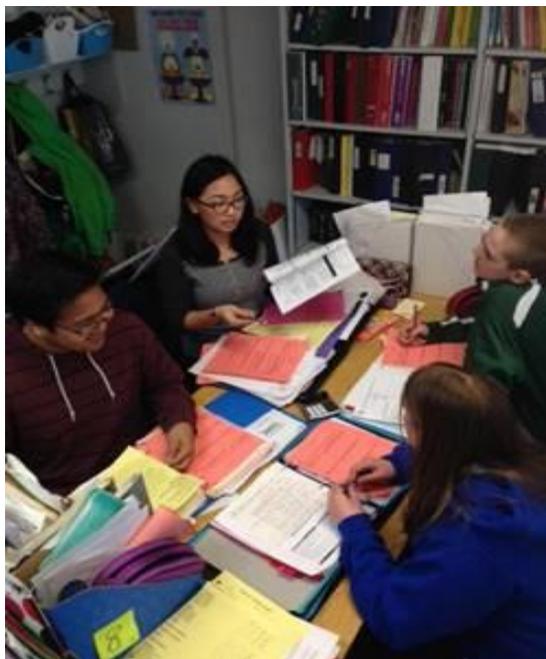


## **UNDERSTANDING STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING – Update Spring 2016**

An integral goal of Regina Catholic Schools and the mandate of the Ministry of Education is improved student achievement. Research on best practices throughout the province and the country to support this goal has transformed our instructional and assessment practices to be more timely, accurate and informative. It is now necessary to implement changes in the reporting process to align with these instructional practices.



Beginning in approximately 2010, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education directed that the learning expected of students be defined at each grade level by learning outcomes as evidenced by various indicators. This change moved curricula away from numerous and vague objectives with relatively few outcomes, towards outcomes that are specific in terms of what a student needs to know, to understand and be able to demonstrate. Consequently, this has impacted the way curriculum assessment and evaluation and instruction are conducted in classrooms. As a result of this change, many school divisions in Saskatchewan have started transitioning to outcomes-based report cards that better reflect and align with the provincial curricula.

### **The Transition Process to Outcomes-Based Reporting**

For a number of years, Regina Catholic Schools have been using outcomes-based reporting in grades 1-5. We are in the process of extending this to grades 6, 7, & 8 and will transition to this reporting system over the next several years. Outcomes-based reporting measures a student's learning in relation to how each student is progressing towards the curricular learning outcome.

Outcomes-based reporting provides a more comprehensive picture of students' academic progress than traditional reporting methods as it identifies specific areas of strength, as well as areas where additional work may be needed. However, as is true with any change process, a challenge with transitioning to this new method of reporting is making the shift from one system to another. People are generally more comfortable with what is familiar. Report cards that look much like the ones they received when they were students two or three decades ago, may not fully reflect the current reforms in teaching and learning. Therefore, a paradigm shift and a level of understanding needs to be realized by all stakeholders as we continue with this transition.

While a percentage can seem objective because it is a number, it is in fact an amalgamation of many assessments, all of which can involve some measure of subjectivity and do not convey specific information about student learning in terms of learning outcomes. One of our goals is to prepare students for 21st century "real world" environments where many companies evaluate employees based on strengths and areas for improvement, as opposed to a grade or a percentage. We believe that students are more than a mere number or letter, and that the purpose of education is to improve and change lives so our students will be the learners and leaders that will create a better present and a better future.

As such, outcomes-based reporting is a transparent method of uncovering characteristics of student strengths on which to build, outlining what a student can and can't do based on the outcome being taught (See example of "I can statements" on this web-site – currently under construction). Although some may fear that outcomes-based reporting sets up students for failure or fails to appropriately prepare them for high school, post-secondary or the workforce, research evidence indicates the opposite. In fact, many post-secondary institutions like the Nursing Education Programs Approval Board within the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta are also including outcomes and competencies in their assessment practices.

Another important driving force in the change to student reporting lies in the fact that our world is changing; we must prepare our students to think critically so they will be able to adapt to constantly changing situations. The role of schools in education is to move our students beyond the mere memorization of facts. Our students need to learn how to ask the right questions; questions that empower students to learn, wonder and explore.

As we think about 21st century education, the statement "education is not preparation for life; education is life", by John Dewey, a renowned philosopher and educational reformer, is very relevant today. We must continue to explore and create the many possibilities and opportunities for students within the classroom and within our schools.

Further, Marazano, (2000), suggests that while traditional grading practices have been used for over one hundred years, to date, there have been no meaningful research reports to support it. On the other hand, he notes, that studies have shown that outcomes-based teaching practices correlate to higher academic achievement, where students know the learning target and have multiple opportunities to learn over time. Thomas Guskey (2011), suggests that today we know more than ever before about effective instructional practices on how our students learn, much of this based on growth mindset. This knowledge base offers a clear direction for change efforts and provides guidance for making improvements for the sake of our students within our schools.

### **The Impact of Outcomes-Based Reporting in the Classroom**

The process of assessing, reporting and conferencing is changing from a teacher-directed approach to a collaborative on-going process designed to support and enhance learning. Using this process, the teacher, the parent, and the student become active participants in reviewing and communicating what has been learned well, and what areas of learning have room for growth. Research has found that outcomes-based reporting has the potential to increase student engagement. By providing students involvement in this process we give them ownership of their own learning (STF Bulletin 07/14/15). "Students who set goals, learn more and do better in school than students who do not." (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009).

### **Implications of Outcomes-Based Reporting and Student Recognition**

Given that student progress will be reported in levels of achievement, it is very difficult to determine a precise and calculated average. Many would also argue that even when percentages are used, there still is a degree of discrepancy when determining percentages.

As a result, this may impact how honour roll and grade eight farewells are presented. However, this does not mean that outcomes based reporting caters to "everyone wins an award" philosophy, or that students will be coddled. Students are expected to complete school work and are evaluated as such and this will not lead to mediocrity. In fact, the experience has been that students were more engaged in, and took more responsibility for, their learning. Students were able to articulate why they were successful or why there were not successful and discuss opportunities to improve. When students were provided with authentic and descriptive feedback, this developed a growth mindset within students and helped them be more successful and ready to take on challenges. (Dweck, 2006)

The methods of assessment used in outcomes-based reporting allows us to work with all of our students to cultivate and realize their strengths and develop their passion for learning. It is unfair to suggest that every student is motivated in the same way. In the domain of public education we have the responsibility of providing learning for all.

Catholic education is about the education and formation of all children in Christ. As a result, students are both formed in their faith and educated to become contributing citizens of the world by using their gifts and talents to transform the world into a more just and loving society. All students within our schools will be encouraged to reach their full potential.

During this transition our administrators will be working with our Catholic School Community Councils, to review their current student recognition and awards program to identify opportunities to continue to celebrate student success. This will include revisiting and sharing a common belief statement, sharing examples of alternative awards programs and developing a plan that respects the uniqueness of each school community.

### **The Assessment is On-Going and Varied**

Assessing student learning is an on-going cycle of gathering, interpreting and responding to student work. Assessment is used to inform the next steps in learning and to evaluate student knowledge and understanding in relationship to the learning. Daily, ongoing assessment and report cards are not separate; both are based on outcomes from the curriculum and inform next steps for learners and teachers. Formative assessment supports and informs learning, while summative assessment verifies learning.

<b>FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT</b>
<p>Formative assessment is a process that uses informal assessment strategies to gather information on student learning. Teachers use formative assessment every day in their classroom similar to a coach instructing their team members how to improve on a skill. Through formative assessment strategies, teachers determine what students understand and what they still need to learn to master a goal or outcome. Formative assessment is designed to help students understand how to improve.</p> <p>Strategies used to gather formative assessment information take place during regular class instruction. Through formative assessment, teachers can discover the rate at which students are learning, the current knowledge of students, what information or skills students still need to learn, and whether the learning opportunities they are providing for students is effective or if they need to change or adapt their instruction.</p>	<p>Summative assessment is a formal assessment process that takes place at the end of a unit. It is used to measure student learning in relation to curriculum outcomes in a particular subject area.</p> <p>The summative assessment shows whether the curriculum outcomes have been met and the degree to which they were attained. Levels of achievement are created using a set of criteria, a benchmark or a scoring guide. A student's level of success is determined by comparing the student's results in relation to the criteria, benchmarks or answer on the scoring guide. Summative assessment provides evidence of overall learning and reflect the findings of the formative assessments.</p> <p>Assessment consists of a variety of conversations, observations, and learning products that occur over the learning period. These multiple forms of assessment determine the extent to which your child has demonstrated learner outcomes. The grading process and the report card summarize learning at a particular point in time, but this is only one piece of the reporting process.</p>

### The Use of Rubrics in Outcomes-Based Reporting



In educational terms, a rubric is a set of lists that describes expectations for reaching learning outcomes, using criteria to describe levels of quality from “beginning to do, know or understand,” through a continuum to enriched understanding of what is expected to be done, known or understood.” Parents, students, and teachers have a clear understanding of learning expectations when outcomes are used. Report cards using a four-level rubric help students understand what quality work looks like and helps them improve their work. Parents can better understand how they can work with teachers to help their child improve by looking at the rubric expectations for each subject.

Throughout a unit of learning, students and teachers will use a variety of assessments (rubrics, labs, tests, performance-based products, observations, feedback, conversations and quizzes). At the end of their unit of study, students and teachers can assess progress in reference to the criteria and decide on next steps in learning. A teacher uses the most recent evidence of achievement to determine a final grade.

Within Regina Catholic Schools, students are involved in collecting evidence of their learning, tracking their progress and reporting it to others through student-involved conferences (see Student Portfolio information below).

## Life Skills and Living our Faith

The *Life Skills and Living our Faith* information included on the report card are the qualities which lead to student success. In the past, they may have been included as part of the subject mark. This practice can distort the picture of the student's actual competence in the subject. Marks allotted for effort, bonus marks or marks deducted for late work can misrepresent what a student actually knows, understands, or can do in a particular unit of study or subject area.

As a result, student *grades* will be reported separately from non-academic behaviors that include skills such as cooperation, organization, responsibility, active faith living, confidence and others.

## Parent Involvement in the Assessment Process

Schools and teachers have a responsibility to communicate effectively and continuously with parents by providing them with meaningful information. This can be through formal communication, such as student-involved conferencing, student work, report cards, as well as informal communication tools such as agenda books, phone calls, e-mails, blogs and newsletters etc. The intention is to work towards more effective and on-going communication regarding a student's progress and to keep parents informed.

## Outcomes-Based Report Cards

An outcome-based report card tells students and their families how close the student is to reaching the learning outcomes for a particular unit of student or end of the year goal. An outcome is a skill that every student is expected to learn. Every subject has outcomes which must be learned and assessed. Students are assessed on their individual performance on the curriculum outcomes rather than as a comparison to the progress of other students in the class. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate and see their growth either during a unit of study or over the course of the year. Outcomes-based reporting respects and celebrates the fact that *children do not grow at the same rate*. Some children will learn skills quickly while others will take longer to learn the same skill. What is important is that the child learns the skill – not how long it takes them. An outcomes-based system gives children several opportunities throughout the year to demonstrate their learning.

## Levels of Outcomes-based Reporting

**NY – Not Yet** meeting grade level outcomes indicates that the student is missing introductory knowledge or understanding that is preventing them from demonstrating the learning outcome. This may indicate that the student is struggling with required skills and needs assistance from the teacher to move beyond an emerging skill set.

**B – Beginning** to meet grade level outcomes indicates that the student is not quite able to demonstrate all the necessary learning, but is beginning to understand some of the concepts and skills. The student needs more time and support in regard to key elements and grade level outcomes. It is not unusual for children to start the year at this level. Some concepts and skills may be at "beginning to meet" in the first part of the course and be solidly understood by the end of the unit of study or end of the year. Later in the year, "beginning" may be a cause for concern and suggest the requirement of additional support to the student.

**M – Meeting** grade level outcomes indicates that the student has shown mastery with grade level outcomes and is able to demonstrate the learning of the curricular outcomes expected of students at this grade level. This is the goal for all students. Very few children start the school year already demonstrating the required grade level skills; however, by the end of the year, or at the end of a unit of study, students should be able to achieve grade level outcomes.

**EU – Enriched Understanding** of the grade level outcomes indicates that the student has an in depth understanding of the grade level outcomes. The student is able to integrate higher level skills by applying the concepts that are being taught and has made new connections that show insight and creativity in the demonstration of the skill or knowledge.

*What does the level of achievement rubrics mean?*

The level of achievement rubric clarifies learning at different stages on a continuum. The rubrics are used by teachers, students and parents in order to help determine where learning needs to go to next.

Not yet meeting grade level outcomes (NY)	Beginning to meet grade level outcomes (BM)	Meeting grade level outcomes (M)	Enriched Understanding (EU)
The student does not yet meet grade level learning outcomes. There is no evidence of grade level learning.	The student is beginning to show progress toward grade level learning outcomes. There is some evidence of grade level learning.	The student is showing mastery with grade level learning outcomes. There is evidence that learning outcomes have been met.	The student is showing an in depth understanding of the learning outcomes. There is evidence that the student is engaged in high level analysis and problem solving.
The student is missing knowledge or understanding that is preventing him/her from demonstrating his/her from meeting the learning outcome.	The student is not able to demonstrate all the necessary learning and is dependent on assistance.	The student has shown mastery with grade level outcomes and is able to demonstrate his/her learning of the curricular criteria.	The students has an in depth understanding of the grade level outcomes, integrating higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
<p><b>With assistance the student is struggling to.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify key elements and concepts</li> <li>- demonstrate an understanding of the topic</li> <li>- develop a skill set</li> <li>- identify strategies to solve problems</li> <li>-demonstrate independence in learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>With assistance the student can.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-identify some of the key elements and concepts</li> <li>-demonstrate a basic understanding of the topic</li> <li>- demonstrate a developing skill set</li> <li>-begin to develop strategies to solve problems</li> <li>-at times demonstrate independence in learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>The student can.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-consistently identify and apply key elements and concepts.</li> <li>- demonstrate a consistent understanding of the topic</li> <li>- demonstrate an established skill set</li> <li>-solve problems and communicate strategies and solutions</li> <li>-consistently demonstrates independence in learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>The student can.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- extend his/her application and analysis of the key elements and concepts</li> <li>-demonstrates a deep and well-developed understanding of the topic</li> <li>-expand and transfer his/her well-developed skill set</li> <li>-solve problems in multiple ways and communicate strategies and solutions</li> <li>-consistently initiate independence in learning and take risks</li> </ul>
<p>Evidence of Learning (Conversation, Observation &amp; Product)</p> <p>The teacher might hear phrases like:</p> <p><i>-I don't get it,-Where do I start?-I don't understand what this means. This is too hard. I am lost.</i></p> <p>The teachers observations might include:</p> <p>Possible avoidance/refusal, insecure, struggling to initiate work, dependent on others</p>	<p>Evidence of Learning (Conversation, Observation &amp; Product)</p> <p>The teacher might hear phrases like:</p> <p><i>-Do you think this is what I should say?-Is this right? Am I on the right track? How do I do this?</i></p> <p>The teachers observations might include:</p> <p>Attempting the work with support and direction,</p>	<p>Evidence of Learning (Conversation, Observation &amp; Product)</p> <p>The teacher might hear phrases like:</p> <p><i>I know that.... I get this. I understand this. I can do....I will show you.</i></p> <p>The teachers observations might include:</p> <p>Able to engage in learning, able to complete tasks</p>	<p>Evidence of Learning (Conversation, Observation &amp; Product)</p> <p>The teacher might hear phrases like:</p> <p><i>What about this? How about this? This is another way. This is worked because. This is a possible solution.</i></p> <p>The teachers observations might include:</p> <p>Highly independent and individualized learning, and</p>

The work submitted by a student is:	hesitant to engage in particular learning	independently with minimal support	ability to extend and apply their learning
Not attempted or has little to do with the outcome	The work submitted by a student is:  Portion of the work is incomplete and there is some evidence of the outcome being met	The work submitted by a student is:  Complete with evidence of the outcome being met	The work submitted by a student is:  Complete with evidence of higher level learning with regard to the outcome

**Report Card Comments that reflect outcomes-based language**

Not Yet Meeting Grade Level Outcomes (NY)	Beginning to Meet Grade Level Outcomes (BM)	Meeting Grade Level Outcomes (M)	Enriched Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not yet</li> <li>• is unable to</li> <li>• needs a great deal of assistance</li> <li>• seldom</li> <li>• has not yet demonstrated</li> <li>• has difficulty with</li> <li>• struggles to</li> <li>• does not understand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sometimes</li> <li>• with support and prompting</li> <li>• is beginning to</li> <li>• has some difficulty with</li> <li>• is developing</li> <li>• has a basic understanding of</li> <li>• understands some of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consistently</li> <li>• understands most</li> <li>• has fully demonstrated</li> <li>• independently</li> <li>• completely</li> <li>• has developed</li> <li>• engaged learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comprehensive understanding</li> <li>• goes beyond</li> <li>• analyzes and applies</li> <li>• excellent and highly proficient</li> <li>• skillfully uses</li> <li>• understands how and why</li> </ul>

**Student Portfolio**

In the process leading up to a *student-involved conference*, students will create a learning portfolio representing their work over the past few months of school. The learning portfolio is an ongoing purposeful collection of student work that provides evidence of student learning and progress over the course of the school year.

These evidence of learning samples should present a clear picture of the process used to meet learner goal(s) and outcomes. The student, with teacher guidance, is the one who selects the work to be included in the learning portfolio. The teacher ensures students understand the purpose of the portfolio and that it represents some, but not all of, the work they have done in class over a period of time. The samples in the portfolios can reflect a student's skills, ideas, interests, accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses. The evidence in the portfolio will also help students reflect on what they have learned and what they still need to learn including setting goals for the future.

**Student-Involved Conferencing**

The approach for parent-teacher and student conferences will be presented in a slightly different format through a process called *student-involved conferences*. The process of conferencing and reporting is changing from a teacher-directed, end-of-term event to a collaborative, ongoing process designed to support learning.

Best practices would suggest that over the past 20 years, there has been an evolution with how to best communicate student learning in ways that support learning and student growth. One of the most powerful options is to have students talk about their own learning growth and share their achievement and evidence that support their growth.

The process of student-involved conferences is a strategy that provides an opportunity for students to engage in meaningful conversations about their learning. Research shows that when students are involved in the assessment process – learning to articulate what they have learned and what they still need to work on – achievement improves (Black and William 1998; Stiggins 2001). As well, when students communicate their learning using a variety of work samples, they go beyond what grades, numbers and scores alone can show; they are able to examine the depth, the detail, and the range of their own learning.

In a Student-Involved Conference:

- Students take an active and meaningful role in their learning
- Students are engaged in the learning process and take responsibility for their learning
- Students' self-esteem is enhanced when they are able to share their learning opportunities in a positive environment
- Students have an opportunity for self-reflection – recognizing their strengths and abilities including areas for growth.
- Students learn to evaluate their growth as a learner and evaluate their performance of curricular outcomes – what they understand, know and are able to do by sharing samples of work
- Students, parents and teachers become partners in the education process.

During the conference, students will discuss the skills and processes they have learned, as well as share goals they have set to further improve themselves. Students have been taught how to select representative work, how to engage in self-assessment and how to analyze their own strength and weakness and lastly, how to report their progress or growth in the format of a student involved conference. Parents and teachers may ask questions of the student and give positive feedback on their work and their performance.

The Student-Involved Conference also has benefits for teachers and parents which include:

Teachers:

- Allows for sharing the responsibility of student learning, assessment and reporting
- Allows for the evidence of student learning to be shared with parents
- Strengthens communication channels with parents about student's learning and progress

Parents:

- Increases their understanding of learning and assessment
- Allows them to participate in the reporting and informing process rather than merely responding to it
- Provides evidence to support student learning and report card information

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