



EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Glossary of Terms

Adventure - Adventure is an approach to learning that promotes risk-taking and courage that can exist in a classroom as well as in natural settings. In either case, students have experiences that are challenging and relevant, including occasions when they are on the brink of both success and failure - both are equally instructive.

Assessment for learning – Assessment for learning strategies are actions that help students improve their understanding and skills at the outset of learning and throughout the process of learning. They provide students with information to help them be successful on assessments of learning. Assessments for learning include instructional practices such as sharing learning targets, self-assessing, or analyzing models and exemplars to create a picture of quality work. Assessments for learning can also be physical assessments, such as quizzes, performances, or journal entries, when they are used to gauge student progress and determine next steps for instruction.

Assessments of learning (summative assessments) – Assessments of learning are evaluations given after learning has occurred; they measure student progress and reflect the level of student learning at a particular point in time. They can reflect a wide range of formats that fall into one of four methods: selected/short response, extended response, performance assessment, and personal communication. Examples of formats within these method categories are: tests, quizzes, essays, presentations, exhibitions, performances, and journals.

Authentic audience – An audience beyond the classroom teacher that helps students care about purpose and quality of their work.

Big ideas – Enduring, conceptual understandings we want students to remember ten years from now. Big ideas are often intentionally repeated over a number of years with students gaining deeper understanding each time. They often represent key concepts of a discipline (e.g. in math: fractions, ratios and percentages are different representations of the same relationships. In science: natural selection is dependent both on features that ensure survival and on features that attract and ensure modes of reproduction).

Case studies – Case studies are concrete, often local, studies of subtopics within a discipline. They are used to make the major concepts of a discipline or broad topic come alive for students. EL uses the term “case study” in a broader manner than that term is used in law or medicine. Sometimes the term is used exactly as it is in those fields, to refer to an investigation of a unique person, place, institution or event (e.g. as part of a U.S. history study of the Civil Rights movement, students investigate a local civil rights hero). Other times the term case study is used more loosely, to refer to a narrowed subtopic that allows students to focus their research on a particular example that animates and clarifies the broader topic (e.g. in a study of the Civil War, students are involved in a case study of women’s roles in the war). Learning Expeditions generally include one or more case studies; ideally they connect students to their local natural or residential community to provide a local window on national or global concepts.

Character – Based on the work of Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson, EL distinguishes two categories of character. *Performance character* refers to skills that enable students to perform to potential, to do good work (e.g., responsibility, perseverance, commitment to quality). *Relational character* refers to skills that enable students to work well with others, to be a good person (e.g. respect, kindness, collaboration,).

Content standards – The standards students will meet in the course of their Learning Expedition, primarily derived from state or district standards. “Content” refers to specific knowledge or reasoning related to an academic discipline. Students will address many standards in the course of a Learning Expedition or project, but it is important to distinguish which of these are most important and should be prioritized in instruction and tracked carefully.

Craftsmanship – “Doing things well”: Achieving personal and group excellence through continuous improvement. Craftsmanship requires clear criteria for quality. In EL schools, teachers create craftsmanship targets related to the use of a particular medium to help students create high quality work.

Differentiation – Proactively adjusting the process of and resources used for learning (but **not** the learning targets) to fit each student’s readiness, interest, or learning profile. This means, respectful, high-quality work for all, but with different modes of support toward this goal. Note that in EL schools, differentiation is not typically achieved by offering students multiple project or product formats but rather by building flexibility and creativity into the components of a common project and individualizing and scaffolding the support offered.

Exhibition – One type of product/performance in which students display selected work in a formal way, as in a museum or gallery.

Experts – People skilled in a particular field of study. Teachers utilize experts to support authentic research, critique student work, model, and provide guidance in expedition development. The EL approach encourages the regular use of experts in the classroom and in the field, not just as “presenters” but as active partners in enriching the quality of student thinking and work.

Fieldwork – Field research done by students. EL distinguishes *fieldwork* from “*field trips*.” In fieldwork, students are active researchers and not passive observers of a prepared experience. For example, a *field trip* might involve elementary school students taking a guided tour at a restored colonial village. *Fieldwork*, on the other hand, might have those students “apprentice” themselves to a particular craftsman at the village, helping with the work, interviewing, and taking photos, becoming an “expert” in that craft. Fieldwork in EL schools often involves service learning, such as testing local water sources for pollutants.

Guiding questions – Open-ended essential questions that synthesize the “so what” of the topic students are studying and link all elements of a learning expedition or unit of study. Typically, 1-3 guiding questions frame an expedition; they are posted in the classroom and referenced regularly. Guiding questions often represent key concepts of a discipline. For example, “where does history come from?” or “what conditions are necessary for a species to survive?”

Habits of scholarship - Habits of scholarship support students' academic success and reflect the values of the school. They are synonymous with performance character skills - skills needed to obtain a standard of excellence in academic or real-world endeavors. Teachers look to the habits of scholarship to name specific, developmentally appropriate targets for which students are held accountable.

Instructional steps – Outline of intentionally sequenced lessons, series of workshops, key lectures, models, simulations, assessments and differentiation plans with enough detail to shape daily lesson plans.

Kickoff/Immersion – Intensive experiences at the beginning of a learning expedition or unit of study that generate curiosity and excitement about the topic and build background knowledge.

Learning expeditions – The signature curricular structure in EL schools that make content standards come alive for students. They are interdisciplinary studies, usually lasting 6-12 weeks, led by a teacher or teaching team. Learning Expeditions are based on state standards and local curriculum maps and focus on what teachers determine to be essential content and skills. They take multiple, powerful elements of the EL approach and join them together: guiding questions, kickoff experiences, case studies, projects, lessons, fieldwork, experts, service learning, and a culminating event that features high-quality student work.

Learning Targets – Goals or objectives for lessons, projects and courses, derived from state and local standards and curriculum maps, to assess growth. They are written in concrete, student-friendly language, shared with students, posted in the classroom, and tracked carefully by students and teachers during the process of learning. For example, if a required 5th grade state standard is: “students will articulate multiple perspectives on the various factors catalyzing the American Revolution,” a teacher-created learning target for students might be: “I can explain how a number of different concerns and events led to the start of the American Revolution.” EL distinguishes between *long-term learning targets* and *supporting learning targets*:

Long-term learning targets - Learning targets that express the intended student learning for the entire Learning Expedition, project or grading term. These targets will be included in teachers' grade books and assessment reports. They are commonly labeled as knowledge, reasoning, skill, craftsmanship, and/or character.

Supporting learning targets – Small-scale targets that guide instruction and scaffold toward the long-term targets. Supporting targets are contextualized and specific (e.g. supporting learning targets for a lesson might include: “I can add fractions with different denominators. I can draw a geometric diagram and use it to explain the concept of adding fractions. I can demonstrate focus and kindness while working with my classmates.”)

Performance - One type of product where students perform for an authentic audience.

Product – Student products are the tangible results of projects. Formats include things like: scientific reports, field guides, blueprints, business plans, anthologies of writing, architectural models, or instructional posters. Most projects in EL schools result in products created for audiences beyond the classroom. Products are intended to increase motivation by engaging students in real work with authentic purpose, and they require students to apply key academic skills while thinking creatively and critically. Products are not the sole assessment of students' ability to meet a set of long-term targets. Their primary purpose is to motivate students to learn important material, demonstrate what they know, improve their craftsmanship, contribute to their community, and build habits of scholarship.

Project – In the EL model, projects are a core structure for learning essential skills and content. Projects are composed of a sequence of thoughtfully-planned lessons and experiences. They address important questions, often have a genuine purpose, and drive student motivation to learn. Projects are generally worked on in school, not as an out-of-school assignment, though they may involve homework. Projects typically require both individual student work and teamwork. They generally last from 2 – 6 weeks and result in student products or performances. High quality work is supported through the use of exemplars and models, multiple drafts or rehearsals, and peer and expert critique.

Service learning – Active participation in organized experiences that meet authentic community needs. Service learning provides students with opportunities to use their acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations, extending student learning into the community and instilling an ethic of stewardship. Service learning is not simply charitable work; the learning (linked to expedition content) is just as important as the service.