

## ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND REPORTING OF STUDENT LEARNING

### Background

Foothills School Division is committed to research based, ongoing quality assessment, evaluation and reporting practices for the purpose of optimal student learning. The division believes that high quality instruction results in deep understanding and depends on valid, reliable, authentic assessment practices. In order to improve learning, assessments guide teachers in adjusting instruction, monitoring student progress, providing effective feedback and assessing for student mastery. The main purpose of assessment is to improve learning as well as communicate student achievement, and is not about completion of activities or tasks for the purpose of generating a grade.

Principals are responsible to the Assistant Superintendent, Learning Services for the implementation of this administrative procedure.

Assessment, evaluation and reporting of student learning in Foothills School Division is guided by the following principles:

### Assessment For, Of, As Learning

Teachers must have balanced assessment practices including:

- **Effective Feedback:** Feedback is used to improve learning. It is **specific** to outcomes and criteria, **actionable** so students understand next steps, **timely** and **on-going**.
- **Formative assessment** that ensures responsive instruction: assessment informs and guides instruction and provides effective feedback for the purpose of improving student learning.
- **Summative assessment** for the purpose of evaluating and reporting academic achievement.
- **Assessment as learning** to develop student independence. Students understand where they are in their learning, where they need to be, and next steps to improve.
- **Clarity:** Clear expectations about high standards foster a culture of continuous improvement. Students understand the learning targets, success criteria, or standards that will be used for assessment as well as the means of evaluation. Parents or guardians have access to the same information.

### Evaluation

Procedures used to evaluate student achievement must be designed so that they are fair, accurate, flexible and equitable; motivate students; instil confidence in students' abilities to learn and to succeed, and assess a variety of knowledge, skills and understandings from the Alberta Program of Studies (Real Learning First, The Teaching Profession's View of Student Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, Alberta Teacher's Association, Sept. 2007).

Grades are informed by summative assessments and are a consistent, accurate, and meaningful summary of each student's achievement of the learning outcomes at a given time during the school year.

- **Triangulation:** Assessment is based on a body of evidence that includes observations, conversations and products to inform a student's grade. Professional judgment requires analyzing a variety of assessment evidence including portfolios, demonstrations of learning, applied projects and performance tasks.
- **Outcomes-based Reporting:** Reporting and communicating academic achievement is based directly on the Alberta Program of Studies which considers front matter, general outcomes and specific outcomes.
- **Non Academic vs Academic Achievement:** effort, participation, attitude, attendance and other behaviours that are not curriculum-based are reported separately from academic achievement.
- **Most Recent Evidence:** Teachers exercise professional judgment when determining overall grades based on most recent and most consistent achievement, observations and conversations rather than averages. Instead of using averages, consider using median or mode for categorical grades and number values.

### **Communication of Student Learning**

Communication of student learning includes both formal and informal methods that are timely, ongoing, clear, concise, and accurate. The intent is to help teachers, students and parents collaborate for student success. Communication can assist parents to support learning at home as well as provide regular information on student progress before Learner Profiles. When communicating learning tasks with parents, areas of strength and next steps should be clear. Accommodations and/or adaptations used in the learning process are made clear to parents.

### **Reporting Student Achievement**

The purpose of reporting is to provide an ongoing summary in relation to Academic Achievement of the learning outcomes and Competencies for Successful Learners.

Reporting student achievement includes comments for Academic Achievement as well as Competencies for Successful Learners and include areas of strength, areas for growth and/or next steps.

### **Definitions**

*Learning outcome:* students' learning expectations based on the curriculum standards from the Alberta Program of Studies.

*Assessment:* the process of collecting evidence of student learning.

*Assessment for learning (formative assessment):* occurs during teaching and learning and is used to inform teachers and students of what has been learned and to provide direction for improvement.

Assessment of learning (summative assessment): reports on the status of achievement at the end of a period of instruction.

Assessment as learning (student independence): assessment that is used to help students understand where they are in their learning, where they need to be, and next steps to improve

Grade: a summary statement of student achievement based on the learning outcomes, usually indicated as a number, letter or category. Grades are based on summative assessments (assessment of learning), except in rare situations where information from existing summative assessments is not sufficient to determine a grade.

Mark: a number, letter or category assigned to any learning task that may be used to determine a grade.

Grade level of achievement: is an indicator of student's achievement in relation to the programs of study, expressed as "at, above or below" grade level. Students with an Inclusive Learning Plan (ILP) who are working on the graded Alberta Program of Studies different from their enrolled grade level will have a GLA reported as "all", "most", "some", or "none".

Evaluation: is the process of judging student achievement based on the curriculum standards from the Alberta Program of Studies.

Benchmark: assessment that screens and identifies students for discussion around interventions and possible further diagnostic assessment. It is not used as a summative assessment.

Diagnostic: assessment that digs deeper into a student's difficulty and allows us to address and assess pre-requisite skills.

Timely: feedback is considered timely when it is provided to students within a time frame where they still remember the learning task AND have the opportunity to use the feedback to improve; given the variety of ages and developmental levels, a tight timeline cannot be used to describe timely. This must be determined by the teacher based on where students are at.

Accommodations: a change in the way the student is expected to learn, complete assignments or participate in classroom activities or assessments. Accommodations are given to remove barriers to ensure students can access the curriculum and demonstrate their knowledge to the best of their ability. Accommodations do little to reduce the gap, as interventions are provided to do this, but instead remove barriers to ensure students have access to the curriculums and can demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understandings.

Adapted programming: programming that retains the learning outcomes of a Program of Studies and where adjustments to the instructional process are provided to address the special education need of the student. Students receiving adapted programming are on graded curriculum and are working towards the learning outcomes of the Alberta Programs of Study, although often at a grade level different from the enrollment grade in one or more subject areas.

Modified programming means programming in which the learning outcomes are significantly different from the provincial curriculum. Students receiving modified programming are not on grade curriculum but receive programming that focuses on life skills, foundational skills and academic readiness. For example, a secondary student may receive regular programming in

physical education and work experience, programming in language arts and mathematics that is adapted by providing age-appropriate content but elementary skill objectives, and modified programming in order to acquire personal life skills that are not part of the graded curriculum.

## **Procedures**

1. The Principal will consult with staff and communicate with School Council and community specific procedures that will guide assessment, evaluation and reporting of student learning in the school in accordance with this administrative procedure.
2. Clearly communicate student assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures in writing to parents/guardians and students by September 30 of each school year.
3. Provide a summary that communicates student progress to parents and students a minimum of three (3) times per year or two (2) times per school semester. This summary will include the following information:
  - 3.1 Individual student achievement in relation to learning outcomes and/or ILP goals.
  - 3.2 Individual student comments that describe areas of strength and areas for growth and/or next steps in relation to the program of studies.
  - 3.3 Individual student progress and comments in relation to Competencies for Successful Learners.
  - 3.4 Program and/or assessment modifications and/or adaptations.
  - 3.5 Attendance and punctuality.
  - 3.6 Student placement (end of year).

A summary could be in a variety of formats including, but not limited to, electronic, hard copy produced electronically and/or online.
4. Principals ensure the implementation of Division and provincial policies and procedures related to assessment, evaluation and reporting of student learning, including:
  - 4.1 The grade level(s) the child has achieved in relation to the grade levels of the provincial program of studies for Language Arts and Math as outlined in the Guide to Education.
  - 4.2 Provincial Achievement Tests – preliminary results for PATs grades 6 and 9.
  - 4.3 Grade 9 Provincial Achievement Tests will be used as the final exam for each subject. Each Grade 9 Provincial Achievement Test will have an overall weighting of 10% of the final grade for each course.
5. Provide at least two (2) parent/teacher and/or student formal conferences during each school year or one (1) per semester.
6. Adhere to the following principles and guidelines to ensure assessment practices are fair, accurate, timely and motivating:
  - 6.1 Use the learner outcomes from the appropriate program of studies to assess and report learning rather than type of assessment (example: test, quizzes, projects)

- 6.2 Report non-achievement factors that are not included in the program of studies, such as effort, neatness, attitude, attendance, and behaviour separately from Academic Achievement.
- 6.3 Reflect individual student understanding of the outcomes; therefore, they do not reflect bonus marks or group marks. In the absence of enough student evidence to make a professional judgment, the teacher will report out as such and not punitively grade students. Alternatives to zeros in grading are developed and implemented.
- 6.4 Use a variety of assessment evidence and professional judgment to determine achievement level or grades; instead of averaging marks, use most recent evidence, consider using median or mode, and consider observations and conversations.
- 6.5 Allow multiple opportunities to improve understanding of outcomes prior to and including summative assessments. Some learning activities are formative assessment which are meant to guide instruction and inform feedback and should not be factored into a student's grade.
- 6.6 Students are involved in the assessment process and know where they are in the learning process, where they need to be, and next steps to improve.
- 6.7 Incorporate a variety of formative assessments to inform and direct instruction for the purpose of improving, student learning.
- 6.8 Incorporate triangulated assessment evidence, including observations, conversations and products, rather than a single type of assessment, to evaluate and report student learning.
- 6.9 Provide a variety of assessments through which students can demonstrate their level of understanding and may include but not limited to portfolios, demonstrations of learning, tests/quizzes, projects and performance tasks.
- 6.10 Provide accurate, actionable, specific and timely feedback and provide opportunities for students to apply the feedback to improve learning.

## 7. Student Placement

- 7.1 Decisions with respect to placement are the responsibility of the school-based team including teachers and administration in consultation with parents and Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services.
- 7.2 Students' education programs are with their age appropriate peers, except in situations where it is determined through consultation with parents, school and Division Office staff that this placement would not be in the best interest of the student.
- 7.3 Authority for placement in specific senior high school programs rests with the senior high school Principal, in consultation with parents and staff. Senior high school promotion is by course as per Alberta Education Policy.
- 7.4 Placement of students in schools outside of their attendance area (non-designated, alternate school-of-choice) will comply with AP305: Attendance Boundary Areas.

## 8. Appeals

- 8.1 The right to appeal marks, grades, final standing in courses, and/or student placement, is the right of the student enrolled in the Division, the student's parent or the applicant (Student Evaluation Regulation).

- 8.2 Prior to any appeal, concerns must first be discussed directly with the student's teacher.
- 8.3 Appeals must be made in writing to the Principal within fourteen (14) days of the initial discussion with the student's teacher. Reasons for the appeal shall be included.
- 8.4 The Principal will initiate the steps deemed necessary to review the basis of the original evaluation, including one (1) or more of the following:
  - 8.4.1 Consultation with teacher involved;
  - 8.4.2 A review of the student's records;
  - 8.4.3 A personal hearing of the parents and/or student's appeal;
  - 8.4.4 An investigation of the evaluation procedures used;
  - 8.4.5 A second evaluation by an impartial third party;
  - 8.4.6 A meeting with the student and/or parent, the teacher and the Principal.
- 8.5 The Principal's findings will be reported to the teacher, parent and/or student, in writing, within seven (7) days of receipt of the appeal.
- 8.6 If the student and/or parent remain unsatisfied with the Principal's decision a further appeal may be made to the Superintendent within fourteen (14) days of the Principal's decision.
- 8.7 The Superintendent's findings will be reported to the Principal, student and/or parent, in writing, within fourteen (14) days of the receipt of the appeal.
- 8.8 Parents will be informed of their right to a review by Alberta Education if they are not satisfied with the decision of the Superintendent.

## Selecting the Correct Program for the Learner Profile

| Program  | Definition   | Report Characteristics of Learner? | On Learner Profile, which achievement indicators would be used?                          |
|--|--|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>GRADE LEVEL</b><br>Program  | The student is learning outcomes at their enrolled grade level and assessed on grade level standards.  | Yes                                | Mastery<br>Proficient<br>Acceptable<br>Beginning   |
| <b>ADAPTED</b><br>Program  | Programming from a program of studies where adjustments to the outcomes and/or outcomes being assessed are provided to address the needs of the student. | Yes                                | Mastery - Adapted<br>Proficient - Adapted<br>Acceptable - Adapted<br>Beginning — Adapted |
| <p>If a student is on a <b>goal based ILP</b> it is appropriate to note: "Refer to ILP for further information" where assessment of the student's progress towards those goals are noted in the reviews.</p> |  |                                    |  |

References: Relevant Legislation & Guidelines  
Information Bulletin:

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3115424/information-bulletin-on-standards-for-special-education-amended-june-2004.pdf>