

School Programs

Principles of Learning

The public school program is based on principles of learning that teachers and administrators should use as the basis of the experiences they plan for their students. These principles include the following:

1. Learning is a process of developing abilities and actively constructing knowledge.

Therefore, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to

- create environments and plan experiences that foster investigating, questioning, critical inquiry, predicting, exploring, collecting, educational play, creativity and innovation, and communicating
- engage learners in experiences that encourage their personal construction of knowledge and abilities through integrated learning opportunities
- involve learners actively in personally meaningful ways

2. Students construct knowledge and make it meaningful in terms of their prior knowledge and experiences.

Therefore, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to

- find out what students already know and can do
- create learning environments and plan experiences that build on learners' prior knowledge and abilities
- ensure that learners are able to see themselves reflected in the learning materials used in the school
- recognize, value, and use the great diversity of experiences and information students bring to school
- provide learning opportunities that respect and support students' racial, cultural, and social identities
- ensure that students are invited or challenged to build on prior knowledge and abilities, integrating new understandings with existing understandings and abilities

3. Learning is enhanced when it takes place in a social and collaborative environment.

Therefore, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to

- ensure that play, talk, group work, and collaborative ventures are central and developmentally appropriate class activities
- see that learners have frequent opportunities to learn from and with others
- structure opportunities for learners to engage in diverse social interactions with peers and adults
- help students to see themselves as members of a community of learners

4. Students need to continue to view learning as an integrated whole.

Therefore, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to

- plan opportunities to help students make connections across the curriculum and with the world outside, and structure activities that require students to reflect on those connections
- invite students to apply strategies from across the curriculum to critically inquire and solve problems in real situations

5. Learners must see themselves as capable and successful.

Therefore, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to

- provide learning activities, resources, and challenges that are developmentally appropriate to the learner
- communicate high expectations for achievement to all students
- encourage perseverance and risk-taking in learning
- ensure that all students experience genuine success on a regular basis
- value experimentation and treat approximation as signs of growth
- provide frequent opportunities for students to reflect on and describe what they know and can do
- provide learning experiences and resources that reflect the diversity of the local and global community
- provide learning opportunities that develop self-esteem

6. Learners have different ways of knowing and representing knowledge.

Therefore, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to

- recognize each learner's preferred ways of constructing meaning and provide opportunities for exploring alternative ways
- plan a wide variety of open-ended experiences
- use assessment to inform teaching and learning
- recognize, acknowledge, and build on students' diverse ways of knowing and representing their knowledge
- structure frequent opportunities for students to explore, formulate, create, and innovate to express ideas, discoveries, and understandings

7. Reflection is an integral part of learning.

Therefore, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to

- challenge their beliefs and their practices based on continuous reflection
- encourage students to reflect on their learning processes, practices, and experiences
- encourage students to acknowledge and articulate their learnings and how they learn
- help students use their reflections to understand themselves as learners, make connections with other learnings, and proceed with new learning