

Basic Principles of Assessment

A Document for Parents

- 1) In today's society, jobs and careers are changing all of the time. For this reason, we want students to be problem-solvers, critical thinkers and lifelong learners (see Vol.1).
- 2) Schools have moved away from vague objectives and adopted learning outcomes that specifically outline what a student needs to understand and be able to do (see Vol.2).
- 3) Student performance is compared to a standard level of expectation rather than a class average (see Vol. 2).
- 4) Assessment of learning is an ongoing process, providing students many opportunities to show what they know as they work toward end of the year outcomes (see Vol. 3).
- 5) Teacher feedback and student-reflection through formative assessment allows students to continually grow and avoid mediocrity (see Vol. 4). Multiple forms of assessment such as observations, conversations and products are used to assess learning (see Vol. 3).
- 6) There is a focus on the quality of assessments rather than the quantity of assessments (see Vol. 4).
- 7) The report card is only one piece of the reporting process. Goal-setting, work samples, rubrics, portfolios and conferences are other ways to communicate student learning (see Vol. 5).
- 8) The purpose of outcomes-based assessment is to assess the student's understanding of an academic outcome, not to evaluate their level of effort, behavior and life skills unrelated to the learning outcome (see Vol. 6).
- 9) Technology provides students the opportunity to deepen their learning by connecting more intensely and sharing with others (see Vol. 7).
- 10) Technology gives students access to vast amounts of information. As a result, increased emphasis is placed on teaching students HOW to think rather than WHAT to think (see Vol. 7).

*Parent Assessment Series (Volumes 1-7) can be found at www.rcsd.ca

Glossary

Assessment

Assessment is a continuous process through which teachers, parents, and students are able to understand students' progress in learning. Assessment measures progress in curriculum outcomes by using several types of information (e.g., tests, observations, assignments).

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment refers to evaluation of student work based on activities that are real-life tasks and performances, rather than paper-and-pencil tests. Authentic tasks are usually complex. They involve problem solving and the use of a variety of knowledge and skills (e.g., preparing a sample budget for a single person living away from home).

Benchmark

A **benchmark** is a standard against which student progress is measured. In Grades 1, 2, and 3 in Saskatchewan, students' reading is benchmarked according to specific standards. In English, the division uses the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark assessment system. In French Immersion, the division uses the GB+ assessment system.

Celebration of Learning

A **Celebration of learning** provides an opportunity for the parent and child to participate in activities that demonstrate what they have been learning at school. The celebration of learning format provides parents with a better understanding as to some of the skills that the students know, understand and are able to do.

Co-Constructing Criteria

Co-constructing criteria engages students in defining learning goals and what success in those learning goals looks like. In language arts, for example, this could mean students working with the teacher to develop criteria for an effective descriptive paragraph.

Exemplar

An **exemplar** is a sample model of student work (e.g., writing) at a specific level. Exemplars in mathematics may be examples of all the detail a student must show when completing a mathematics question. Exemplars in writing may be a sample model of a descriptive paragraph. These assist students in self-evaluating the quality of their work.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is any assessment (e.g., quizzes, written work, interviews, presentations) where the goal is to give students constructive feedback about their work while it is in progress. This type of assessment assists students in correcting missteps and improving knowledge and skills. Through formative assessment, teachers can address student needs before summative assessment.

Goal Setting

Goals are statements about students' educational targets. Through goal setting, students are able to share these targets. Students and teachers have conversations about these goals during the school year.

Indicator

An indicator indicates what actions that the student should be able to perform in terms of the knowledge and skills (e.g. comprehension and application) necessary for the mastery of the outcome.

Life Skills

A **life skill** is a skill necessary or desirable in a student's social and personal development. Skills such as sharing, team work, and organization are examples of important life skills that contribute to student learning and success.

Outcome

Outcomes are specific statements that describe what the student is to learn, understand, or be able to do in different school subjects (curricula). These statements set the learning targets for students and are provided on the Saskatchewan Education website.

Rubric

A **rubric** is a chart or list that clearly describes criteria for evaluating a piece of student work. A rubric is divided into categories (e.g., beginning, meeting, or exceeding). The best rubrics offer clear details in each category so students can self-evaluate before they submit work.

Summative Assessment

Summative Assessment is assessment that makes a judgment about a student's final product or about the quality of student performance.

Strand

A **Strand** is a group of outcomes related to one area of the curriculum for each specific subject. The outcomes are consistently grouped into strands across all grade levels

Student-Involved Conference

A **student-involved conference** is a conference with parents where the student takes ownership for describing learning targets and the student's success in meeting those targets. Depending on a student's age and experience, these conferences may be student-led.

Student Learning Portfolio

Student learning portfolios are collections of students' work. These portfolios assist teachers, parents, and students evaluate what students know, understand, and can do. Students store their work in folders or electronic files. Students may occasionally select specific work samples to highlight growth and understanding.

Student Self-Assessment

Student self-assessment allows students to evaluate their own work and progress in learning. This is valuable because students can then pinpoint gaps within their learning and explore where they need to improve.