

Assessment Policy

I. Philosophy Statement: The Purpose of Assessment

At Vanguard Community School, we believe that the purpose of assessment is to improve learning and teaching. We believe that assessment provides students, parents and teachers with an accurate picture of student performance in relation to the learning outcomes of the Saskatchewan Curriculum.

Assessment opportunities at Vanguard Community School take on one of three primary roles:

1. Assessment OF Learning:

This type of assessment is usually summative and is mostly done at the end of a task, unit of work etc. It is designed to provide evidence of achievement to parents, other educators, the students themselves and sometimes to outside groups. It is the assessment that becomes public and results in statements or symbols about how well students are learning.

2. Assessment FOR Learning:

Assessment for Learning happens before or during the learning, often more than once, rather than at the end. Students understand exactly what they are to learn, and what is expected of them and are given feedback and advice on how to improve their work. In Assessment for Learning, teachers use assessment as an investigable tool to find out as much as they can about what their students know and can do, and what confusions, preconceptions, or gaps they might have. The wide variety of information that teachers collect about students' learning processes provides the basis for determining what they need to do next to move student learning forward. It provides the basis for providing descriptive feedback for students and deciding on groupings, instructional strategies, and resources.

3. Assessment AS Learning:

Through this process, students are able to learn about themselves as learners and become aware of how they learn – become metacognitive (knowledge of one's own thought processes). Students reflect on their work on a regular basis, usually through self and peer assessment and decide (often with the help of the teacher, particularly in the early stages) what their next learning will be.

Assessment as learning helps students to take more responsibility for their own learning and monitoring future directions.

II. Responsibilities/Expectations

Teachers' Roles in Assessment of Learning:

Teachers have the responsibility of reporting student learning accurately and fairly, based on evidence obtained from a variety of contexts and applications. Effective assessment of learning requires that teachers provide:

1. a rationale for undertaking a particular assessment of learning at a particular point in time.
2. clear descriptions of the intended learning.
3. processes that make it possible for students to demonstrate their competence and skill.
4. a range of alternative mechanisms for assessing the same outcomes.
5. public and defensible reference points for making judgements.
6. transparent approaches to interpretation.
7. descriptions of the assessment process.
8. strategies for recourse in the event of disagreement about the decisions.

Teachers' Roles in Assessment for Learning:

Assessment for learning occurs throughout the learning process. It is interactive, with teachers:

1. aligning instruction with school, division and provincial learning outcomes and initiatives.
2. identifying particular learning needs of students or groups selecting and adapting materials and resources.
3. creating differentiated teaching strategies and learning opportunities for helping individual students move forward in their learning.

4. Providing immediate feedback and direction to students

Teachers' Roles in Assessment as Learning:

The teacher's role in promoting the development of independent learners through assessment as learning is to:

1. model and teach the skills of self-assessment.
2. guide students in setting their own goals, and monitoring their progress toward them.
3. provide exemplars and models of good practice and quality work that reflect curriculum outcomes.
4. work with students to co-construct clear criteria of good practice.
5. guide students in developing internal feedback or self-monitoring mechanisms to validate and question their own thinking.
6. provide regular and challenging opportunities to practise, so that students can become confident, competent self-assessors.
7. monitor students' metacognitive processes as well as their learning, and provide descriptive feedback.
8. create an environment where it is safe for students to take chances and where support is readily available.

Students' Role:

Students will:

1. Complete all required assignments and assessment activities.
2. Demonstrate pride in completed work by ensuring that all assignments are of high quality.
3. Participate in activities to celebrate learning and/or demonstrate that learning has occurred.
4. Take advantage of opportunities to revise or redo assignments or assessment activities.
5. Participate in all learning and/or assessment activities.

6. Take advantage of all intervention opportunities.

Parents / Guardians' Role

Parents/Guardians will:

1. Provide the time and place to support student learning.
2. Actively participate in communicating with staff; including reading newsletters and other information documents, attending conferences that focus on student learning and achievement.
3. Convey the importance of school in general and learning activities specifically to their children.
4. Endeavour to ensure that their children are present for as many learning and assessment opportunities as possible given varying circumstance.

III. Grading Practice:

Assessment OF Learning:

1. Student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc) should not factor into summative grades unless specified in the curriculum.
2. Work or assignments submitted late should not result in a reduced mark. Provide support or intervention for the learner instead.
3. Bonus points or extra credit should not factor into a summative grade.
4. Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement.
5. Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately.
6. Don't include group scores in grades unless a group assignment has individually assessed components; use only individual achievement evidence.

7. Where possible avoid organizing grades by assessment method or terms. Organize by curriculum outcomes.
8. Use clear performance standards and achievement expectations when assigning grades. Involve students where possible in the creation of assignment criteria.
9. Avoid using zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment. Use alternatives, such as:
 - reassessing to determine real achievement.
 - use "I" for Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence. Please note that at Vanguard School we can communicate to parents and students if a failing grade is a result of missing assessments or a result of not meeting curriculum expectations. In Grades 10-12 however, final grades must be reported to the ministry as such and no distinctions can be made.
 - For students that are habitually late in handing in assignments, tests and quizzes can be used to make up 100 percent of the student's summative mark. This should be brought up at a staff or team meeting.
 - synthesis projects at the end of a course of study.
10. Comprehensive Midterms may be given. Final exams are to be from the midterm to the end of the course. Teachers may give a comprehensive final exam upon consultation with the principal.
11. There will be a designated time for end of course assignments and exams.
12. Non-accredited teachers will give government exams.
13. Assessment must be tied to learning objectives in the curriculum.
14. Assessment strategies will measure content, process, and product.
15. Marks cannot be deducted as a punitive measure.
16. Marks from summative assessment will only factor into grades.
17. Plagiarism may result in:
 - Automatic redoing of the assignment.
 - Alternative assessment opportunities.
 - Synthesis project.
 - Forfeiting of assignment privileges.
 - Withdraw from high school courses.

Assessment FOR Learning:

1. Students will receive multiple low-stakes opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the learning.
2. Assessment should be ongoing and should include a variety of strategies.
3. Assessment should be differentiated according to student needs.
4. Assessment should provide timely feedback.
5. Assessment should be used in forward planning.

Assessment AS Learning:

1. Instruction should be based upon a number of metacognitive strategies.
2. Students should be given opportunities to co-construct assignment criteria.
3. Use exemplars of good practice whenever possible.

IV. Reporting Progress

1. Report Cards are automatically generated using the Aspen Database.
2. For Grades 10-12 there are four reporting periods (November, January, April, June)
3. . Grades 10-12 students take part in a formal final exam session in January and June. Grades 7-9 students have final exams in June or in semester courses that end in January.
5. For K-12 Parent/ Teacher interviews take place in the fall and spring.

V. FAQ's

Why don't you give students zeros?

- We need to make sure students do the work that is required of them. We can't let them off the hook by giving them a zero. If we do that, they don't do the work and we can't assess what they know.
- Assessment is a summary of what a student knows. It is not a commentary on behaviour.
- Missed assignments are a behaviour issue. Teachers are responsible for finding out why an assignment was missed and take steps to address this issue. This takes a lot of work, but our students are worth the effort.
- Educational research has shown that many students are not motivated to work harder at learning when they get a zero grade. Some students are at risk of not completing school. We need to keep them motivated, help them learn the curriculum, and give them fair and appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their learning.
- For Grades 10-12 students zeros will be given at the end of a course if all other options are exhausted.

Why were zeros okay when I was in school?

- Like all things, the nature of assessment has changed considerably over the past few decades.
- At one time, assessment only measured what a student had learned at the end of a unit or course. There was no way for students to benefit from ongoing assessment throughout the year.
- Educational research has shown that sharing ongoing feedback with students about their progress throughout the year is a better approach.
- By giving students regular feedback, assessment helps students understand where they are doing well, where there are gaps in their understanding, and what they can do to bridge that gap. This approach is having a great deal of success among students who are struggling.

Why does it seem like public education doesn't hold kids accountable?

- Public education works to instill accountability among students. One of the ways we do this is by requiring them to submit missed assignments. We don't allow them to get off the hook by giving them a zero and moving on. We find other approaches to ensure they get the work done. They are in school to learn. Some of the things students learn as part of their education are concepts of responsibility, commitment and accountability.

Isn't it our responsibility to teach kids about the real world?

- For students, school is the real world. They need to get to school on time. They need to attend regularly. They need to study to pass tests. They need to turn in assignments to get a grade. They gain time management skills, learn how to balance competing priorities and discover how to overcome challenges.

See also:

AP 360

[Chinook Assessment Handbook](#)