Recipients of these funds include public school districts, institutions of higher education, and other state and local education agencies. ED has published a regulation implementing Section 504 (34 C.F.R. Part 104) and maintains an Office for Civil Rights (OCR), with 12 enforcement offices and a headquarters office in Washington, D.C., to enforce Section 504 and other civil rights laws that pertain to recipients of funds.

The Section 504 regulation requires a school district to provide a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)** to each qualified person with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the person's disability.

FAPE is one of the most misunderstood concepts of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). And it often causes the greatest conflict between parents and schools. A required component of IDEA, FAPE mandates that school districts provide access to general education and specialized educational services. It also requires that children with disabilities receive support free of charge as is provided to non-disabled students. It also provides access to general education services for children with disabilities by encouraging that support and related services be provided to children in their general education settings as much as possible.

Over the years, the courts have helped define what FAPE is and is not. The exact requirements of "appropriate" are not defined, but other references within the law imply the most "normal" setting available.

FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH (FRL)

Free and reduced price lunches are provided to students whose families fall below a minimum income threshold as determined by the federal government.

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT (FBA)

The **functional behavioral assessment** is required by the IDEA to address behavior issues that are interfering with a special education eligible child's progress in school. It is, generally, considered to be an approach that incorporates a variety of techniques and strategies to diagnose the causes and to identify interventions intended to address problem behaviors. Federal regulations enumerate what must be included in a functional analysis:

1. Systematic observation of the occurrence of targeted behaviors that address frequency, duration, and intensity;
2. Systematic observation of the antecedent events;
3. Systematic observation and analysis of the consequences following the display of behavior to determine the function of the behavior;
4. Ecological analysis of the settings in which the behavior occurs most frequently;
5. Review of health and medical information that may influence behavior; and
6. Review of behavior history to include the effectiveness of previously used interventions.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION EXPENDITURES

The term **general administration expenditures** is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe expenditures for the board of education and superintendent's office for the administration of LEAs.

GRADUATION RATE

In 2005, the National Governors Association (NGA) introduced the 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate calculation in an effort to move all states towards using a common calculation. The Adjusted Cohort formula has been deemed more accurate than other calculations in its ability to track student movement over time. In 2008, the federal government adopted NGA's formula and mandated that states calculate cohort rates beginning with 2011 graduates.

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form

the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. For any given cohort, students who are entering grade 9 for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently “adjusted” by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during that same period. This definition is defined in federal regulation 34 C.F.R. §200.19(b) (1) (i)-(iv).

Who counts as a graduate?

The graduation rate is defined as the percent of students who graduated from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years, which in most cases is four but could be three or two. It cannot be more than four. Students who graduate in less than four years are counted with the students in their assigned four-year cohort, not in the year when they actually graduate. Students who have dropped out of school and undocumented transfers must remain in the cohort number but will not count as graduates.

How is a student assigned to a cohort?

The original cohort comprises entering first-time ninth-graders in the school district. Any student who transfers in after the opening of school is assigned to the cohort that corresponds to the cohort the student would have been in if he or she had been in your school as an entering freshman. This applies to students coming into the school from any other location, even outside of the United States. The district determines the cohort placement and the student remains in that cohort through the rest of high school.

When is a student a dropout?

One of the aims of the new adjusted cohort graduation rate is to increase the accuracy of the country’s dropout and graduate data so that we can get a true picture of students who are not earning diplomas. In order to do that, the real count of those who drop out or whose transfers cannot be documented must remain in the denominator of the formula. Undocumented transfers count as dropouts. When assessing who is a dropout, the important criterion, according to the federal law, is to demonstrate that the student is continuing his or her education in an instructional program that leads to a standard state high school diploma. A student is a dropout when he or she has terminated his or her education before graduation or when a district cannot verify that the student is pursuing an education toward a regular diploma in another educational location. In the following examples, these students would be coded as dropouts:

- Left school to get a GED;
- Has not shown up for ten consecutive days and/or his or her whereabouts are unknown;
- Purported to be homeschooled but produced no documentation; or
- Entered the high school in the senior year then did not show up after a period of time. Once the school district accepts a transferred SID or assigns a new SID to a student at any time, that school owns the student’s records.

GROWTH MINDSET

The concept of a **growth mindset** was developed by psychologist Carol Dweck and popularized in her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. In recent years, many schools and educators have started using Dweck’s theories to inform how they teach students.

A *mindset*, according to Dweck, is a self-perception or “self-theory” that people hold about themselves. Believing that you are either “intelligent” or “unintelligent” is a simple example of a mindset. People may also have a mindset related their personal or professional lives—“I’m a good teacher” or “I’m a bad parent,” for example. People can be aware or unaware of

their mindsets, according to Dweck, but they can have profound effect on learning achievement, skill acquisition, personal relationships, professional success, and many other dimensions of life.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

In education, the term **high expectations**, or the phrase *common high expectations*, typically refers to any effort to set the same high educational standards for all students in a class, school, or education system. The concept of high expectations is premised on the philosophical and pedagogical belief that a failure to hold all students to high expectations effectively denies them access to a high-quality education, since the educational achievement of students tends to rise or fall in direct relation to the expectations placed upon them. In other words, students who are expected to learn more or perform better generally do so, while those held to lower expectations usually achieve less.

HIGH-STAKES TEST

A **high-stakes test** is any test used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, most commonly for the purpose of accountability—i.e., the attempt by federal, state, or local government agencies and school administrators to ensure that students are enrolled in effective schools and being taught by effective teachers. In general, “high stakes” means that test scores are used to determine punishments (such as sanctions, penalties, funding reductions, negative publicity), accolades (awards, public celebration, positive publicity), advancement (grade promotion or graduation for students), or compensation (salary increases or bonuses for administrators and teachers).

HONORS COURSE

The term **honors course** is a common label applied to courses, predominantly at the high school level, that are considered to be more academically challenging and prestigious. Students enrolled in honors courses generally receive greater academic recognition and possibly, if the course awards weighted grades, a numerical advantage when it comes to grading. Historically, honors courses have entailed more demanding college-preparatory coursework, and they were intended for the highest-achieving or most academically accelerated students in a school. In many cases, students need to meet certain prerequisites, such as a teacher recommendation or an average grade of B or higher in a previous course, to gain admission to an honors course. Honors courses may be the highest-level courses or “track” offered by the school, or they may be above “college prep” but below specialized courses such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate. In some schools, however, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses will be considered the school’s “honors courses.”

INCLUSION

This term is used primarily for students with disabilities and describes their involvement in an educational setting that best meets their needs.

INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION (IEE)

A school district is required by law to conduct assessments for students who may be eligible for special education. If the parent disagrees with the results of a school district's evaluation conducted on their child, they have the right to request an **independent educational evaluation**.

The district must provide parents with information about how to obtain an IEE. An independent educational evaluation means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district. Public expense means the school district pays for the full cost of the evaluation and that it is provided at no cost to the parent.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

The **individualized education program** is a written education plan for a school-aged child with disabilities that is developed by a team of professionals (teachers, therapists, etc.) and the child's parents or family to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities who require specially designed instruction. This plan must be reviewed and updated yearly. It describes how the child is presently doing, specifies the child's learning needs, and describes what services the child will need.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM TEAM

Educators use the term **individualized education program team** used to describe the committee of parents, teachers, administrators and school personnel that provides services to the student. The committee may also include medical professional and other relevant parties. The team reviews assessment results, determines goals and objectives and program placement for the child needing services.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (IDEA)

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a United States federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, *special education*, and related services to children with disabilities. It addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities from age 3 to age 18 or 21 in cases that involve 14 specified categories of disability.

The IDEA is "spending clause" legislation, meaning that it only applies to those States and their local educational agencies that accept federal funding under the IDEA. While States declining such funding are not subject to the IDEA, all States have accepted funding under this statute and are subject to it.

The IDEA and its predecessor statute, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, arose from federal case law holding the deprivation of free public education to disabled children constitutes a deprivation of due process. It has grown in scope and form over the years. IDEA has been reauthorized and amended a number of times, most recently in December 2004, which contained several significant amendments. Its terms are further defined by regulations of the United States Department of Education, which are found in Parts 300 and 301 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

- **Part B** - Section of IDEA that defines requirements of serving students ages 3 through 21 and
- **Part C** - Section of IDEA that defines requirements of serving students birth through 3.

INTERIM ASSESSMENT

An **interim assessment** is a form of assessment that educators use to (1) evaluate where students are in their learning progress and (2) determine whether they are on track to performing well on future assessments, such as standardized tests or end-of-course exams.

Interim assessments are usually administered periodically during a course or school year (for example, every six or eight weeks) and separately from the process of instructing students. (In education, the term *assessment* refers to the wide variety of methods that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students.)

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ORGANIZATION

The **International Baccalaureate Organization** is a non-profit international educational organization that was established in 1968. The IBO offers three programs of international education that span the primary, middle, and secondary school years. The Diploma Program for IB students is a two-year course of study that prepares students for university. It is a broad and balanced curriculum in which all candidates study languages, a social science, an experimental science, mathematics, and normally, an arts subject. Wherever possible, the subjects are approached from an international perspective. Diploma program candidates typically take six exams, including one literature course taught in the student's native language, one foreign language, one social science, one experimental science, one mathematics, and one arts course. IB students take their examinations at the end of the two-year Diploma Program.

INTERNSHIP

The term **internship** refers to work-based learning in which a partnership is established between the schools, the employer or business, and the student for the purpose of providing practical education to the student through productive work opportunities. A signed agreement between all parties, outlining a student's cooperative learning plan, is a necessary component of an internship.

iNVEST

In 2003, the Nevada Association of School Boards and Nevada Association of School Superintendents joined together to consider the question: "What will it take to improve student achievement in our schools?" At that time, both board members and superintendents were intently focused on improving the educational achievement of every student in every classroom in every school across the State. At that time, these leaders answered their own question by providing a comprehensive plan to improve student achievement throughout the Silver State. That plan was called *iNVEST*, and it was introduced to legislators, elected officials, key stakeholders, and anyone and everyone who would listen to what Nevada's education leaders knew needed to be done to improve student achievement in Nevada. Before each Session of the Nevada Legislature from 2003 to 2015, *iNVEST* has been reconsidered and updated as an overall, statewide approach—both short-term and long-term—to communicate what is needed to improve learning and achievement for all Nevada students.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

A **leadership team** is typically a group of administrators, teachers, and other staff members who make important governance decisions in a school and/or who lead and coordinate school-improvement initiatives. While most leadership teams are composed of on-staff administrators and educators, the specific composition of a team can vary widely from school to school, and the teams may also include student, parent, and community representatives—a variation that is often called a *school-improvement committee* or *school-improvement council*, among other terms. Participants may volunteer for a leadership team,

or they may be recruited by administrators. Educators may also receive a stipend for taking on leadership-team responsibilities, especially if the school has received a grant to fund the positions, but it can be just as common for educators to volunteer their time. Not all schools have leadership teams.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Learning environment refers to the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn. Since students may learn in a wide variety of settings, such as outside-of-school locations and outdoor environments, the term is often used as a more accurate or preferred alternative to *classroom*, which has more limited and traditional connotations—a room with rows of desks and a chalkboard, for example.

The term also encompasses the culture of a school or class—its presiding ethos and characteristics, including how individuals interact with and treat one another—as well as the ways in which teachers may organize an educational setting to facilitate learning—e.g., by conducting classes in relevant natural ecosystems, grouping desks in specific ways, decorating the walls with learning materials, or utilizing audio, visual, and digital technologies. And because the qualities and characteristics of a learning environment are determined by a wide variety of factors, school policies, governance structures, and other features may also be considered elements of a “learning environment.”

LEARNING GAP

Closely related to *achievement gap* and *opportunity gap*, a **learning gap** is the difference between what a student has learned—i.e., the academic progress he or she has made—and what the student was expected to learn at a certain point in his or her education, such as a particular age or grade level. A learning gap can be relatively minor—the failure to acquire a specific skill or meet a particular learning standard, for example—or it can be significant and educationally consequential, as in the case of students who have missed large amounts of schooling (for a more detailed discussion, see *learning loss*).

LEARNING LOSS

The term **learning loss** refers to any specific or general loss of knowledge and skills or to reversals in academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student’s education. While learning loss can manifest in a wide variety of ways for a variety of reasons, the following are a few representative examples of widely recognized forms of learning loss:

- **Summer break:** Perhaps the most commonly cited form is “summer learning loss,” which occurs when students take extended breaks in their education during the summer. Since most public schools typically take summer breaks that can last up to two or two-and-a-half months, summer learning loss is a fairly universal and well-documented issue in the United States. Consequently, schools may adopt a variety of strategies intended to mitigate the learning loss that occurs over summer breaks. If students are unprepared upon returning to school in the fall, for example, teachers may review content that was taught the previous year or schools may provide some students with additional instructional time or academic support. Districts and schools may also offer a variety of summer learning programs designed to help students make up lost academic ground, provide greater educational continuity, or accelerate academic progress. Another common strategy is generally known as expanded learning time, which encompasses any attempt to improve learning acquisition, or

reduce learning loss, by increasing the amount of time students are in school and receiving instruction from teachers.

- **Interrupted formal education:** Students may experience significant interruptions in their formal education for a wide variety of reasons. One of the most commonly cited examples is the learning loss experienced by recently immigrated refugee students who, often due to societal unrest in their home countries, have been unable to attend school for extended periods of time—in fact, in some cases these students may never have attended a formal school or may not have attended school for several years. The term “students with interrupted formal education,” or SIFE, is often used in reference to these students.
- **Returning dropouts:** If a student returns to school after dropping out for an extended period of time, even multiple years, the student may have experienced significant learning loss or gaps in his or her education. In these cases, students may need to repeat previous grades, complete additional coursework, or accelerate their learning progress in other ways.
- **Senior year:** The senior year of high school is often considered to be a potential source of learning loss. Since high schools commonly have course-credit requirements that allow students to satisfy the majority of their graduation requirements in advance of their senior year, many twelfth-grade students elect to take a reduced course load or leave school after half a day. If students complete their credit requirements in math during eleventh grade, for example, and they do not elect to take math class during twelfth grade, they could be at a disadvantage when taking placement tests or a math course during their first year of college (in fact, these students may be required to take a full-priced remedial math course that does not allow them to earn course credit and satisfy graduation requirements). In addition, some educators and reformers feel that senior-year learning loss represents a missed opportunity for students, and many schools have pursued strategies aimed at mitigating senior-year learning loss, including capstone projects, multifaceted assignments that serve as culminating academic and intellectual experiences for students, or increasing graduation requirements so that students need to take “four years” of math, English, science, and social studies.
- **School absence:** A prolonged health-related absence would be another potential source of learning loss, as would any family decision to remove students from school or discontinue their formal education. Another common form of absence is the school suspension or expulsion, which can lead to either minor or significant learning loss. In some cases, districts and schools have explored alternatives to suspensions and expulsions, reasoning that the denial of formal education may not be the best way to address behavioral issues or help troubled students who may already be on the path to dropping out or worse, such as choosing criminal pursuits over completing their education and finding gainful employment.
- **Ineffective teaching:** Lower-quality teaching can, in some cases, lead to slower academic progress, which produce learning losses in relation to other students or in terms of where students are expected to be at a specific stage in their education. For example, some studies have found evidence that highly effective teachers can teach students up to a year and a half (or more) of content in a single year, while other teachers may teach students only a half year of content over the course of a full year of school. If students receive poor-quality teaching over multiple years, learning losses can compound and grow more severe, decreasing the students’ chances of catching up with their peers or completing school.
- **Course scheduling:** While relatively rare, school schedules—if they are not properly designed and coordinated—can lead to learning loss for some students. Perhaps the most commonly discussed examples are certain forms of block scheduling, which can create half-year or yearlong gaps in the continuity of instruction in some subjects,

such as in mathematics or world language (most schools that use block scheduling, however, will typically takes steps to avoid such gaps).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In education, **learning objectives** are brief statements that describe what students will be expected to learn by the end of school year, course, unit, lesson, project, or class period. In many cases, learning objectives are the interim academic goals that teachers establish for students who are working toward meeting more comprehensive learning standards.

LEARNING PATHWAY

When used in the singular, **learning pathway** refers to the specific courses, academic programs, and learning experiences that individual students complete as they progress in their education toward graduation. In its plural form, the term *learning pathways*—or any of its common synonyms, such as *multiple pathways* or *personalized pathways*—typically refers to the various courses, programs, and learning opportunities offered by schools, community organizations, or local businesses that allow students to earn academic credit and satisfy graduation requirements.

The “learning pathway” concept nearly always implies an expansion of educational options beyond the course sequences historically offered to students. The concept is most commonly applied to educational experiences, usually at the high school level, that occur outside of traditional classroom settings or school buildings, such as internships, apprenticeships, independent research projects, online classes, travel, community-service projects, or dual-enrollment experiences, for example. While many schools are either creating and incorporating alternative learning options for students, academic courses remain the foundational learning experiences offered by most schools; therefore, they would still be considered one of the “learning pathways” available to students.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

The term **learning progression** refers to the purposeful sequencing of teaching and learning expectations across multiple developmental stages, ages, or grade levels. The term is most commonly used in reference to learning standards—concise, clearly articulated descriptions of what students should know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education.

Learning progressions are typically categorized and organized by subject area, such as mathematics or science, and they map out a specific sequence of knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn as they progress through their education. There are two main characteristics of learning progressions: (1) the standards described at each level are intended to address the specific learning needs and abilities of students at a particular stage of their intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development, and (2) the standards reflect clearly articulated sequences—i.e., the learning expectations for each grade level build upon previous expectations while preparing students for more challenging concepts and more sophisticated coursework at the next level. The basic idea is to make sure that students are learning age-appropriate material (knowledge and skills that are neither too advanced nor too rudimentary), and that teachers are sequencing learning effectively and avoiding the inadvertent repetition of material that was taught in earlier grades.

LEARNING STANDARDS

Learning standards are concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. Learning standards describe educational objectives—i.e., what students should have learned by the end of a course, grade level, or grade span—but they do not describe any particular teaching practice, curriculum, or assessment method (although this is a source of ongoing confusion and debate).

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)

Under IDEA, schools must provide services with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate for students with disabilities. This is an educational setting or program that provides a student with disabilities the chance to work and to learn to the best of his/her ability. The environment also provides the student as much contact as possible with children without disabilities, while meeting all of the child's learning needs and physical requirements.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP)

LEP students are those for whom English is a second language and who are not reading or writing in English at grade level. This is another term for describing students who are English Language Learners (ELL).

LOCAL CONTROL

In education, **local control** refers to (1) the governing and management of public schools by elected or appointed representatives serving on governing bodies, such as school boards or school committees, that are located in the communities served by the schools, and (2) the degree to which local leaders, institutions, and governing bodies can make independent or autonomous decisions about the governance and operation of public schools.

The concept of local control is grounded in a philosophy of government premised on the belief that the individuals and institutions closest to the students and most knowledgeable about a school—and most invested in the welfare and success of its educators, students, and communities—are best suited to making important decisions related to its operation, leadership, staffing, academics, teaching, and improvement. This general philosophy of governance is often contrasted with state or federal policies intended to influence the structure, operation, or academic programs in public schools, given that level of control granted to local governing bodies is directly related to the level of prescription articulated in education laws, regulations, and related compliance rules and requirements.

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA)

This term is used by the National Center for Education Statistics and other agencies involved with revenues and expenditures to describe the government agency at the local level whose primary responsibility is to operate public schools or to contract for public school services.

LOCUS OF CONTROL

Locus of control is a psychological concept that refers to how strongly people believe they have control over the situations and experiences that affect their lives. In education, locus of control typically refers to how students perceive the causes of their academic success or failure in school.

Students with an “internal locus of control” generally believe that their success or failure is a result of the effort and hard work they invest in their education. Students with an “external locus of control” generally believe that their successes or failures result from external factors beyond their control, such as luck, fate, circumstance, injustice, bias, or teachers who are unfair, prejudiced, or unskilled. For example, students with an internal locus of control might blame poor grades on their failure to study. By contrast, students with an external locus of control may blame an unfair teacher or test for their poor performance.

MAINSTREAMING

Educators use the term **mainstreaming** to describe the integration of children with special needs into regular classrooms for part of the school day. The remainder of the school day is in a special education classroom.

MEASUREMENT ERROR

Measurement error in education generally refers to either (1) the difference between what a test score indicates and a student’s actual knowledge and abilities or (2) errors that are introduced when collecting and calculating data-based reports, figures, and statistics related to schools and students.

Because some degree of measurement error is inevitable in testing and data reporting, education researchers, statisticians, data professionals, and test developers often publicly acknowledge that performance data, such as high school graduation rates or college-enrollment rates, are not perfectly reliable (they may even report the “margin of error” for a given statistic or finding) or that test scores don’t always accurately reflect what students know or can do—i.e., that there is no such thing as a perfectly reliable test of student knowledge and skill acquisition.

MENTAL RETARDATION

This term has recently been changed; the term ***Intellectually Disabled*** is now used in its place. This disorder is characterized by below average cognitive functioning in two or more adaptive behaviors with onset before age 18.

MISSION AND VISION

A **mission statement**, or simply a *mission*, is a public declaration that schools or other educational organizations use to describe their founding purpose and major organizational commitments—i.e., what they do and why they do it. A mission statement may describe a school’s day-to-day operational objectives, its instructional values, or its public commitments to its students and community.

A **vision statement**, or simply a *vision*, is a public declaration that schools or other educational organizations use to describe their high-level goals for the future—what they hope to achieve if they successfully fulfill their organizational purpose or mission. A vision statement may describe a school’s loftiest ideals, its core organizational values, its long-term objectives, or what it hopes its students will learn or be capable of doing after graduating.

The terms **mission statement** and **vision statement** are often used interchangeably. While some educators and schools may loosely define the two terms, or even blur the

traditional lines that have separated them, there appears to be general agreement in the education community on the major distinctions between a “mission” and a “vision.” Generally speaking, a vision statement expresses a hoped-for future reality, while a mission statement declares the practical commitments and actions that a school believes are needed to achieve its vision. While a vision statement describes the end goal—the change sought by a school—a mission statement may describe its broad academic and operational assurances, as well as its commitment to its students and community.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Multicultural education refers to any form of education or teaching that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds. At the classroom level, for example, teachers may modify or incorporate lessons to reflect the cultural diversity of the students in a particular class. In many cases, “culture” is defined in the broadest possible sense, encompassing race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, and “exceptionality”—a term applied to students with specialized needs or disabilities.

Generally speaking, multicultural education is predicated on the principle of educational equity for all students, regardless of culture, and it strives to remove barriers to educational opportunities and success for students from different cultural backgrounds. In practice, educators may modify or eliminate educational policies, programs, materials, lessons, and instructional practices that are either discriminatory toward or insufficiently inclusive of diverse cultural perspectives.

Multicultural education also assumes that the ways in which students learn and think are deeply influenced by their cultural identity and heritage, and that to teach culturally diverse students effectively requires educational approaches that value and recognize their cultural backgrounds. In this way, multicultural education aims to improve the learning and success of all students, particularly students from cultural groups that have been historically underrepresented or that suffer from lower educational achievement and attainment.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. Assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history, and beginning in 2014, in Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL).

Since NAEP assessments are administered uniformly using the same sets of test booklets across the nation, NAEP results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts. The assessment stays essentially the same from year to year, with only carefully documented changes. This permits NAEP to provide a clear picture of student academic progress over time.

As NAEP moves into computer-based assessments, the assessment administration will remain uniform continuing the importance of NAEP as a common metric. Read more about the future of the NAEP assessment.

NAEP provides results on subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment for populations of students (e.g., all fourth graders) and groups within those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools, although state NAEP can report results by selected large urban districts. NAEP results are based on representative samples of students at grades 4, 8, and 12 for the main assessments, or samples of students at ages 9, 13, or 17 years for the long-term trend assessment. These grades and ages were chosen because they represent critical junctures in academic achievement.

There are two NAEP websites: one dealing with the different components of the NAEP assessment and one presenting the results. When NAEP results are reported, they become part of "The Nation's Report Card." To find results from a particular assessment quickly, use the table at The Nation's Report Card website.

NATIONAL SPANISH TEST

This nationally-normed test is designed to enable students taking Spanish to demonstrate their achievement compared with students in comparable courses throughout the nation.

NEVADA ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

Since 1996, Nevada has been a standards-based education system. With the adoption of the Common Core state standards in October 2010, the standards became the Nevada Academic Content Standards for English/language arts and mathematics. With this action, the State Board of Education committed to ensuring that all students are ready for college and careers. For additional detailed information, see related documents on the NASB website: www.nvasb.org.

NEVADA EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES (NEIS)

Formerly Special Children's Clinic, this state agency provides programs for serving students birth through 3 under Part C of IDEA.

NEVADA READY!

Nevada Ready! is a statewide initiative led by the Nevada Department of Education and the Nevada Board of Education, and is financially supported by the Nevada Public Education Foundation. The Department is partnering with the Nevada System of Higher Education, local school districts, and public and private organizations and agencies.

The original intention of the *Nevada Ready!* initiative has been to raise awareness of the state's public school standards, which define what students are expected to learn and be able to do as they move from grade to grade. Although standards are not new to education in Nevada, today's students are being taught under more challenging standards to prepare them for college and the modern workplace and to place Nevada's education system on par with every other state in our great nation. Virtually all of Nevada's education initiatives are built upon these standards—with the goal of increasing expectations of what students will know and master to be college and career ready, and equipped to compete globally.

Through a comprehensive communications initiative, *Nevada Ready!* has been providing information to help educators, students, parents, community leaders and others understand the standards of education adopted by the Department and Board, the tests that will be given to assess student and teacher performance and ways to use those results to help students, educators, schools and school districts reach these new, rigorous standards.

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS (NGSS)

The National Research Council (NRC), the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Achieve have completed a two-step process to develop the Next Generation Science Standards.

Step One: Getting the Science Right The NRC, the staff arm of the National Academy of Sciences, began by developing the *A Framework for K–12 Science Education*. The *Framework* was a critical first step because it is grounded in the most current research on science and science learning and identified the science all K–12 students should know. To undertake this effort, the NRC convened a committee of 18 individuals who are nationally and internationally known in their respective fields. The committee was composed of practicing scientists, including two Nobel laureates, cognitive scientists, science education researchers, and science education standards and policy experts. In addition, the NRC used four design teams to develop the Framework. These design teams, in physical science, life science, earth/space science, and engineering, developed the framework for their respective disciplinary areas. A public draft was released in July of 2010. The NRC reviewed comments and considered all feedback prior to releasing the final Framework on July 19, 2011.

Step Two: States Developing Next Generation Science Standards In a process managed by Achieve, states lead the development of K–12 science standards, rich in content and practice, arranged in a coherent manner across disciplines and grades to provide all students an internationally-benchmarked science education. The NGSS is based on the *Framework* and will prepare students for college and careers. The NGSS was developed collaboratively with states and other stakeholders in science, science education, higher education and industry. Additional review and guidance was provided by advisory committees composed of nationally-recognized leaders in science and science education as well as business and industry. As part of the development process, the standards underwent multiple reviews from many stakeholders including two public drafts, allowing all who have a stake in science education an opportunity to inform the development of the standards. This process produced a set of high quality, college- and career-ready K–12 *Next Generation Science Standards* ready for state adoption. The standards may be accessed online using this link: <http://www.nextgenscience.org/next-generation-science-standards>.

NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIMS)

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work together seamlessly and manage incidents involving all threats and hazards—regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity—in order to reduce loss of life, property and harm to the environment. The NIMS is the essential foundation to the National Preparedness System (NPS) and provides the template for the management of incidents and operations in support of all five National Planning Frameworks. More about NIMS can be accessed online using this link: <http://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system>.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT (NCLB)

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, signed into law by President Bush on Jan. 8, 2002, was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the central federal law in pre-collegiate education. The ESEA, first enacted in 1965 and previously reauthorized

in 1994, encompasses Title I, the federal government's flagship aid program for disadvantaged students.

Coming at a time of wide public concern about the state of education, the NCLB legislation set in place requirements that reached into virtually every public school in America. It expanded the federal role in education and took particular aim at improving the educational lot of disadvantaged students.

At the core of the No Child Left Behind Act were a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress. They represented significant changes to the education landscape (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

- **Annual Testing:** By the 2005-06 school year, states were required to begin testing students in grades 3-8 annually in reading and mathematics. By 2007-08, they had to test students in science at least once in elementary, middle, and high school. The tests had to be aligned with state academic standards. A sample of 4th and 8th graders in each state also had to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress testing program in reading and math every other year to provide a point of comparison for state test results.
- **Academic Progress:** States were required to bring all students up to the "proficient" level on state tests by the 2013-14 school year. Individual schools had to meet state "adequate yearly progress" targets toward this goal (based on a formula spelled out in the law) for both their student populations as a whole and for certain demographic subgroups. If a school receiving federal Title I funding failed to meet the target two years in a row, it would be provided technical assistance and its students would be offered a choice of other public schools to attend. Students in schools that failed to make adequate progress three years in a row also were offered supplemental educational services, including private tutoring. For continued failures, a school would be subject to outside corrective measures, including possible governance changes.
- **Report Cards:** Starting with the 2002-03 school year, states were required to furnish annual report cards showing a range of information, including student-achievement data broken down by subgroup and information on the performance of school districts. Districts must provide similar report cards showing school-by-school data.
- **Teacher Qualifications:** By the end of the 2005-06 school year, every teacher in core content areas working in a public school had to be "highly qualified" in each subject he or she taught. Under the law, "highly qualified" generally meant that a teacher was certified and demonstrably proficient in his or her subject matter. Beginning with the 2002-03 school year, all new teachers hired with federal Title I money had to be "highly qualified." By the end of the 2005-06 school year, all school paraprofessionals hired with Title I money must have completed at least two years of college, obtained an associate's degree or higher, or passed an evaluation to demonstrate knowledge and teaching ability.
- **Reading First:** The act created a new competitive-grant program called Reading First, funded at \$1.02 billion in 2004, to help states and districts set up "scientific, research-based" reading programs for children in grades K-3 (with priority given to high-poverty areas). A smaller early-reading program sought to help states better prepare 3- to 5-year-olds in disadvantaged areas to read. The program's funding was later cut drastically by Congress amid budget talks.
- **Funding Changes:** Through an alteration in the Title I funding formula, the No Child Left Behind Act was expected to better target resources to school districts with high concentrations of poor children. The law also included provisions intended to give

states and districts greater flexibility in how they spent a portion of their federal allotments.

Given its scope and detail, the No Child Left Behind Act was the source of considerable controversy and debate in the education community. As the law's effects began to be felt, some educators and policymakers questioned the feasibility and fairness of its goals and time frames.

Concerns about the law grew, particularly concerning its rules surrounding adequate yearly progress and the goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2013-14. Traditionally high-performing schools made headlines as they failed to meet their set rates of improvement, and states saw increasingly high rates of failure to meet the rising benchmarks. By 2010, 38 percent of schools were failing to make adequate yearly progress, up from 29 percent in 2006.

In 2011, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, as part of his campaign to get Congress to rewrite the law, issued dire warnings that 82 percent of schools would be labeled "failing" that year. The numbers didn't turn out quite that high, but several states did see failure rates over 50 percent (McNeil, Aug. 3, 2011).

The law allowed states to set their own annual benchmarks, provided they reached 100 percent proficiency by 2012-13, and some simply refused to raise their benchmarks any further or requested waivers from the rules. In the summer of 2011, Mr. Duncan promised to create a waiver option for all states, though it would have strings attached requiring those states to adopt some of the administration's education priorities (McNeil, Aug. 9, 2011). In Congress, meanwhile, members from both parties saw a need to rewrite the law, but agreeing on the shape of a new version of that law was slow in coming (Klein, Jan. 16, 2011; Sept. 14, 2011).

NORM-REFERENCED TEST

Norm-referenced refers to standardized tests that are designed to compare and rank test takers in relation to one another. Norm-referenced tests report whether test takers performed better or worse than a hypothetical average student, which is determined by comparing scores against the performance results of the statistically selected group of test takers, typically of the same age or grade level, who have already taken the exam.

Calculating norm-referenced scores is called the "norming process," and the comparison group is known as the "norming group." Norming groups typically comprise only a small subset of previous test takers, not all or even most previous test takers. Test developers use a variety of statistical methods to select norming groups, interpret raw scores, and determine performance levels.

Norm-referenced scores are generally reported as a percentage or percentile ranking. For example, a student who scores in the seventieth percentile performed as well or better than seventy percent of other test takers of the same age or grade level, and thirty percent of students performed better (as determined by norming-group scores).

Norm-referenced tests often use a multiple-choice format, though some include open-ended, short-answer questions. They are usually based on some form of national standards, not locally determined standards or curricula. The SAT and ACT exams are among the most well-known norm-referenced tests. IQ tests are another familiar form, as are developmental-screening tests, which are used to identify learning disabilities in young children or determine eligibility for special educational services.

A few major norm-referenced tests include the California Achievement Test, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Stanford Achievement Test, and TerraNova. In past years, Nevada has used the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Terra Nova.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

This term is used to describe individuals who provide consultation and support to staff to improve a student's educational performance related to fine motor, gross motor and sensory integration development.

ONE-TO-ONE

The term **one-to-one** is applied to programs that provide all students in a school, district, or state with their own laptop, netbook, tablet computer, or other mobile-computing device. *One-to-one* refers to one computer for every student.

OPPORTUNITY GAP

Closely related to achievement gap and learning gap, the term **opportunity gap** refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students.

Opportunity gaps can take a wide variety of forms—too many to comprehensively describe here. The following, however, are a few representative factors that can give rise to opportunity gaps:

- Students from lower-income households may not have the financial resources that give students from higher-income households an advantage when it comes to performing well in school, scoring high on standardized tests, and aspiring to and succeeding in college. Poor nutrition, health problems resulting from a lack of healthcare, or an inability to pay for preschool education, tutoring, test-preparation services, and/or college tuition (in addition to a fear of taking on student-loan debt) may all contribute to lower educational achievement and attainment.
- Minority students may be subject to prejudice or bias that denies them equal and equitable access to learning opportunities. For example, students of color tend to be disproportionately represented in lower-level courses and special-education programs, and their academic achievement, graduation rates, and college-enrollment rates are typically lower than those of their white peers.
- Students raised by parents who have not earned a college degree or who may not value postsecondary education may lack the familial encouragement and support available to other students. These students may not be encouraged to take college-preparatory courses, for example, or their parents may struggle with the complexities of navigating the college-admissions and financial-aid process.
- Students raised in a non-English-speaking family or culture could experience limited educational opportunities if their acquisition of English proficiency, fluency, and literacy is delayed. If courses are taught exclusively in English, if educational materials are printed in English, or enriching educational programs are conducted in English or require English fluency, students who are learning or struggling with English may be denied full participation in these opportunities.
- Economically disadvantaged schools and communities may suffer from less-effective teaching, overcrowded schools, dilapidated facilities, and inadequate educational resources, programs, and opportunities—all of which can contribute to lower educational performance or attainment.

- Small schools located in geographically isolated rural areas may not be able to offer the same diversity of educational opportunities—such as multiple world-language courses or co-curricular programs like science fairs, debate competitions, robotics clubs, or theatrical performances, for example—that are available to students in larger schools. Rural students may also have less access to libraries, cultural institutions, museums, internships, and other learning opportunities because they do not exist, they are too far away, or there is no free or low-cost public transportation.
- A lack of internet connectivity, computers, and new learning technologies in rural schools, inner-city schools, and lower-income communities can place students at a disadvantage when it comes to acquiring technological skills, taking computer-based tests, or accessing knowledge and learning opportunities online.

OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER (ODD)

This term describes a child who defies authority by disobeying, talking back, arguing or being hostile in a way that is excessive compared to other children and this pattern continues for more than six months. ODD often occurs with other behavioral problems such as ADHD, learning disabilities and anxiety disorders.

ORLEANS-HANNA ALGEBRA PROGNOSIS TEST

This 40-minute, norm-referenced assessment is administered annually in the early spring to seventh grade students. Its purpose is to identify students likely to experience difficulties in an algebra course. It is a 60-item multiple-choice test published by The Psychological Corporation.

PARAPROFESSIONALS

Paraprofessionals are those non-certified employees who assist with instruction in various ways, including library assistants, classroom aides, classroom assistants, and assistants who provide one-on-one tutoring services.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires that paraprofessionals working in programs supported by Title I funds must meet one of the following requirements:

- Completed at least two years of postsecondary study;
- Obtained an associate’s (or higher) degree;
- Met a rigorous standard of equality and can demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics.

This requirement applied immediately to paraprofessionals hired after the enactment of NCLB in January 2002. In addition, all paraprofessionals, regardless of hiring date, must have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent.

PARENT CONSENT

This is a special education term used by IDEA that states the parent/guardian has been fully informed in his/her native language or other mode of communication of all the information about the action for which he/she is giving consent and that the parent/guardian understands and agrees in writing to that action.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Each school district that receives Title I funds must have a written **parent involvement** policy that is developed with and approved by parents. The policy must be evaluated each year. This policy must explain how the district will involve parents in developing Title I plans and help parents know how to be included in decision making at the schools and in the district.

PARENT VOICE

In education, **parent voice** refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of the parents, guardians, and families of students enrolled in a school, which extends to parent groups, cultural organizations, and other entities related to a school through familial connections.

As both a philosophical stance and a school-improvement strategy, the concept of parent voice in education has grown increasingly popular in recent decades. Generally speaking, parent voice can be seen as an alternative to more hierarchical forms of governance or decision making in which school administrators may make unilateral decisions with little or no input from parents. Parent voice is also predicated on the belief or recognition that a school will be more successful—e.g., that teachers will be more effective and professionally fulfilled, that students will learn and achieve more, and that parents will feel more confidence in the school and more involved in their children’s education—if school leaders both consider and act upon the values, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives of the parents, guardians, and families in a school community. While the degree to which parent voice is both solicited and valued can vary considerably from school to school, educators are increasingly embracing parent voice in both leadership and instructional decisions.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE

Educators use this term to describe a face-to-face meeting between a teacher and one or both parents (or guardians) of a student to discuss the student’s academic performance and other concerns either party might have.

PARTICIPATION RATE

This term is applied to the percentage of students who participate in the assessment when compared to the number of eligible students. NCLB requires that 95% of all children in each subgroup be tested.

PERCENT PROFICIENT

Set by the Nevada Department of Education, this is the percentage of students that must be proficient on assessments each year for a school or disaggregated group to make its AYP.

PERSONAL LEARNING PLAN

A **personal learning plan** (or PLP) is developed by students—typically in collaboration with teachers, counselors, and parents—as a way to help them achieve short- and long-term learning goals, most commonly at the middle school and high school levels. Personal learning plans are generally based on the belief that students will be more motivated to learn, will achieve more in school, and will feel a stronger sense of ownership over their education if they decide what they want to learn, how they are going to learn it, and why they need learn it to achieve their personal goals.

PLATO

Across Nevada and the nation, school leaders are challenged to prepare students for success on graduation tests as well as with quality instruction that meets their individual needs and learning styles. PLATO Learning Inc., is the original educational software company and has the capability to assess student skills, align instruction to state graduation tests, and prescribe appropriate coursework to fill in skill gaps. Designed to promote learning through interactive, real-world problem-solving activities, PLATO courseware uses visually stimulating, photo-realistic environments to engage students in interactive learning.

PORTFOLIO

A **portfolio** is a compilation of student work assembled for the purpose of (1) evaluating coursework quality and academic achievement, (2) creating a lasting archive of academic work products, and (3) determining whether students have met learning standards or academic requirements for courses, grade-level promotion, and graduation. Advocates of student portfolios argue that compiling, reviewing, and evaluating student work over time can provide a richer and more accurate picture of what students have learned and are able to do than more traditional measures, such as standardized tests or final exams, that reflect only what a student knows at a specific point in time.

Portfolios can be a physical collection of student work that includes materials such as written assignments, journal entries, completed tests, artwork, lab reports, physical projects (such as dioramas or models), and other material evidence of student learning progress and academic accomplishment, including awards, honors, certifications, and recommendations. Portfolios may also be digital collections or presentations that include the same documents and achievements as physical portfolios, but that may also include additional content such as student-created videos, multimedia presentations, spreadsheets, websites, photographs, or other digital artifacts of learning.

Online portfolios are often called *digital portfolios* or *e-portfolios*. In some cases, blogs or online journals may be maintained by students and include ongoing reflections related to learning activities and progress. Portfolios may also be presented—publicly or privately—to parents, teachers, and community members as part of a demonstration of learning.

PRELIMINARY SAT/NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFYING TEST (PSAT)

This is a nationally norm-referenced test. This assessment is co-sponsored by the College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation. The PSAT measures the critical reading, math problem solving, and writing skills that students have developed throughout their school careers. The PSAT includes actual SAT I questions.

The PSAT enables students to participate in the Student Search Service to get mail from colleges/universities.

Over 3.6 million students take the PSAT/NMSQT each year. Only 11th-grade students can qualify for scholarships and recognition, but younger students benefit from early feedback on their skills. The PSAT/NMSQT helps students become college ready. It provides detailed feedback on skills, access to scholarships and personalized online tools, and excellent practice for the SAT.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In education, the term **professional development** may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. When the term is used in education contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, however, it may be difficult to determine precisely what “professional development” is referring to.

In practice, professional development for educators encompasses an extremely broad range of topics and formats. For example, professional-development experiences may be funded by district, school, or state budgets and programs, or they may be supported by a foundation grant or other private funding source. They may range from a one-day conference to a two-week workshop to a multiyear advanced-degree program. They may be delivered in person or online, during the school day or outside of normal school hours, and through one-on-one interactions or in group situations. And they may be led and facilitated by educators within a school or provided by outside consultants or organizations hired by a school or district. And, of course, the list of possible formats could go on.

The following are a representative selection of common professional-development topics and objectives for educators:

- Furthering education and knowledge in a teacher’s subject area—e.g., learning new scientific theories, expanding knowledge of different historical periods, or learning how to teach subject-area content and concepts more effectively.
- Training or mentoring in specialized teaching techniques that can be used in many different subject areas, such as differentiation (varying teaching techniques based on student learning needs and interests) or literacy strategies (techniques for improving reading and writing skills), for example.
- Earning certification in a particular educational approach or program, usually from a university or other credentialing organization, such as teaching Advanced Placement courses or career and technical programs that culminate in students earning an industry-specific certification.
- Developing technical, quantitative, and analytical skills that can be used to analyze student-performance data, and then use the findings to make modifications to academic programs and teaching techniques.
- Learning new technological skills, such as how to use interactive whiteboards or course-management systems in ways that can improve teaching effectiveness and student performance.
- Improving fundamental teaching techniques, such as how to manage a classroom effectively or frame questions in ways that elicit deeper thinking and more substantive answers from students.
- Working with colleagues, such as in professional learning communities, to develop teaching skills collaboratively or create new interdisciplinary courses that are taught by teams of two or more teachers.
- Developing specialized skills to better teach and support certain populations of students, such as students with learning disabilities or students who are not proficient in English.
- Acquiring leadership skills, such as skills that can be used to develop and coordinate a school-improvement initiative or a community-volunteer program.
- Pairing new and beginning teachers with more experienced “mentor teachers” or “instructional coaches” who model effective teaching strategies, expose less-experienced teachers to new ideas and skills, and provide constructive feedback and professional guidance.

- Conducting action research to gain a better understanding of what’s working or not working in a school’s academic program, and then using the findings to improve educational quality and results.
- Earning additional formal certifications, such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, which requires educators to spend a considerable amount of time recording, analyzing, and reflecting on their teaching practices (many states provide incentives for teachers to obtain National Board Certification).
- Attending graduate school to earn an advanced degree, such as a master’s degree or doctorate in education, educational leadership, or a specialized field of education such as literacy or technology.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

A **professional learning community**, or *PLC*, is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. The term is also applied to schools or teaching faculties that use small-group collaboration as a form of professional development. Shirley Hord, an expert on school leadership, came up with perhaps the most efficient description of the strategy: “The three words explain the concept: Professionals coming together in a group—a community—to learn.”

Professional learning communities tend to serve two broad purposes: (1) improving the skills and knowledge of educators through collaborative study, expertise exchange, and professional dialogue, and (2) improving the educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment of students through stronger leadership and teaching. Professional learning communities often function as a form of action research—i.e., as a way to continually question, reevaluate, refine, and improve teaching strategies and knowledge. Meetings are goal-driven exchanges facilitated by educators who have been trained to lead professional learning communities. Participation in meetings may be entirely voluntary, and in some schools only a small percentage of the faculty will elect to participate, or it may be a school-wide requirement that all faculty members participate.

In professional learning communities, teams are often built around shared roles or responsibilities. For example, the teachers in a particular group may all teach the same ninth-grade students or they may all teach science, and these shared attributes allow participants to focus on specific problems and strategies—How do I teach *this* particular student better? How do I teach *this* scientific theory more effectively?—rather than on general educational goals or theories. Teachers, for example, will discuss and reflect on their instructional techniques, lesson designs, and assessment practices, while administrators may address leadership questions, strategies, and issues.

PROFICIENCY

In education, the term **proficiency** is used in a variety of ways, most commonly in reference to (1) proficiency levels, scales, and cut-off scores on standardized tests and other forms of assessment, (2) students achieving or failing to achieve proficiency levels determined by tests and assessments, (3) students demonstrating or failing to demonstrate proficiency in relation to learning standards, and (4) teachers being deemed proficient or non-proficient on job-performance evaluations.

To understand how proficiency works in educational contexts, it is important to recognize that all proficiency determinations are based on some form of standards or measurement system, and that proficiency levels change in direct relation to the scales, standards, tests,

and calculation methods being used to evaluate and determine proficiency. It is therefore possible, for example, to alter the perception of proficiency by lowering standards or cut-off scores on tests, or to overlook that two distinct—and therefore incomparable—proficiency systems are being compared side-by-side, even though different standards, tests, or calculation methods were used to determine proficiency. Because the bar for proficiency can diverge significantly from system to system, state to state, test to test, school to school, and course to course, or from year to year when changes are made to learning standards and accompanying tests, proficiency in education may become a source of confusion, debate, controversy, and even deception.

PROFICIENCY-BASED LEARNING

Proficiency-based learning refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. In public schools, , proficiency-based systems use state learning standards to determine academic expectations and define “proficiency” in a given course, subject area, or grade level (although other sets of standards may also be used, including standards developed by districts and schools or by subject-area organizations). The general goal of proficiency-based learning is to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential to success in school, higher education, careers, and adult life. If students fail to meet expected learning standards, they typically receive additional instruction, practice time, and academic support to help them achieve proficiency or meet the expected standards.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-based learning refers to any programmatic or instructional approach that utilizes multifaceted projects as a central organizing strategy for educating students. When engaged in project-based learning, students will typically be assigned a project or series of projects that require them to use diverse skills—such as researching, writing, interviewing, collaborating, or public speaking—to produce various work products, such as research papers, scientific studies, public-policy proposals, multimedia presentations, video documentaries, art installations, or musical and theatrical performances, for example. Unlike many tests, homework assignments, and other more traditional forms of academic coursework, the execution and completion of a project may take several weeks or months, or it may even unfold over the course of a semester or year.

PROTOCOL

A **protocol** is a set of step-by-step guidelines—usually in the form of a simple one- or two-page document—that is used by educators to structure professional conversations or learning experiences to ensure that meeting, planning, or group-collaboration time is used efficiently, purposefully, and productively. The National School Reform Faculty and the School Reform Initiative are the two primary sources of protocols in the United States, and hundreds of protocols can be downloaded from their websites.

PUBLIC LAW 94-142

This law passed in 1975 requires that public schools provide a “free and appropriate public education” to school-aged children ages 3-21, regardless of disabling condition. This law is also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

One of the big changes that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act provides is called **Public School Choice**. This is the right of parents to take their children out of a low-performing school or an unsafe school and transfer him/her to a different school. This is true for any school that receives Title I funding from the federal government after the school has failed to meet its AYP targets for two consecutive years in the same content area. Districts are required by law to notify parents if the school their children attend is in need of improvement. This can be done through the mail or using email. Public school choice is only available to parents of children attending Title I schools in need of improvement. The district must provide the choice of at least two schools that have met their AYP targets for achievement. Parents of children attending Title I schools in need of improvement can then select one of those schools for their child to attend and the school district will pay for transportation to the new school.

READ 180

One of the most compelling issues facing educators today is how to address the needs of struggling readers. This program brings together the essential building blocks of intervention, meeting the needs of students in elementary to high school whose reading achievement is below the proficient level. Several Nevada school districts use this program.

RELEVANCE

In education, the term **relevance** typically refers to learning experiences that are either directly applicable to the personal aspirations, interests, or cultural experiences of students (*personal relevance*) or that are connected in some way to real-world issues, problems, and contexts (*life relevance*).

Personal relevance occurs when learning is connected to an individual student's interests, aspirations, and life experiences. Advocates argue that personal relevance, when effectively incorporated into instruction, can increase a student's motivation to learn, engagement in what is being taught, and even knowledge retention and recall.

RIGOR

The term **rigor** is widely used by educators to describe instruction, schoolwork, learning experiences, and educational expectations that are academically, intellectually, and personally challenging. Rigorous learning experiences, for example, help students understand knowledge and concepts that are complex, ambiguous, or contentious, and they help students acquire skills that can be applied in a variety of educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives.

In education, *rigor* is commonly applied to lessons that encourage students to question their assumptions and think deeply, rather than to lessons that merely demand memorization and information recall. For example, a fill-in-the-blank worksheet or multiple-choice test would not be considered rigorous by many educators. Although courses such as AP United States History are widely seen as rigorous because of their comparatively demanding workload or because the courses culminate in difficult tests, a more expansive view of rigor would also encompass academic relevance and critical-thinking skills such as interpreting and analyzing historical data, making connections between historical periods and current events, using both primary and secondary sources to support an argument or position, and

arriving at a novel interpretation of a historical event after conducting extensive research on the topic.

While some educators may equate *rigor* with *difficultly*, many educators would argue that academically rigorous learning experiences should be sufficiently and appropriately *challenging* for individual students or groups of students, not simply difficult. Advocates contend that appropriately rigorous learning experiences motivate students to learn more and learn it more deeply, while also giving them a sense of personal accomplishment when they overcome a learning challenge—whereas lessons that are simply “hard” will more likely lead to disengagement, frustration, and discouragement.

RUBRIC

A **rubric** is typically an evaluation tool or set of guidelines used to promote the consistent application of learning expectations, learning objectives, or learning standards in the classroom, or to measure their attainment against a consistent set of criteria. In instructional settings, rubrics clearly define academic expectations for students and help to ensure consistency in the evaluation of academic work from student to student, assignment to assignment, or course to course. Rubrics are also used as scoring instruments to determine grades or the degree to which learning standards have been demonstrated or attained by students.

In courses, rubrics may be provided and explained to students before they begin an assignment to ensure that learning expectations have been clearly communicated to and understood by students, and, by extension, parents or other adults involved in supporting a student’s education.

SCAFFOLDING

In education, **scaffolding** refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process. The term itself offers the relevant descriptive metaphor: teachers provide successive levels of temporary support that help students reach higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition that they would not be able to achieve without assistance. Like physical scaffolding, the supportive strategies are incrementally removed when they are no longer needed, and the teacher gradually shifts more responsibility over the learning process to the student.

Scaffolding is widely considered to be an essential element of effective teaching, and all teachers—to a greater or lesser extent—almost certainly use various forms of instructional scaffolding in their teaching. In addition, scaffolding is often used to bridge learning gaps—i.e., the difference between what students have learned and what they are expected to know and be able to do at a certain point in their education.

For example, if students are not at the reading level required to understand a text being taught in a course, the teacher might use instructional scaffolding to incrementally improve their reading ability until they can read the required text independently and without assistance. One of the main goals of scaffolding is to reduce the negative emotions and self-perceptions that students may experience when they get frustrated, intimidated, or discouraged when attempting a difficult task without the assistance, direction, or understanding they need to complete it.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY

When used by educators, the term **school community** typically refers to the various individuals, groups, businesses, and institutions that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school and its community—i.e., the neighborhoods and municipalities served by the school.

In many contexts, the term encompasses the school administrators, teachers, and staff members who work in a school; the students who attend the school and their parents and families; and local residents and organizations that have a stake in the school's success, such as school board members, city officials, and elected representatives; businesses, organizations, and cultural institutions; and related organizations and groups such as parent-teacher associations, "booster clubs," charitable foundations, and volunteer school-improvement committees (to name just a few).

In other settings, however, educators may use the term when referring, more specifically, to the sense of "community" experienced by those working, teaching, and learning in a school—i.e., the administrators, faculty, staff, and students. In this case, educators may also be actively working to improve the culture of a school, strengthen relationships between teachers and students, and foster feelings of inclusion, caring, shared purpose, and collective investment.

SCHOOL CULTURE

The term **school culture** generally refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity.

Like the larger social culture, a school culture results from both conscious and unconscious perspectives, values, interactions, and practices, and it is heavily shaped by a school's particular institutional history. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other staff members all contribute to their school's culture, as do other influences such as the community in which the school is located, the policies that govern how it operates, or the principles upon which the school was founded.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

The **school psychologist** assists in the identification of intellectual, social and emotional needs of students. They provide consultation and support to families and staff regarding behavior and conditions related to learning. They plan programs to meet the special needs of children and often serve as facilitators during an IEP meeting.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATH (STEM)

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are an important part of education in a competitive global marketplace. In 2009, the United States educational system received some sobering news. The Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked 15-year-old U.S. high-school students 18th in mathematics and 13th in science. These results

were based on data from 34 participating nations. Some of the nations with higher student scores included much smaller and far less wealthy nations like Estonia, Slovenia and Finland. It was apparent that the U.S. educational system needed significant improvement in these areas if the students who would be the workforce of tomorrow were to have a competitive edge in a globalized, high-tech marketplace.

National and state educational policymakers renewed efforts begun in 2006 to improve the overall mathematics, science and technology literacy of U.S. students. These efforts became known as the **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or STEM**, initiative.

Although many of the nation's public schools had already begun a greater focus on mathematics and science as part of their core curricula, new academies as well as existing educational institutions took the focus one step further. Applying for, and receiving, government and private business grants set up for *STEM* education initiatives, these schools aggressively promoted the concept with the express goal of graduating students competent in a variety of *STEM* subjects.

Schools pursuing these goals explored a variety of approaches such as smaller class sizes of 10 to 12 students with a one-to-one student/computer ratio, inquiry-based teaching methodologies and an active partnership with technology businesses that provide real-world applications for *STEM* subjects. Other schools made electronic textbooks, Skype and video-conferencing an integral part of the educational experience.

For more information, visit this website: <http://www.stemedcoalition.org>.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS, AND MATH (STEAM)

Advocates of **STEAM** strive to have business leaders, arts professionals, educators and others work together to educate governments, the public and the media to the need for returning Arts to the national curricula. For these advocates, *STEAM* education is a national priority issue.

Together they try to demonstrate that Arts is a necessary adjunct to *STEM* "by connecting the dots" for everyone:

- Arts education is a key to creativity, and
- Creativity is an essential component of, and spurs innovation, and
- Innovation is agreed to be necessary to create new industries in the future, and
- New industries, with their jobs, are the basis of our future economic well-being.

For more information, visit this website: <http://steam-notstem.com>.

SCORE INFLATION

Score inflation results when student scores on tests or other assessments increase but the increase does not reflect any genuine improvements in learning—i.e., the instrument being used to measure learning acquisition and growth is providing a false reading because (1) the testing design or processes are flawed or (2) educators are inadvertently or intentionally inflating student scores. Score inflation has been compared to holding a lit match to a thermometer in a cold room: while the thermometer reading indicates that the temperature is rising, the room remains cold.

There are two main problems associated with score inflation: (1) students appear to be improving academically when they're not, and they may consequently not receive the additional instruction, attention, and academic support they need to improve and succeed, and (2) elected officials, policy makers, parents, and the public are given the misleading impression that schools are improving or performing adequately when in fact performance may be stagnating or even deteriorating.

SEAT TIME

When used in the context of education reform, the term **seat time** refers to the use of academic credits based on the 120-hour Carnegie unit. The term is typically a derogatory reference to the perception that course credits more accurately measure "seat time"—i.e., the amount of time students have sat in a classroom—than what students have actually learned or failed to learn. For example, high school students typically earn credit by passing a course, but a passing grade may be an A or it may be a D, suggesting that the awarded credit is based on a spectrum of learning expectations—with some students learning more and others learning less—rather than on the same high expectations being applied to all students equally. And since grades may be calculated differently from school to school or teacher to teacher, and they may be based on highly divergent learning expectations (i.e., some courses may be "harder" and others "easier"), it may be possible for students to pass their courses, earn credits, and receive a diploma without acquiring important knowledge and skills.

SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER

This term is used to describe a complex brain disorder that causes a child to misinterpret everyday sensory information like movement, sound and touch. Children with SPD may seek out intense sensory experiences or feel overwhelmed with information.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Shared leadership is the practice of governing a school by expanding the number of people involved in making important decisions related to the school's organization, operation, and academics. In general, shared leadership entails the creation of leadership roles or decision-making opportunities for teachers, staff members, students, parents, and community members. Shared leadership is widely seen as an alternative to more traditional forms of school governance in which the principal or administrative team exercises executive authority and makes most governance decisions without necessarily soliciting advice, feedback, or participation from others in the school or community.

In practice, shared leadership may be defined differently from school to school, and it may take a wide variety of forms. One of the most common forms of shared leadership is a leadership team—i.e., a group of administrators, teachers, staff members, and others who meet regularly to make important school decisions and/or coordinate a school-improvement initiative. Shared leadership may also take other forms: formal committees created to oversee a specific program or provide feedback to the school principal and administration; teams of teachers organized by content area or academic department who meet regularly and provide recommendations on instructional decisions or the design of the academic program; or community meetings in which school leaders listen to the viewpoints and opinions of community members—teachers, students, parents, and others—and then act on their recommendations.

STAKEHOLDER

In education, the term **stakeholder** typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities, such as local businesses, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions, in addition to organizations that represent specific groups, such as teachers unions, parent-teacher organizations, and associations representing superintendents, principals, school boards, or teachers in specific academic disciplines (e.g., the National Council of Teachers of English or the Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics). In a word, stakeholders have a “stake” in the school and its students, meaning that they have personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern.

STANDARDIZED TEST

A **standardized test** is any form of test that (1) requires all test takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from a common bank of questions, in the same way, and that (2) is scored in a “standard” or consistent manner, which makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students. While different types of tests and assessments may be “standardized” in this way, the term is primarily associated with large-scale tests administered to sizeable populations of students, such as a multiple-choice test given to all the eighth-grade public-school students in a particular state, for example.

In addition to the familiar multiple-choice format, standardized tests can include true-false questions, short-answer questions, essay questions, or a mix of question types. While standardized tests were traditionally presented on paper and completed using pencils, and many still are, they are increasingly being administered on computers connected to online programs. While standardized tests may come in a variety of forms, multiple-choice and true-false formats are widely used for large-scale testing situations because computers can score them quickly, consistently, and inexpensively.

By contrast, open-ended essay questions need to be scored by humans using the same guidelines or rubrics to promote consistent evaluations from essay to essay—a less efficient and more costly option that is also considered to be more subjective.

STANDARDS-BASED

In education, the term **standards-based** refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating understanding or mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. In a school that uses standards-based approaches to educating students, learning standards—i.e., concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education—determine the goals of a lesson or course. Teachers then determine how and what to teach students so they achieve the learning expectations described in the standards.

STANDARDS-REFERENCED

In education, the term **standards-referenced** refers to instructional approaches or assessments that are “referenced” to or derived from established learning standards—i.e.,

concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. In other words, *standards-referenced* refers to the use of learning standards to guide what gets taught and tested in schools.

The term *standards-referenced* is predominately used in two ways by educators:

- **Standards-referenced tests**, and other forms of standards-referenced assessment, are designed to measure student performance against a fixed set of predetermined learning standards. In elementary and secondary education, standards-referenced tests evaluate whether students have learned a specific body of knowledge or acquired a specific skill set described in a given set of standards. The term *standards-referenced test* and *criterion-referenced test* are synonymous when the “criteria” being used are learning standards. The terms *standard-referenced assessment* and *criterion-referenced assessment* are similarly synonymous. (In education, *assessment* refers to the wide variety of methods that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students, which includes tests and other methods of evaluation, such as graded assignments, demonstrations of learning, or formative assessments, for example.) For a more detailed discussion of standards-referenced testing, see *criterion-referenced test*.
- A **standards-referenced curriculum** is a course of study that is guided by learning standards. In other words, the academic knowledge and skills taught in a school, or in a specific course or program, are based on learning standards, typically the learning standards developed and adopted by states. The standards determine the goals of a lesson or course, and teachers then determine how and what to teach students so they achieve the expected learning goals described in the standards. Depending on how broadly educators define or use the term, *standards-referenced curriculum* may refer to the knowledge, skills, topics, and concepts that are taught to students and/or to the lessons, units, assignments, readings, and materials used by teachers.

STEREOTYPE THREAT

Stereotype threat refers to the risk of confirming negative stereotypes about an individual’s racial, ethnic, gender, or cultural group. The term was coined by the researchers Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson who performed experiments that showed that black college students performed worse on standardized tests than their white peers when they were reminded, before taking the tests, that their racial group tends to do poorly on such exams. When their race was not emphasized, however, black students performed similarly to their white peers.

This research shed light on the ways student performance on tests may be affected by a heightened awareness of racial stereotypes. Because stereotype threat is believed to contribute to race- and gender-based achievement gaps, the theory has drawn considerable attention and debate, prompting efforts to reduce or eliminate the effect in educational and testing situations. It has also raised larger questions about the fairness of high-stakes tests—tests used to make important decisions about students, teachers, or schools.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In education, **student engagement** refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. Generally speaking, the concept of “student engagement” is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students are inquisitive, interested, or inspired, and that learning

tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, or otherwise “disengaged.” *Stronger student engagement* or *improved student engagement* are common instructional objectives expressed by educators.

In education, the term *student engagement* has grown in popularity in recent decades, most likely resulting from an increased understanding of the role that certain intellectual, emotional, behavioral, physical, and social factors play in the learning process. For example, a wide variety of research studies on learning have revealed connections between so-called “non-cognitive factors” or “non-cognitive skills” (e.g., motivation, interest, curiosity, responsibility, determination, perseverance, attitude, work habits, self-regulation, social skills, etc.) and “cognitive” learning results (e.g., improved academic performance, test scores, information recall, skill acquisition, etc.).

The concept of student engagement typically arises when educators discuss or prioritize educational strategies and teaching techniques that address the intellectual, emotional, behavioral, physical, and social factors that either enhance or undermine learning for students.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

The term **student outcomes** typically refers to either (1) the desired learning objectives or standards that schools and teachers want students to achieve, or (2) the educational, societal, and life effects that result from students being educated. In the first case, student outcomes are the intended goals of a course, program, or learning experience; in the second case, student outcomes are the actual results that students either achieve or fail to achieve during their education or later on in life. The terms *learning outcomes* and *educational outcomes* are common synonyms.

STUDENT STUDY TEAM (SST)

The **student study team** is a group that evaluates a child’s performance, makes recommendations for success and develops a formal plan. The team includes the classroom teacher, parents, and educational specialists. They may make a recommendation for a special education evaluation.

STUDENT WORK

When used by educators, the term **student work** refers to all of the assignments, products, and projects that students complete to demonstrate what they have learned. Student work could include research papers, essays, lab results, presentations, tests, videos, and portfolios, among many other potential products.

The term *student work*, and the phrases *looking at student work* or *discussing student work*, are commonly used in reference to the collaborative evaluations of academic work products that take place in professional learning communities—groups of educators who meet regularly and work together to improve their instructional skills. The review and discussion of student work is one of many methods used by educators to evaluate their instructional methods and reflect on their effectiveness. If the quality of student work is poor, for example, teachers may revisit how they taught the lesson and develop alternative approaches to help students improve the quality of their work.

Alternatively, high-quality student work may indicate that a lesson is well designed and that students understood both the material and the purpose of the lesson. In addition, teachers

will review student work, either individually or collaboratively, to determine whether students have achieved expected learning standards or course objectives—i.e., the specific knowledge and skills that educators want students to learn by the end of a lesson, unit, project, or course.

STUDENT-GROWTH MEASURES

Student-growth measures compare the relative change in a student’s performance on a specific test with the performance of all other students on that same test. The scores of all students are used to create an “index of student growth” and to identify a median achievement score that can be used as a point of comparison for all student scores—i.e., some students will show growth that is greater than the median, while others will show growth that is lower than the median.

The terms *student-growth measures* and *student-growth percentiles* are sometimes used interchangeably with *value-added measures*, but the two approaches are technically quite different. In contrast with value-added measures, student-growth measures *do not* attempt to control for outside factors that may influence a student’s relative improvement on a test, such as individual ability, family income, or the educational attainment of parents, for example.

STUDY HALL

A **study hall** is a period of time set aside during the school day for students to work independently or receive academic help from a teacher or adult. Historically, study halls have been used to fill gaps in student schedules, and students are assigned to a specific classroom at a designated time. Study halls are more common in schools with traditional six- or eight-period schedules, but they are less common in schools that use block scheduling—fewer and longer periods during the school day.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Summative assessments are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Generally speaking, summative assessments are defined by three major criteria:

- The tests, assignments, or projects are used to determine whether students have learned what they were expected to learn. In other words, what makes an assessment “summative” is not the design of the test, assignment, or self-evaluation, per se, but the way it is used—i.e., to determine whether and to what degree students have learned the material they have been taught.
- Summative assessments are given at the conclusion of a specific instructional period, and therefore they are generally evaluative, rather than diagnostic—i.e., they are more appropriately used to determine learning progress and achievement, evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs, measure progress toward improvement goals, or make course-placement decisions, among other possible applications.
- Summative-assessment results are often recorded as scores or grades that are then factored into a student’s permanent academic record, whether they end up as letter grades on a report card or test scores used in the college-admissions process. While summative assessments are typically a major component of the grading process in most districts, schools, and courses, not all assessments considered to be summative are graded.

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Synchronous learning is a general term used to describe forms of education, instruction, and learning that occur at the same time, but not in the same place. The term is most commonly applied to various forms of televisual, digital, and online learning in which students learn from instructors, colleagues, or peers in real time, but not in person. For example, educational video conferences, interactive webinars, chat-based online discussions, and lectures that are broadcast at the same time they are delivered would all be considered forms of synchronous learning.

Digital and online learning experiences can also be *asynchronous*—i.e., instruction and learning occur not only in different locations, but also at different times. For example, prerecorded video lessons, email exchanges between teachers and students, online discussion boards, and course-management systems that organize instructional materials and related correspondence would all be considered forms of asynchronous learning.

SYSTEMIC REFORM

In education, the terms **systemic reform** or *systemic improvement* are widely and commonly used by educators, reformers, and others. While education reforms often target specific elements or components of an education system—such as what students learn or how teachers teach—the concept of systemic reform may be used in reference to (1) reforms that impact multiple levels of the education system, such as elementary, middle, and high school programs; (2) reforms that aspire to make changes throughout a defined system, such as district-wide or statewide reforms; (3) reforms that are intended to influence, in minor or significant ways, each student and staff member in the school or system; or (4) reforms that may vary widely in design and purpose, but that nevertheless reflect a consistent educational philosophy or that are aimed at achieving common objectives.

TEACHER AUTONOMY

The concept of **teacher autonomy** refers to the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it.

In recent years, teacher autonomy has become a major point of discussion and debate in American public education, largely as a result of educational policies that, some argue, limit the professionalism, authority, responsiveness, creativity, or effectiveness of teachers.

While teacher autonomy is most frequently discussed in terms of what teachers teach to students and how they teach it, the issue may also manifest in other ways. For example, some schools are entirely led and managed by teachers—i.e., the schools do not have formal administrators; teachers assume administrative roles, usually on a revolving basis.

In addition, the composition and negotiation of teacher contracts may also vary significantly from place to place. For example, local teachers' unions will negotiate annual contracts with school districts in some states, while most states have statewide teacher contracts that are negotiated by state teachers' unions. Depending on its provisions, teaching contracts can directly affect professional autonomy, given that contracts may, for example, determine the specific number of hours that teachers can work each week or limit the roles that teachers can play in a school or district.

TEACHER VOICE

In education, **teacher voice** refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, expertise, and cultural backgrounds of the teachers working in a school, which extends to teacher unions, professional organizations, and other entities that advocate for teachers.

As both a philosophical stance and a school-improvement strategy, the concept of teacher voice in education has grown increasingly popular in recent decades. Generally speaking, teacher voice can be seen as an alternative to more hierarchical forms of governance or decision making in which school administrators may make unilateral decisions with little or no input from the faculty.

Teacher voice is also predicated on the belief or recognition that a school will be more successful—e.g., that teachers will be more effective and professionally fulfilled, that students will learn and achieve more, and that parents will feel more confidence in the school and more involved in their child’s education—if school leaders both consider and act upon the values, opinions, beliefs, expertise, and perspectives of the teachers in a school. While the degree to which teacher voice is both solicited and valued can vary considerably from school to school, educators are increasingly embracing teacher voice in decisions related to school leadership and governance, instruction, curriculum, and professional development.

TEACHER-LEADER

In schools, the term **teacher-leader** is commonly applied to teachers who have taken on leadership roles and additional professional responsibilities. The teacher-leader concept is closely related to *voice* and *shared leadership*, or the distribution of leadership roles and decision-making responsibilities beyond the administrative team.

It should be noted that while the term *teacher-leader* is commonly used across the country, educators frequently create unique, homegrown vocabularies and titles when referring to these positions in their schools.

TEAMING

While the term *team* may be applied to a variety of organizational and instructional practices in a school, the most common application of the term **teaming** refers to pairing a group of teachers (typically between four and six) with a group of sixty to eighty students. Proponents of the strategy believe that teaming allows teachers to discuss the students they have in common and to establish stronger teacher-student relationships based on an improved understanding of the students and their specific learning needs. In most cases, a team will be built around the core-subject-area teachers in English language arts, math, science, and social studies, but the particular composition of teams may vary widely from school to school. Guidance counselors, special-education teachers, and other specialists are commonly assigned to teams.

While teaming may be structured differently from school to school, there are two general forms: *horizontal teaming*, the grouping of students and teachers at a particular grade level, and *vertical teaming*, which is the continuation of a horizontal team across multiple grades, such as the seventh and eighth grades or ninth and tenth grades. With vertical teaming, the student group typically remains intact, while the team of teachers assigned to them changes. Vertical teaming may also be called *looping*, a term that specifically refers to the practice of grouping students with the same teacher (in the elementary grades) or group of teachers (in the upper grades) for two or more years.

The general goal of teaming is to provide a more personalized learning experience for students—i.e., to ensure that students are well known by adults in the school, that their learning needs are understood and addressed, and that they receive the social, emotional, and academic support from teachers and staff that they need to succeed academically and remain in school.

While teaming is widely used in middle schools, it is becoming a more common strategy for grouping students and determining course assignments in high school. Since educators typically see more students struggling with behavior and attendance, failing courses, or dropping out during the first two years of high school, teaming is often used as a proactive strategy for addressing these trends. While teaming is sometimes used in the upper grades of high school, it is far less common during these years, in part because teaming is based on the specific developmental needs of students in their early adolescence. During these years, having consistent, supportive, understanding relationships with teachers and adults appears to have a positive effect on learning, emotional growth, and social development. Teaming is one of many strategies educators may use to achieve these ends.

TEST ACCOMMODATIONS

Test accommodations are any modifications made to tests or testing conditions that allow students with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, or limited English-language ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a testing situation.

Common modifications include extending the amount of time students are given to complete a test, reducing the number of test items, having someone else write down test answers, or listening to questions read aloud by text-to-speech conversation software. Students who are still learning the English language are also eligible for accommodations such as bilingual glossaries or test questions presented in their native language.

The accommodations may apply to both standardized tests administered to large populations of students, including high-stakes tests used to make important decisions about students, and to the assessments that teachers use to evaluate what students have learned in a particular course.

TEST BIAS

Educational tests are considered **biased** if a test design, or the way results are interpreted and used, systematically disadvantages certain groups of students over others, such as students of color, students from lower-income backgrounds, students who are not proficient in the English language, or students who are not fluent in certain cultural customs and traditions.

Identifying test bias requires that test developers and educators determine why one group of students tends to do better or worse than another group on a particular test. For example, is it because of the characteristics of the group members, the environment in which they are tested, or the characteristics of the test design and questions? As student populations in public schools become more diverse, and tests assume more central roles in determining individual success or access to opportunities, the question of bias—and how to eliminate it—has grown in importance.

There are a few general categories of test bias:

- **Construct-validity bias** refers to whether a test accurately measures what it was designed to measure. On an intelligence test, for example, students who are learning English will likely encounter words they haven't learned, and consequently test results may reflect their relatively weak English-language skills rather than their intellectual abilities.
- **Content-validity bias** occurs when the content of a test is comparatively more difficult for one group of students than for others. It can occur when members of a student subgroup, such as various minority groups, have not been given the same opportunity to learn the material being tested, when scoring is unfair to a group (for example, the answers that would make sense in one group's culture are deemed incorrect), or when questions are worded in ways that are unfamiliar to certain students because of linguistic or cultural differences. **Item-selection bias**, a subcategory of this bias, refers to the use of individual test items that are more suited to one group's language and cultural experiences.
- **Predictive-validity bias** (or bias in **criterion-related validity**) refers to a test's accuracy in predicting how well a certain student group will perform in the future. For example, a test would be considered "unbiased" if it predicted future academic and test performance equally well for all groups of students.

Test bias is closely related to the issue of *test fairness*—i.e., do the social applications of test results have consequences that unfairly advantage or disadvantage certain groups of student? College-admissions exams often raise concerns about both test bias and test fairness, given their significant role in determining access to institutions of higher education, especially elite colleges and universities. For example, female students tend to score lower than males (possibly because of gender bias in test design), even though female students tend to earn higher grades in college on average (which possibly suggests evidence of predictive-validity bias).

TITLE 1

This term describes a federal program that provides funds to improve the academic achievement for educationally disadvantaged students who score below the 50th percentile on standardized tests, including the children of migrant workers.

TOURETTE'S SYNDROME

This term refers to a disorder that includes multiple motor and one or more vocal tics, which occur many times per day, nearly daily. If a child has Tourette's syndrome, symptoms tend to appear between the ages of 3-10 years old.

TRACKING

Educators use this term to describe a common instructional practice of organizing students in groups based on their academic skills. Tracking allows a teacher to provide the same level of instruction to the entire group.

TRANSITION IEP

IDEA mandates that at age 16, the IEP must include a statement about transition including goals for post-secondary activities and the services needed to achieve these goals. This is referred to an **Individual Transition Plan** or ITP.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Both the medical community and educators use this term to describe an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment. The term applies to open or closed head injuries.

TRANSITION

In education, the term **transition** typically refers to the three major transitional points in the public-education system: when students move from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to college.

While students experience other “transitions” during their educational journey—such as advancing from one grade level to the next—the three “major” transition points are a particular focus of educators and school reformers because transitioning students often experience significant academic, social, emotional, physical, or developmental changes that may adversely affect their educational performance.

During these transitions, for example, students may move from a familiar school to an unfamiliar school, where they encounter new teachers, peers, academic expectations, social issues, and school configurations that increase the likelihood they will feel overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated, or insecure.

VALUE-ADDED MEASURES

Value-added measures, or *growth measures*, are used to estimate or quantify how much of a positive (or negative) effect individual teachers have on student learning during the course of a given school year.

To produce the estimates, value-added measures typically use sophisticated statistical algorithms and standardized-test results, combined with other information about students, to determine a “value-added score” for a teacher. School administrators may then use the score, usually in combination with classroom observations and other information about a teacher, to make decisions about tenure, compensation, or employment. *Student growth measures* are a related—but distinct—method of using student test scores to quantify academic achievement and growth, and they may also be used in the evaluation of teacher job performance (see discussion below).

Value-added measures employ mathematical algorithms in an attempt to isolate an individual teacher’s contribution to student learning from all the other factors that can influence academic achievement and progress—e.g., individual student ability, family income levels, the educational attainment of parents, or the influence of peer groups. If, for example, teacher effectiveness was determined simply by looking at student test scores at the end of a school year, then teachers with the most highly motivated students from the most educated households would likely get much higher ratings than teachers whose students have troubled home lives, significant learning disabilities, or limited English-language proficiency, for instance.

In reality, the latter teacher could be more skilled and effective than the former, but the test scores of a student population that faces significant learning challenges might not accurately reflect the teacher’s abilities.

VISION STATEMENT

A **vision statement**, or simply a *vision*, is a public declaration that schools or other educational organizations use to describe their high-level goals for the future—what they hope to achieve if they successfully fulfill their organizational purpose or mission. A vision statement may describe a school’s loftiest ideals, its core organizational values, its long-term objectives, or what it hopes its students will learn or be capable of doing after graduating.

The term *vision statement* is often used interchangeably with *mission statement*. While some educators and schools may loosely define the two terms, or even blur the traditional lines that have separated them, there appears to be general agreement in the education community on the major distinctions between a “vision” and a “mission.”

Generally speaking, a vision statement expresses a hoped-for future reality, while a mission statement declares the practical commitments and actions that a school believes are needed to achieve its vision. While a vision statement describes the end goal—the change sought by a school—a mission statement may describe its broad academic and operational assurances, as well as its commitment to its students and community.

VOICE

In education, the term **voice** refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of the people in a school or school community, especially students, teachers, parents, and local citizens. The most common variations are *student voice*, *teacher voice*, and *parent voice*.

WEIGHTED GRADES

Weighted grades are number or letter grades that are assigned a numerical advantage when calculating a grade point average, or GPA. In some schools, primarily public high schools, weighted-grade systems give students a numerical advantage for grades earned in higher-level courses or more challenging learning experiences, such as honors courses, Advanced Placement courses, or International Baccalaureate courses.

In many cases, the terms *quality points* or *honor points* may be used in reference to the additional weight given to weighted grades. In the case of students who have completed courses considered to be more challenging than regular courses, the general purpose of a weighted grade is to give these students a numerical advantage when determining relative academic performance and related honors such as honor roll or class rank.

In some weighted-grade systems, for example, a grade in a higher-level course may have a “weight” of 1.05, while the same grade in a lower-level course has a weight of 1.0. In this system, a grade of 90 in an honors course would be recorded as a 94.5 or 95, while a 90 in a similar “college-prep” course would be recorded as a 90. An alternate system might add five “quality points” to grades earned in honors courses ($90 + 5 = 95$) and eight quality points to all grades earned in Advanced Placement courses ($90 + 8 = 98$).

In another variation, an A in a higher-level course may be awarded a 5.0, for example, while an A in a lower-level course is awarded a 4.0. Lower grades in weighted courses would also receive the same one-point advantage—a grade of C, for example, would be assigned a 3.0, while a C in a regular course would be assigned a 2.0. In yet another variation, .33

may be added to all grades earned in Advance Placement courses, so that an A (4.0) would be recorded as a 4.33.

While the examples above represent a few common formulations, grading systems and GPA scales may vary significantly from one school or school district to the next.

YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

The term **year-round education** describes a modified school calendar that gives students short breaks throughout the year, instead of a traditional three-month summer break. Year-round calendars vary, sometimes within the same school district.

Some schools use the staggered schedule to relieve overcrowding, while others believe the three-month break allows students to forget much of the material covered in the previous year.

ZOOM SCHOOLS

The term **Zoom schools** first was used in Nevada in Senate Bill 504 enacted by the 2013 Session of the Nevada Legislature and signed into law by Governor Brian Sandoval on June 12, 2013. In Section 16.2 of the bill, reference is made to the schools having the highest percentage of students who are limited English proficient and are the lowest performing academically that will be designated to receive funding for special programs and services. The legislation directs the Clark and Washoe County School Districts to designate these as "Zoom schools" and allocate the money appropriated in Section 16.2 to:

- Provide prekindergarten programs free of charge;
- Expand full-day kindergarten classes;
- Operate reading skills centers; and
- Provide, free of charge, a summer academy or an intersession academy for those schools that do not operate on a traditional school calendar.

The term has been expanded to apply to any school in the State receiving funds appropriated through Senate Bill 504.

A process was established for the board of trustees of a school district other than Clark and Washoe as well as the State Public Charter School Authority to submit an application to the Department of Education to apply for funds from an amount set aside for this purpose.

Each school district receiving funds appropriated by Senate Bill 504 must submit a report on or before June 15, 2014, and again on or before February 2, 2015, that includes, without limitation:

- a. An identification of the schools that received an allocation of money by the school district or a grant of money from the Department;
- b. How much money each school received;
- c. A description of the programs or services for which the money was used by each school;
- d. The number of children who participated in a program or service that was funded;
- e. The average per-child expenditure per program or service that was funded;
- f. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs or services, including, without limitation, data regarding the academic and linguistic achievement and proficiency of children who participated in a program or received services; and
- g. Any recommendations for legislation, including, without limitation, for the continuation or expansion of programs and services that are identified as effective in

improving the academic and linguistic achievement and proficiency of children who are limited English proficient.

In addition at the national level, **Zoom School** is an on-line elementary school classroom with lessons in geography, biology, language arts, and early childhood activities. For more information, see www.zoomschool.com.

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

The term **21st century skills** refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed—by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today’s world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces. Generally speaking, 21st century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas, and in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout a student’s life.

It should be noted that the “21st century skills” concept encompasses a wide-ranging and amorphous body of knowledge and skills that is not easy to define and that has not been officially codified or categorized. While the term is widely used in education, it is not always defined consistently, which can lead to confusion and divergent interpretations.

In addition, a number of related terms—including *applied skills*, *cross-curricular skills*, *cross-disciplinary skills*, *interdisciplinary skills*, *transferable skills*, *transversal skills*, *non-cognitive skills*, and *soft skills*, among others—are also widely used in reference to the general forms of knowledge and skill commonly associated with **21st century skills**.

While these different terms may not be strictly synonymous, and they may have divergent or specialized meanings in certain technical contexts, these diverse sets of skills are being addressed here for the purposes of practicality and usefulness.