

Wisconsin's Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning

1. Every student has the right to learn.

It is our collective responsibility as an education community to make certain each child receives a high-quality, challenging education designed to maximize potential, an education that reflects and stretches his or her abilities and interests. This belief in the right of every child to learn forms the basis of equitable teaching and learning. The five principles that follow cannot exist without this commitment guiding our work.

2. Instruction must be rigorous and relevant.

To understand the world in which we live, there are certain things we all must learn. Each school subject is made up of a core of essential knowledge that is deep, rich, and vital. Every student, regardless of age or ability, must be taught this essential knowledge. What students learn is fundamentally connected to how they learn, and successful instruction blends the content of a discipline with processes of an engaging learning environment that changes to meet the dynamic needs of all students.

3. Purposeful assessment drives instruction and affects learning.

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Purposeful assessment practices help teachers and students understand where they have been, where they are, and where they might go next. No one assessment can provide sufficient information to plan teaching and learning. Using different types of assessments as part of instruction results in useful information about student understanding and progress. Educators should use this information to guide their own practice and in partnership with students and their families to reflect on learning and set future goals.

4. Learning is a collaborative responsibility.

Teaching and learning are both collaborative processes. Collaboration benefits teaching and learning when it occurs on several levels: when students, teachers, family members, and the community collectively prioritize education and engage in activities that support local schools, educators, and students; when educators collaborate with their colleagues to support innovative classroom practices and set high expectations for themselves and their students; and when students are given opportunities to work together toward academic goals in ways that enhance learning.

5. Students bring strengths and experiences to learning.

Every student learns. Although no two students come to school with the same culture, learning strengths, background knowledge, or experiences, and no two students learn in exactly the same way, every student's unique personal history enriches classrooms, schools, and the community. This diversity is our greatest education asset.

6. Responsive environments engage learners.

Meaningful learning happens in environments where creativity, awareness, inquiry, and critical thinking are part of instruction. Responsive learning environments adapt to the individual needs of each student and encourage learning by promoting collaboration rather than isolation of learners. Learning environments, whether classrooms, schools, or other systems, should be structured to promote engaged teaching and learning.