

Learning Differences Programme

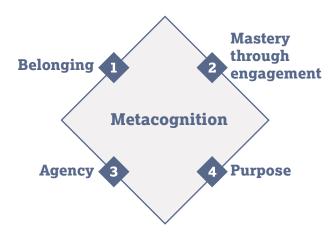
Rethinking the Way Learning Happens

Introduction

The Oak Foundation's Learning Differences Programme (LDP) believes every student should benefit from engaging and rigorous educational opportunities, and we support solutions focused specifically on students with learning differences, particularly those who experience additional adversity due to racism and poverty.

Advances in cognitive science and neuroscience have provided more understanding than ever about human development, from the science of reading to the link between academic mastery and social and emotional growth. Yet, changes in school organisation and instructional practice are slow to respond to this new information.

Based on interviews with students, families, teachers, and leaders, the LDP identified four attributes we believe are critical to realising our vision of building a world in which schools unlock the creativity and power of students with learning differences – along with every young person – and equip them to shape more just and equitable communities.



- A sense of **belonging** through strong relationships that promote acceptance, connection, support and empathy in the learning environment;
- **2. Mastery through engagement** with rigorous content, demonstration of its understanding, and critical reflection on new material;
- **3. Agency** through the capacity and habit to form and act on intentions; and
- **4. Purpose** through understanding of personal values and the relationship to learning and long-term goals.

At the same time, the LDP recognises that **metacognition** — the ability to reflect on one's own thinking and consciously manipulate the cognitive process — undergirds all learning, including that of the four attributes. Together, belonging, mastery through engagement, agency, purpose and metacognition enable students to evaluate their needs as learners and to achieve their personal and academic goals.

Detailed definitions for each attribute follow on the next page. To build out the definitions, our research partners at Public Impact analyzed how the four attributes are reflected in or align with competencies included in the Harvard Taxonomy Project, which maps hundreds of competencies across 40 of the most widely used non-academic, social-emotional frameworks. Whereas the competencies describe specific mindsets, habits, and skills, the attributes are broader, encompassing groups of related, but different competencies. These definitions reflect the LDP's own interpretations and understanding of the attributes rather than scientific research findings.

We believe that practitioners need to offer students with learning differences responsive and unique learning experiences to fully develop these attributes and their related competencies. To learn about the evidentiary basis for the attributes and implementation strategies, as well as to access a range of other resources, please explore the <u>Resource Library</u> we developed with Public Impact. In addition, we developed an <u>Assessment Library</u> to identify metrics and assessments for monitoring student development of the attributes.



Questions? / Get in touch

If you have questions about this resource guide, please contact our colleague Julie Hill at julie.hill@oakfnd.org

Defining the attributes

Belonging

Building positive relationships

Ability to establish and maintain positive relationships that convey respect and empathy

Work with others

Ability to work effectively with others in a respectful and collaborative manner

Sociability

Tendency to seek out and enjoy situations involving interpersonal interactions

Helping others

Tendency to care for and offer others help

Civic identity

Sense of belonging to and responsibility towards a community or communities with which one identifies

Positive sense of self

Favorable self-esteem and feelings about oneself and how others value you

Awareness of systems

Tendency to understand how one fits into a specific context and the corresponding rules and procedures

Achievement orientation

Metacognition

Sense of commitment to mastery and success, and belief in one's ability to reach high standards through effortful, incremental processes

Creativity

Tendency to generate and act on novel, original ideas

Openness

Tendency to be open and respect new ideas, perspectives, and cultures

Risk-taking

Tendency to go beyond established limits

Access information

Ability to find accurate, relevant information and apply it effectively

Critical thinking

Mastery through engagement

Ability to analyze and evaluate evidence, make connections between information, and strategize on tasks

Decision-making

Ability to make choices based on information analysis

Set and achieve goals

Ability to set realistic goals and do the action planning necessary to achieve them

Agency

Growth mindset

Belief that one's abilities can grow with effort

Self-efficacy

Belief in one's abilities to succeed in completing a task, achieving an outcome, or reaching a goal

Conscientiousness

Tendency to be organized, responsible, and hardworking

Initiative

Tendency to independently take action to achieve desired personal outcomes

Resilience

Tendency to recover quickly from adversity and persist

Leadership

Ability to lead and organize others

Self-management

Ability to recognize and regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to work toward and achieve goals

Purpose

Positive sense of future

Belief in having a place in the world

Self-concept

Sense of personal identity, including personal strengths and weaknesses

Relevance of school

Belief that subject content in school is interesting or holds value

Desire to learn

Tendency to want to learn based on a sense of enjoyment and / or curiosity in learning