

Co-curricular Approach

Evidence Report

2024



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The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Canada

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Canada is a not-for-profit, global, non-competitive, youth development, experiential framework for participants ages 14-24:

- The Award has 60 years of experience in Canada, is in over 130 countries, and continues to empower millions of young people globally.
- The Award is recognized as one of the 'Big 6' global youth experiential organizations.
- The Award celebrates personalized learning and goal setting to empower students as leaders. Both flexible and adaptable the Award supports students in all pathways, all abilities, and all subject areas.

There are three progressive levels in the Award framework (Bronze, Silver, Gold) that focus on four key sections for students to set and reflect on their goals in:

- Skill Development,
- Physical Recreation,
- Voluntary Service, and
- Adventurous Journey.

What is the Co-curricular Approach?

Efforts have been made to better understand the challenges facing public education and the ways in which the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Canada can align the experiential learning framework with public education priorities to improve student engagement and personalized learning.

Award Canada is working with educators, ministries, industry partners, and school boards across the country to purposefully connect the Award's framework to enhance provincial curricular learning outcomes.

A Co-curricular Approach integrating Award Canada as a catalyst for youth achievement.

There are global concerns that existing public education systems are not adequately meeting the challenges of the complex modern world for both students and educators. Awareness of the disruptors impacting the future of education inform strategic approaches to be responsive to needs rather than reactive. The decline in student and teacher well-being is reflected in the McCrindle report, *The Seven disruptors impacting the future of education, (2023)*. The report highlights research in the seven disruptors impacting the future of education, consistent with studies conducted in Canada:

1. Artificial intelligence and technological change
2. Individualization of learning
3. Mental health and wellbeing
4. Consumer approach to education
5. Teacher burnout
6. Attracting and retaining the next generation of teachers
7. Achieving educational reform in a risk-averse culture

Progress in education is demonstrated by the shift in focus from traditional learning goals, to building competencies and supporting strategies that advocate for student lifelong learning and well-being. The traditional distinction between hard skills (technical abilities) and soft skills (interpersonal abilities) is blurring as the workplace demands more holistic competencies. Applied learning, which integrates both theoretical knowledge and practical application, is gaining prominence.

Education is preparing youth for jobs that may not yet exist due to the rapid pace of technological advancement and innovation. Therefore, a focus on adaptable skills, critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning is crucial. The ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings and to continuously learn and evolve will be invaluable. Strategies to develop resiliency and to be responsive to challenges and growth, alongside managing well-being will remain relevant for holistic student success.

Recognition of non-formal learning makes experiences more visible, valuable, and intentional. “For this recognition to be effective, it must be coupled with accepted and recognised standards” (Werquin, 2022). Partnering formal and non-formal learning strategies could be the solution to holistic student development.

A Proposed Co-curricular Approach

Community-based learning complements in class learning by taking theory into action. Community-based learning is co-facilitated by industry experts with educators and is often in a space outside of the traditional school setting. Evidence illustrates that community-based co-curricular learning not only enriches students' educational experiences but also enhances their overall development and prepares them for future success in various pathways, whether academic or career oriented.

Co-curricular Learning Gap in Canada

There is a pan-Canadian gap in the standards of advancement in youth engagement of non-formal learning and co-curricular experiences and acknowledgement. Co-curricular activities are ideally meant to complement academic curriculum through student experiences, but there can be challenges in integrating and assessing them effectively. A lack of continuity, recognition and alignment between the skills youth develop and curricular connections, variety of experiences offered, resources, access and equity, availability and funding, and the critical element of teacher engagement make holistic student success difficult to measure, motivate, or sustain. Moreover, educator readiness may not all begin the same way.

Co-curricular components integrated into a continuum / assessment approach will inspire and guide growth for next steps to build a standard that acknowledges student engagement, achievement, and success in the public school system. Assessment strategies influence pedagogical practice; a standardized approach will support educators in developing meaningful links between formal education curriculum and non-formal and co-curricular experiences.

The Award's Flexible Framework

A solution to this gap is a framework that is flexible enough for each province to integrate, based on individual provincial policies and curricular expectations, but consistent enough to nationally acknowledge and track student growth and success through meaningful co-curricular learning.

There are five interconnected, measurable components to propose and consider when designing an effective integrated co-curricular framework. All five components play a crucial role in fostering holistic student development and improvement in learning outcomes through engaging, relevant, educational experiences: *Pedagogy, Assessment, Real World Application, Student Participation and Structure*. Intersections between the five key drivers yield added benefits and can be transformative.

A Co-curricular Growth Continuum

Each of the five components moves teaching and learning experiences along a the Co-Curricular Growth Continuum through the following four stages: *Extracurricular, Classroom Integration, Interdisciplinary Learning, Co-curricular*. All stages represent benefits for student learning; however, the starting points may vary based on readiness. The hypothesis is that the ability to move forward on the continuum will improve student and educator outcomes with each stage.

Emphasis on process, reflection, student interests, and formative assessment will support learning skills and coaching for goal setting and improvement.

	Extracurricular	Classroom Integration	Interdisciplinary	Community-Based Co-Curricular
Pedagogy	Champion Teacher	Teacher + Experiential	Experiential Theme Team-Taught, Multi Subject Collaborative Approach	Interdisciplinary Teacher + Community Facilitator
Assessment	Not for Credit	Provincial Curriculum	Multiple Curricula Experiential Assessment	Competency Based Interdisciplinary Mastery of curriculum Self-Reflection
Real World	Out of Class	Real World Connections	Real World + Multi- Subject Connections	Real-World Location Industry Mentorship Theory to Action
Student	Student Interest Voluntary	In Class + Out of Class	Collaborative & Experiential Global Competencies Skills Portfolio Development.	Interdisciplinary Collaborative Goal setting and tracking.
Structure	Specific Group Impact	In-Class + Community Connected	Team-Taught or Cross-Curricular	Off-site or Community- Supported, Team-taught
Example	e.g., teacher club or team	e.g., Robotics - in a class & school community	e.g., Interdisciplinary class theme like STEM	e.g., SHSM: Aviation School, Environment Leaders Program, Construction School

A strategic focus for Award pilot integration has been to select themes and targets based on Canadian education and industry priorities, Award scalability, and Award readiness. Currently, pilot initiatives include an early focus of Construction, Environment, Aviation, STEM, Careers, and several other trades and business related sectors.

With the increasing industry demand for trades and STEM, provincial curricular revisions, pathways, and private sector priorities, there are infrastructures in place in education that align with the Award.

Environmental and Outdoor Education continue to inform students of climate change, food literacy, and environmental industry priorities making the environmental theme very relevant to the Award. Environmental and Outdoor Education also promote well-being and healthy living and readily connect with mainstream curriculum and specialized programming.

Integrating the Award with the prioritized provinces, structures and themes will provide a diverse pilot Co-curricular Approach from coast to coast for future expansion opportunities. The Award team remains responsive to sector interests and needs as we continue to grow and adapt the Co-curricular Approach to support all students, all pathways, with stakeholders.

Conclusion

Award Canada shares the vision of innovative educators, students, families, and communities who want to be responsive to the ever-changing needs in education and prepare their young adults for a future world of undefined possibilities. The Award framework is a tool to measure the impact of student experiences which provides evidence to measure student learning outcomes.

With the increased importance placed on developing the whole student, the Co-curricular Approach will enhance students' skill development in ways that academics alone cannot.

Award Canada can be used as an integrated partner framework to support co-curricular development to improve and celebrate youth education outcomes. Award Canada offers a robust solution through a Co-curricular Approach to empower educators to leverage a holistic strategy that emphasizes knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes that complement and deepen content knowledge.

Award Canada's Co-curricular Approach can advance the potential of education, and the commitment to equitable, inclusive, personalized, learning connected to real world experiences and provincial curriculum.

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