

2-3 December 2024  
UNESCO Headquarters



Anita Ponne/Shutterstock.com

## Building bridges to transform learning

### Background

The **Global Alliance on the Science of Learning for Education** is a UNESCO international community of practice that was inaugurated at a [meeting of experts on the Learning Sciences](#) held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 25 to 26 October 2023. The Learning Sciences meeting was an initiative of the [Global Learning House mission](#) with the framework of the [Global Education Coalition](#), which was established in March 2020 to bring together partners from diverse sectors to mitigate learning disruptions as a result of COVID-19 school closures. The Learning Sciences meeting aimed to follow-up on the [International Science and Evidence-based Education Assessment](#) (ISEEA) report released by the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), which is the first-ever scientifically robust and large-scale evidence-based assessment of knowledge in education to inform policy-making.

Within the overall goal of accelerating achievement of [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4 on education](#), the Learning Sciences meeting responded to the call of the international community to urgently address the learning crisis, as reiterated in the work of the [SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee \(HLSC\)'s Functional Area 1](#) on evidence-based policy formulation, planning and implementation, the Call to Action of the 2022 United Nations [Transforming Education Summit](#), and the recommendations in the report of the International Commission on the [Futures of Education](#), which are also reflected in the United Nations Secretary-General's [Vision Statement on Transforming Education](#).

## From scientific knowledge of learning and pedagogy to applications in education policy and practice

---

The 2023 meeting on the Learning Sciences contributed and led to the establishment of an international community of practice that gathers together scientists, policymakers, practitioners and development partners to facilitate the translation of scientific knowledge from the interdisciplinary fields that study learning and pedagogy (the Science of Learning) for application to education policy and practice. Founding members at the inaugural meeting issued an [Inaugural Statement](#) and agreed on the [Terms of Reference](#) for the community, defining the objectives, scope and modalities of work.

Membership in the Global Alliance is made up of institutions or individuals with a mandate, expertise, and track record of relevant contributions strongly linked to brokering, knowledge translation, or conducting scientific research on learning, pedagogy, teaching-learning processes, quality of education, or improving student learning outcomes, and other education-related activities linked to the scope of work of the Alliance. The Alliance is guided by a Steering Committee and its platform is housed within the [Global Learning House Connect](#) of the [Global Education Coalition](#).

The Alliance presents a consensus scientific view across independent leading experts. The overarching aim of the Alliance is to serve in an advisory capacity to influence and inform global and national policy discourses on transforming education and learning which are currently taking place in both political and education development fora. For this, the Alliance is represented by UNESCO as the principal Scientific Council at key high-level global political events and consultations and works closely with the HLSC's Functional Area 1 to advocate for and inform these deliberations in the areas of its expertise.

This objective will be achieved by improving the feedback loop from research production to policymaking (i.e., scientific knowledge to inform policymaking) and implementation (i.e., the uptake and application of scientific knowledge to improve pedagogy and teaching-learning processes), and vice versa. In parallel, the aim is to enhance communication and improve resources and tools to support the SDG 4 mission of achieving a high-quality education in formal and informal learning environments, inclusive of digital and remote learning, with respect to education policies, pedagogical practices, and teacher education and professional development.

### Working groups

---

The important aspect of operationalizing the international community of practice is its agility through the establishment of thematic Working Groups. In consultation with the Steering Committee, two Working Groups have been established to support the preparation of background research that will be the focus of the discussions at the annual meeting of the Alliance, scheduled for 2-3 December 2024. The themes for the Working Groups were selected based on priorities expressed by UNESCO Member States for accelerating achievement of SDG 4, namely, Foundational Learning and Technologies for Learning.

**Foundational Learning.** Despite increases in access to education since 2015 when the Sustainable Development Goals were launched, many children today still complete primary school without having acquired the basic skills needed to progress in further education and succeed in life. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimated that 37% of the world's children (more than 300 million children) will not reach minimum proficiency levels in reading by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Foundational learning refers to basic literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills that are the essential building blocks for all other learning,

---

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2022. Setting Commitments: National SDG 4 Benchmarks to Transform Education. Montreal, UNESCO-UIS.

knowledge and higher-order competencies. However, despite the well-established research and knowledge base on the acquisition of reading, numeracy and social-emotional skills, much of this knowledge remains outside the sphere of the design of curricula and pedagogical practices. The purpose of this Working Group is to prepare a report demonstrating how the Science of Learning has been implemented in educational policy or practice to improve curriculum, pedagogy, teaching-learning processes, or student learning.

**Technologies for Learning.** Despite diverse, and sometimes contradictory, findings of the impact of hybrid, remote and online teaching on student learning outcomes, the proliferated use of technologies of varying types and scales during COVID-19 school closures has opened up an intensive debate on the potential of technology for ‘transforming’ teaching-learning processes and delivering more personalized, equitable, relevant, and efficient education. Advanced educational technologies that can be adapted to students’ specific learning needs and knowledge gaps have been hailed as the panacea for the future of learning, both to free up teachers’ time in the classroom so they can focus on the social-emotional aspects of learning and to provide hands-on support to struggling students. However, sound, rigorous and impartial evidence of technology’s added value for learning remains lacking. The purpose of this Working Group is to prepare a report demonstrating how the Science of Learning has informed (or should inform) the development of education technologies that have evidenced improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, teaching-learning processes, or student learning.

## Meeting objectives and participants

---

The theme for this first annual meeting is “Building Bridges to Transform Learning.” We will hear from science of learning experts who have worked with education policymakers and practitioners to inform the design of curricula and instructional practices.

In addition to keynote presentations and panel discussions, the meeting will also serve as the occasion for a wider consultation about the reports of the two Working Groups to gather the perspectives of a diverse group of stakeholders, including practitioners and policymakers. The pre-final drafts of the two reports will be shared in advance of the meeting.

Participants will include all members of the Global Alliance on the Science of Learning for Education as well as invited practitioners such as teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, curriculum developers, learning assessment experts, and edtech companies. UNESCO will also invite education technical experts and policymakers of Member States through the national delegations in Paris.

At the conclusion of the inaugural meeting in 2023, invited experts agreed to contribute research policy brief based on their scientific presentations to be published in a Compendium of Insights on the Science of Learning for Education as part of the meeting proceedings. The release of this publication will take place at the annual meeting in December.

As one of the goals of the Global Alliance is to translate and implement scientific research findings into classroom practice, UNESCO is planning to organize a school visit. The visit will be to a school in a disadvantaged area of the Paris region. The school visit is planned for Wednesday morning, 4 December 2024, and participation will be open to Alliance members.

## Expected outputs

---

1. Finalization of the two working group reports integrating the insights from a wider and diverse group of stakeholders, including practitioners, policymakers and development partners. The reports will be published by UNESCO in 2025.

2. A discussion of priority or innovative thematic areas of work for the following year for consideration by the Steering Committee and members of the Alliance.

## Pre-registration form

---

To facilitate organization, interested participants are invited to pre-register for the meeting. As spaces are limited, invitations will be issued on a first-come-first-served basis until all spaces are filled. There is no participation fee to attend the meeting, but participants are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation costs. UNESCO will provide lunch for the two days of the meeting. Participants from low- and low-middle-income countries may be eligible for financing. The pre-registration deadline is 31 August 2024. Participants who have secured a place at the meeting will be contacted with more information after the pre-registration deadline. To pre-register, participants may complete the pre-registration form: <https://forms.office.com/e/JGmzQsQXg2>

## Membership application form

---

Membership is open to universities, research institutions, networks, think tanks, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, foundations, funders, associations, academic societies and publishers (Institutional Membership), as well as individual researchers, academics, teacher educators, teachers, curriculum developers, assessment experts and policymakers, who may be representatives of national governments (Individual Membership). Membership criteria is further described in the [Terms of Reference](#). Members are automatically subscribed to the Newsletter. To apply for membership, applicants may complete the application form: <https://forms.office.com/e/PZgCPRhUNF>

## For more information

---

**Section of Education Policy - Education Sector**

[educationpolicy@unesco.org](mailto:educationpolicy@unesco.org)

<https://glhconnect.unesco.org/launch-global-alliance-science-learning-education>