

Basic Education Terms Every Parent Should Know

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Education has its own vocabulary, and understanding the terms used often by teachers and school officials is important for parents and guardians who want to understand their children's educational progress. Here are some of the key words and phrases that describe important things going on in education in public schools.

👉 Assessment

An assessment, often referred to as a test, measures the learning and performance of students in schools. While there are many different types of assessments, the most common assessment is a multiple-choice test. Assessments in California public schools are used to measure student mastery of the Standards, but there are also assessments for identifying special-need students, high school graduation requirements, and college entrance levels. There are also assessments that measure individual students, whole schools, districts, and state progress.

👉 Basic Skills

These are the fundamental skills needed to succeed, first in school and ultimately in life. Most people think of basic skills as the ability to read, write, and compute. Others, however, would broaden the term to include such skills as the ability to use a computer, the ability to work cooperatively with others, and the ability to solve new and old problems.

👉 Curriculum

Curriculum is the set of concepts, operations, and ideas that form a course of study for students in a particular grade. In California, the curriculum is set by the Mathematics Content Standards, which lists the curriculum for each grade, kindergarten through high school. In elementary schools, the mathematics curriculum for each grade covers Algebra and Functions, Measurement and

Geometry, Number Sense, Statistics, Data Analysis and Probability, and Mathematical Reasoning. Starting in eighth grade, curriculum is by mathematics topic: Algebra I, Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus, etc.

👉 Developmentally Appropriate

Curriculum and instruction that fit with the physical age and mental development of students are referred to as developmentally appropriate. Many educators feel that certain concepts can be learned more easily when students reach certain ages. Developmentally appropriate education also considers that not all students mature educationally at the same rate. *Note: this is NOT a belief that some students can learn mathematics and others cannot!*

👉 Direct Instruction

Direct instruction, also referred to as lecture, is when the teacher presents the content in a clear, orderly way from the front of the room. Alternatives to direct instruction are discovery learning and constructive teaching, in which students are led, by means of investigation or discussion, to develop their own ideas and solve problems.

👉 Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education refers to the education of young children ages 0 through 7 years old. Recent brain development research shows that these years are the most rapid period of children's learning. This includes learning at home, in childcare, preschool, and the first years of school.

👉 Hands-on Learning

In hands-on learning students are directly involved in the learning process by making a hand-to-eye-to-brain connection. The term *hands-on* comes from the use of objects, such as blocks and shapes, that students can manipulate to help them understand a new

concept. Some students learn better if more of their senses are used. Hands-on learning is often a part of discovery learning and constructivist teaching.

Manipulatives

Manipulatives are learning materials used in hands-on learning activities to help students understand abstract ideas and learn mathematics by handling physical objects. Typical manipulatives used in schools include counters, beans, number tiles and rods, base 10 blocks, fraction strips, and pattern blocks.

Mathematical Operations

Mathematical operations let us work with numbers in computation and equations. Examples of operations in mathematics are addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

One-to-one Correspondence

One-to-one correspondence is a basic understanding or counting that each object counts for one number when counting. Very young children often find it difficult to count one object for each number counted.

Problem Solving

Problem solving is the ability to find answers to unique and challenging mathematical situations. The ability to problem solve is possibly the most important life skill, because real life constantly presents us with problems to solve. A good problem makes you think— $4 + 4 + 4 + 4$ is an exercise, not a problem. But “How many different answers can you get using four 4s and any mathematical operations?” is a problem.

Professional Development

Professional development, also known as staff development and teacher inservice education, refers to leaning experiences, such as classes, conferences, and workshops, that help teachers and administrators increase their knowledge and skills in order to improve their teaching and help more students. Teaching as a profession requires on-going professional development.

Remedial Education

Remedial education presents new opportunities for students who did not learn

concepts and skills the first time. For example, learning basic mathematics skills in high school or college are considered remedial because most students are expected to learn those skills in elementary school. Remedial education often involves a different teaching approach and materials and work on student motivation as well as basic skills.

School Readiness

School readiness is a measure of the basic background and knowledge children are expected to have upon entering kindergarten. Some educators believe that school readiness skills include (but are not limited to) recognition of colors and basic shapes, gross motor skills such as running or catching a ball, fine motor coordination that enables children to hold a crayon or pencil, the ability to sort objects in meaningful ways (e.g., beans or coins), and children knowing their first and last names and home address. 

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