ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

Background

Essential components of teaching include the effective assessment, evaluation, and communication of student learning. Assessment ultimately drives all other aspects of the teaching and learning process. Master teachers are highly "assessment literate" and are therefore able to establish the optimal balance between formative (Assessment **for** Learning) and summative assessment (Assessment **of** Learning) practices in their classrooms, thus strategically positioning themselves to effectively evaluate and communicate student achievement.

The primary goal of <u>assessment</u> is to promote student learning and to inform the teaching process. Assessment shall be ongoing, meaningful, consistent, valid and supportive for all students.

The purpose of <u>evaluation</u> is to make valid and reliable judgments about student performance on end-of-unit or end-of-course summative assessments. Through the evaluation process, teachers generate final grades (academic achievement codes or a percentage score) to reflect their professional judgment about their students' overall performance on the unit or course of study.

<u>Communication</u> is an essential component of the assessment and evaluation processes. Teachers who routinely use formative assessment recognize the importance of written and oral communication (often through descriptive feedback) in helping to inform students about the ongoing progress of their learning. Communication at the end of the evaluation process generally involves informing students and their parents/guardians about their final grade (an achievement code or a percentage score) in the unit or course of study.

Definitions

<u>*Assessment literate*</u> means having an excellent understanding of both the assessment and evaluation processes, as well as the important distinction between formative and summative assessment, and how the former supports and influences the latter in fostering students' academic development.

<u>*Accommodation*</u> means a change or alteration in the regular ways a student is expected to learn, complete assignments, or participate in classroom activities

<u>*Achievement indicator*</u> (grade or code) means the use of a four-point scale (for Grades K-6) or a percentage grade (for Grades 7-12) to indicate or communicate a summary of student achievement relative to learner outcomes in the Alberta Education Programs of Study.

Adapted programming means programming that retains the learner outcomes of the Programs of Study and where adjustments to the instructional process are provided to address the special education needs of the student (see also "modified programming").

Assessment means a process of collecting information on student achievement and performance that includes a variety of assessment tasks designed to monitor and improve student learning (AAC glossary). Throughout this document the term "assessment" encompasses assessment for learning (formative assessment), and assessment of learning (summative assessment).

Assessment for learning (formative assessment) means assessment experiences that result in an on-going exchange of information between students and teachers about student progress in achievement of clearly specified learner outcomes - not to be used for final evaluation (grading) purposes. Assessment for learning requires careful design on the part of teachers so that they use the resulting information to determine not only what students know, but also to gain insights into how, when, and whether students apply what they know. It provides teachers with information to modify and differentiate teaching and learning activities. Teachers use this information to streamline and target instruction and resources, and to provide feedback to students to help them advance their learning. Other than in exceptional circumstances where use of formative assessment data is necessary and advantageous for the student, such data are not used to determine a student's final grade, but to continue to support students in improving their learning so they can perform better on the summative assessments for the unit of work or the course.

Assessment of learning (summative assessment) means assessment experiences designed to collect information about learning to make professional judgments about student performance and achievement at the end of a period of instruction (e.g., end-of-unit, end-of-semester, end-of-year). Assessment of learning is used to confirm what students know and can do. Teachers ensure they have used summative assessment evidence to provide valid and reliable statements about their students' proficiency, so that recipients of the information can use it to make reasonable and defensible decisions about student achievement.

Balanced assessment means there is a optimal mix or balance of "assessment for learning" and "assessment of learning" experiences in the classroom. However, a balance does not mean an equal amount of formative and summative assessment. In fact, research has consistently shown that student learning is significantly enhanced when teachers create an "optimal imbalance" between formative and summative assessment through frequent daily use of formative assessment to best prepare students for the "very small number" of summative assessments throughout the school year.

Communication of student learning means an ongoing process that involves students, parents, and teachers in making sense of a student's learning. A communication system includes multiple tools, each with its own specific and well-defined purpose. For example, this might include a report card with achievement indicators (i.e., 1 to 4 or percentage grade) and other comments, standardized assessment reports, planned phone calls home, newsletters to parents, regular

progress reports, school open houses, portfolios or exhibits of student work, school web pages, parent-teacher conferences and meetings, student-teacher conferences, and student-involved conferences.

Descriptive feedback means ongoing, timely, constructive, and specific communication (both written and verbal) about learning that relates directly to student success with the learner outcomes. Research has consistently shown that descriptive feedback is the most powerful aspect of formative assessment because it helps students to better understand what they have done well and what they need to do next to improve their learning.

Division means the grade grouping for lower elementary (grades K-3 or Division I), upper elementary (grades 4-6 or Division II), junior high (grades 7-9 or Division III) and senior high (grades 10-12 or Division IV) students.

Evaluation means the process of using evidence from summative assessments to make judgments about the quality and level of student achievement over a period of time, and the communication of this judgment is in the form of a 1-4 number scale (for K-6 students) or a percentage score (for grades 7-12 students).

Learner attributes means behaviours that may support student achievement of learner outcomes in the Alberta Education Programs of Study. These are patterns of behaviours that are refined over time and produce higher quality learning and understanding than if these behaviours are not applied. Examples include listening, following directions, working independently, cooperating, collaborating, respecting self and others, and focusing on tasks.

Learner outcomes means what we expect students to learn; the provincially mandated knowledge, skills, and attitudes we expect students to demonstrate because of schooling in accordance with the Alberta Education Programs of Study.

Modified programming means programming in which the learner outcomes are significantly different from the programs of study and are specifically selected to meet students' special education needs (see also "adapted" programming).

Placement means the student has not satisfied the program requirements or met the outcomes required for that grade or course but has been placed into the next grade/course based on the decision made by the school in the best interest of the student (see also "promotion", and AP 361).

Promotion means the student has satisfied the program requirements and met the outcomes for that grade or course. The student will advance to the next higher grade or course (see also "placement" and AP 361).

Procedures

1. **Assessment** – Formative (Assessment for Learning) and Summative (Assessment of Learning)

    1.1 A comprehensive assessment program utilizes extensive ongoing, daily formative assessment practices that provide relevant information about what the students know, how they make sense of that learning, and what they need to do next to improve their mastery of the learner outcomes. Formative assessment information guides future programming and instructional differentiation and improves the quality of the small number of summative assessments teachers create and students' performance on them. Assessment has the greatest impact when it is predominantly formatively focused, and when it is integrated into all learning activities and is aligned with the Alberta Education Programs of Study.

    1.2 Classroom assessment refers to "all activities in the classroom that enable students to demonstrate what they understand, know and can do" (Alberta Assessment Consortium).

    1.3 Classroom assessment methods must be non-punitive, fair and accurate – minimizing all possible bias and giving all students equitable opportunities to demonstrate what they know and are able to do – and supportive of the learning process.

    1.4 Teachers must use robust and reliable assessment practices that:

    1.4.1 Reflect current research and are reviewed and updated regularly through collaborative professional development

    1.4.2 Ensure extensive use of daily formative assessment (assessment **for** learning) practices that prepare students to perform their best on the very small number of summative assessments (assessments **of** learning) that will be administered throughout the school year;

    1.4.3 Consist of an appropriate body of evidence to support the judgments being made (e.g., triangulation of assessment data, which is a process that utilizes a variety of information from 3 data sources – conversations, observations, and products – to collect evidence of student achievement);

    1.4.4 Use methods that are consistent, fair, valid, supportive of learning, and considerate of the students' developmental background;

    1.4.5 Separate the reporting on academic achievement from the reporting on behavioural elements such as effort, participation, attitude, and attendance. Such separation of behavioural elements prevents the problem of "grade deflation" or "grade inflation", hence ensuring more accurate reporting of academic achievement of learner outcomes.

    1.4.6 Use learning (practice) tasks, such as homework, as a source of formative assessment which are not to be factored into a student's achievement grade;

1.4.7 Use assessment results to improve teaching practice and learning activities;

1.4.8 Provide diagnostic information to address recommendations for remediation and/or enrichment;

1.4.9 Encourage meaningful dialogue and descriptive feedback between teacher and student(s) that indicates how well the learner is moving toward the specific learner outcomes, and provide supportive opportunities to improve or be further challenged;

1.4.10 Represent an ongoing process with methods and instruments used in a variety of contexts and approaches that reflect a variety of learning styles, rather than a set of isolated, summative events;

1.4.11 Are balanced and focused on a broad range of the prescribed outcomes, and reflect multiple dimensions of skill development:

1.4.12 Encourage/allow students to use feedback to improve upon and take responsibility for learning through a variety of assessment tools such as self-reflection, peer coaching, rubrics, and exemplars;

1.4.13 Support students' thinking about how they learn, help them gauge where they are in their learning, and set direction for future learning to occur;

1.4.14 Represent an important aspect of instruction that clearly reveal to students what is expected of them, the learner outcomes they are working toward, and what they next need to do to improve their achievement;

1.4.15 Have a clear purpose to understand, promote, enhance or measure student learning;

1.4.16 Communicate to the students/parent(s)/guardian(s) both the purpose of assessment and the assessment method(s) being used;

1.4.17 Enable students and parents to easily understand the assessment results in plain language.

1.5 All assessment must:

1.5.1 Be based on the appropriate Alberta Education Programs of Study;

1.5.2 Focus on a range of outcomes reflecting multiple dimensions of skill development, and must ensure that grades are based on an individual's performance rather than group achievement grades;

1.5.3 Provide opportunities for students to use accommodations and/or assistive technology when appropriate; and,

1.6 No single assessment event will be considered as the main source of evidence when making a professional judgment about student achievement of the expected learner outcomes.

1.7   Teachers and principals will:

    1.7.1   Be assessment literate and follow the guiding principles about assessment outlined by administrative procedures;

    1.7.2   Use a variety of strategies and tools for assessment to provide students with a range of opportunities and a variety of ways to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and attitudes about the learner outcomes;

    1.7.3   Consider cultural background, language proficiency, and prior experiences to help ensure students are provided fair/equitable opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the expected learner outcomes; and,

    1.7.4   Differentiate assessment tools and strategies to ensure all students have fair/equitable opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of expected learner outcomes.

1.8   Consideration must be given to students who require Individual Program Plans (IPPs), Modified Programming and/or Adapted Programming (see also Administrative Procedure 213 Appendix). **Note that not all students with gaps in prior learning will necessarily need an IPP. Please refer to the continuum of academic supports to determine if an IPP is required (see also Section 3.7 – Academic Achievement Codes below).**

    1.8.1   For students on a modified or adapted program, the following must be in place:

        1.8.1.1   Parents need to be informed of the adapted or modified learner outcomes, their impact on future educational programming and provide consent;

        1.8.1.2   The progress report needs to clearly indicate if a student's learning goals have been modified;

        1.8.1.3   Assessment of a student's achievement, if receiving adapted programming, is relative to currently assigned grade placement or program; and,

        1.8.1.4   Assessment of a student's achievement, if receiving modified programming, is relative to the modified learner outcomes.

    1.8.2   For students with a formal Individual Program Plan (IPP), the following must be in place:

        1.8.2.1   If a formal IPP has been prepared for a student in one (1) or more subject areas, the student's progress shall be reported in relation to the IPP goals; and,

        1.8.2.2   Students with special needs whose entire programs are directed by an IPP (modified programming) shall have their progress reported through an anecdotal report card.

1.8.3 A copy of the student's IPP shall be placed in the student's confidential file.

2. **Evaluation** – (Professional Judgment) of Overall Student Achievement of Learner Outcomes Based on Summative Assessment Evidence

   2.1 Principals and teachers in all Divisions (I-IV) will follow the procedures below to ensure that assessments of learning (summative assessments) and the related evaluation decisions in schools are meaningful, consistent, accurate and supportive of learning.

   2.1.1 Learner outcomes are the basis to record evidence and determine marks and final grades/scores;

   2.1.2 The meaning of grades/codes comes from a clear description of the indicators. Regardless of the symbol system used, it is the descriptions that make the level of performance meaningful to the teachers, students, and parents;

   2.1.3 The most consistent level of achievement is used with special consideration for more recent evidence of achievement, and reassessment opportunities are provided if the students show they have engaged in learning activities that increase the likelihood of success;

   2.1.4 Professional judgment and consideration of the whole body of evidence is used to determine cumulative/summative grades. When using number values to calculate a cumulative/final grade, teachers must not average results that have low outlier data because it will generate a skewed (lower) final grade that does not reflect the student's overall level of achievement. Instead, consideration should be given to median or mode, which are measures of central tendency that more effectively account for the negative impact of outlier scores.

   2.1.5 Alternatives to zeros in grading are developed and implemented. Awarding a numeric value of zero for work that was not submitted nor reviewed, is not only an inappropriate and unhelpful consequence for missed work, but it also creates counterproductive effects on motivation for many students. In short, zeros must not be used as consequences for missed work.

   2.2 A teacher, in consultation with the Principal, will determine the evaluation procedures in accordance with the provisions of this administrative procedure, including the weighting to be given to term work and final examinations.

   2.3 Use Grade 6 Provincial Achievement Test results for no more than ten percent (10%) of the evidence used to determine the achievement code that best represents the student's final level of achievement of learner outcomes.

   2.4 Use Grade 9 Provincial Achievement Test results for no more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the student's final grade in each course.

3. **Communication** – Communication of Student Achievement of Learner Outcomes

3.1 Assessment of Learning (Summative Assessment) is focused on engaging students in assessment experiences designed to collect critical evidence of student work that reflects achievement of the learner outcomes in a given grade and subject at the end of a unit of work or course. Once summative assessments are administered and the results are evaluated, teachers may use a variety of strategies to communicate student progress and achievement. Tools that might be included in a multifaceted communication/reporting system include report cards with achievement indicators (i.e., 1 to 4 or percentage grade), comments/notes attached to report cards, standardized assessment reports, phone calls to parents, progress reports, school open houses, newsletters to parents, personal letters to parents, evaluated projects or assignments, portfolios or exhibits of students' work, school web pages, parent-teacher meetings, student-teacher conferences, and/or student-involved conferences.

3.2 Report cards of student achievement will include summary information about both the students' achievement and behaviours, and narratives about their strengths, areas for improvement, and next steps.

3.3 Each grades K to 12 report card of student achievement must include:

   3.3.1 School name, address and phone number;

   3.3.2 School Division logo and Superintendent's statement;

   3.3.3 Name of the Principal and the name of the student's teacher(s);

   3.3.4 Signature of the Principal (original or electronic), acknowledging having read the report card;

   3.3.5 Record of student attendance and punctuality;

   3.3.6 Alberta student identification number and legal name of student;

   3.3.7 The student's grade or program placement level for the end-of-year/semester report, including an indication of where the program has been modified or adapted; and,

   3.3.8 A year-end indication of promotion or placement to the next grade level (for K-9 students). Note: See AP 361 for further details re: promotion and placement).

3.4 All schools must use the school division's standardized report card templates for Divisions I-IV, and also adhere to the division's reporting periods and the requirements of this Administrative Procedure.

3.5 Teachers and Principals in all schools must:

   3.5.1 Make provisions for at least two (2) parent/guardian conferences (that can involve students) for the purpose of discussing student achievement during each school year;

3.5.2   Work with the Division-level staff to make provisions for proficient specialized services to facilitate effective conferencing or interviews with parents and students where appropriate;

3.5.3   Review the Board policy, administrative procedures and philosophy about assessment and evaluation annually as part of the review and revision of the School Education Plan, and must share this information with parents;

3.5.4   Ensure that information is effectively communicated to parents about what their children know and can do in relation to learner outcomes;

3.5.5   Communicate effort and learner attributes separately from achievement of learner outcomes;

3.5.6   Ensure students' preliminary scores from the provincial achievement tests are shared with parents/guardians as per Alberta Education Requirements; and,

3.5.7   Ensure that a copy of the student's report card, or a record of final levels of achievement, be placed annually in the student's cumulative file.

Communications Specific to Grades K-6 (Divisions I and II)

3.6   The Divisions I and II (Grades 1 to 6) Report Cards will:

3.6.1   Use a four-point scale to report academic achievement of mandated learner outcomes (See the Academic Achievement Codes in 3.7 below);

3.6.2   Include a purpose statement;

3.6.3   Include Subject Effort Codes; and,

3.6.4   Include Learner Attribute Indicators.

3.7   For Divisions I and II, the following Academic Achievement Codes apply to all subject areas where learner expectations are established in the curriculum. The Achievement Codes are used to communicate the student's level of academic achievement of learner outcomes **in relation to their grade level** from the Alberta Education Programs of Study based on a valid and reliable collection of evidence of learning. Only the approved indicators may be used, and they may not be qualified in any way (for example, by using + or -, or percentages), and nor can they be impacted through using Effort Codes or Learner Attribute Indicators. Details about Effort and Learner Attributes are to be reported separately as outlined in a later section of this document.

Academic Achievement Codes	
4	**Meeting with Mastery** - The student demonstrates a thorough <u>understanding of all or almost all</u> of the grade-level concepts.
3	**Meeting** - The student demonstrates an <u>understanding of most</u> of the grade-level concepts.
2	**Approaching** - The student demonstrates an <u>understanding of some</u> of the grade-level concepts.
1	**Not Yet** - The student is <u>not yet demonstrating an understanding</u> of the grade-level concepts.
INS	**Insufficient** - There is <u>not enough assessment evidence</u> to give a grade.
NA	**Not Applicable** - The outcome or subject area has not been covered this past term.

Note: Students not on an IPP and who are performing below grade level expectations and making progress towards ("approaching") grade level would be assigned a "2" on their report card. Students not on an IPP and who are performing below grade level and "not yet" making progress towards grade level expectations would be assigned a "1".

Note: When a student who is not on an IPP receives a "1", this should trigger a reconsideration of how best to meet the student's needs. Additional and/or different supports, possibly including an IPP, will likely need to be implemented.

3.8   For Divisions I and II, the following Subject Effort Codes apply to all subject areas. Effort is an expression of attitude towards work and work ethic. Effort focuses on the student's process of learning. Students who put forth a consistent effort might see connections to academic achievement. Only the approved indicators may be used, and they may not be qualified in any way (for example, by using + or -, or percentages), and nor can these be used to impact or influence the decisions regarding Academic Achievement Codes.

Subject Effort Codes	
E	**Excellent** – The student <u>persists until a task is completed</u>. When faced with a challenge, the student is inquiring and makes use of a variety of strategies to complete the task.
S	**Satisfactory** – The student <u>usually sticks to a task</u> until it is completed. When faced with a challenge, the student tends to be inquiring and makes use of some strategies towards completing the task.
I	**Inconsistent** – The student's <u>effort is not yet consistent</u>. More frequently than not, when faced with a challenge, the student may give up, not make use of, or be unaware of strategies that may help to complete the task.

3.9　For Divisions I and II, the following Learner Attribute Indicators are used. Learner attributes are behaviours that support a student's achievement of the learner outcomes in the Alberta Education Programs of Study. Patterns of behaviours are refined over time and produce higher quality learning and understanding than if these behaviours are not applied. Only the approved indicators may be used, and they may not be qualified in any way (for example, by using + or -, or percentages), and nor can these indicators be used to impact or influence the decisions regarding Academic Achievement Codes.

Learner Attribute Indicators		
E	**Excellent** – The student demonstrates commendable performance of this learner attribute.	
S	**Satisfactory** – The student demonstrates acceptable performance of this learner attribute.	
I	**Inconsistent** – The student demonstrates lack of consistency in relation to this learner attribute. This may affect learning and achievement.	
Demonstrates responsibility for own learning...		
Follows directions		
Listens attentively		
Attentively uses time wisely to complete assignments		
Organizes work materials		
Work is done with care		
Works independently		
Demonstrates qualities of a good citizen…		
Accepts responsibility for own behaviour		
Follows established rules and procedures		
Respects rights and feelings of others		
Interacts effectively in social settings		
Works effectively with others		

3.10　Teachers and principals of Divisions I and II will provide report cards a minimum of three (3) times per school year aligned with the division's standardized reporting periods;

3.10.1　The final report card will include a "final term" grade (i.e., a 1 to 4 achievement code) and a "final course" grade (a 1 to 4 code) for Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science;

3.10.2　The final course grade (achievement code of 1 to 4) will reflect the student's whole performance throughout the year with special consideration given to the most recent body of evidence of performance.

Communications Specific to Grades 7-12 (Divisions III and IV)

3.11　For Division III (Grades 7-9) and Division IV (Grades 10-12), schools will use a percentage score to indicate student achievement of learner outcomes.

3.12　Teachers and principals of Division III (both semesterized and non-semesterized) and Division IV (semesterized) will provide a minimum of two (2) reports per semester, one

(1) at approximately the midpoint of the semester, and the other at the end of the semester:

3.12.1   The final report card (June for non-semesterized Division III students, and January and June for semesterized Division III and Division IV students) will include a final term grade and a final course grade;

3.12.2   The final course grade will reflect the student's overall performance throughout the year with special consideration given to the most recent body of evidence.

4 Adherence

4.1   Any deviation from the practices identified above must receive the formal approval of both the school staff and the School Council before being submitted to the Superintendent for review and possible approval.

4.1.1   Requests are to be submitted in writing, along with copies of the required documentation, to the Superintendent by June 30 of the school year prior to that in which they are proposed to become effective

5 Appeal Procedures

5.1   To ensure that student assessment procedures followed in a school have been fair and just, a student shall have the right to appeal the final grade awarded in any subject. The right of appeal may be exercised by a parent or guardian acting on a student's behalf.

5.2   Appeals at the School Level

5.2.1   Students and/or their parents/guardians shall, by whatever means the Principal chooses, be acquainted with the appeal procedure(s) available to them.

5.2.2   Questions over the assessment of a student shall first be referred to the teacher(s) who assessed the student. To facilitate this process, it is important that good lines of communication between teachers, students and parent/guardians remain open, and that accurate assessment records be kept.

5.2.3   Where agreement cannot be reached at the classroom level, an appeal shall be made in writing to the Principal within one (1) week of the time final grades are available to the student. A copy of the appeal shall be forwarded to the Superintendent for information.

5.2.3.1   The written appeal shall outline the reason(s) for making the request;

5.2.3.2   The Principal shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal and indicate to the student and/or parent/guardians the expected date when a decision regarding the appeal will be reached; and,

5.2.3.3   A copy of the Principal's letter shall be forwarded to the Superintendent for information.

5.2.4 To review the basis of any final grade awarded to a student, the Principal shall employ any or all of the procedures listed below:

    5.2.4.1 Consultation with the teachers involved;

    5.2.4.2 Check of records;

    5.2.4.3 A personal hearing of the student's appeal; and/or

    5.2.4.4 Allow the student and/or parent/guardians to see the graded final examination.

5.2.5 The Principal shall confirm in writing the outcome of the appeal to the student and/or parent/guardians.

5.2.6 Where an appeal through the teacher and Principal is not possible, an appeal may be made directly to the Superintendent.

5.3 Appeals at the Division Level

5.3.1 Where agreement cannot be reached at the school level, the student and/or their parent/guardian shall have the right of appeal at the Division level.

5.3.2 The procedures outlined in Administrative Procedure 390 – Appeals Concerning Student Matters, or Board Policy 13 – Appeals and Hearings on Student Matters will apply.