

The International School at Dundee
Assessment Policy
2016

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The purpose of this document is to clarify teachers' understanding of the assessment process within our school setting. It is a constantly evolving document that reflects our school's unique assessment needs. Our assessment philosophy applies to the whole school and is to be communicated to and understood by all continuing and new teachers, students, parents, and administrators. It is directly linked to our mission statement which is:

The mission of the International School at Dundee is to lead students toward becoming life-long learners and responsible citizens of the world by teaching, modelling, reinforcing and rewarding the achievement of academic and social/emotional goals that will result in children becoming: Inquirers, Thinkers, Communicators, Risk-Takers, Knowledgeable, Principled, Caring, Open-Minded, Balanced and Reflective.

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I. Overview

PYP Definition:

Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. It identifies what students know, understand, can do and feel at different stages in the learning process. It is the means by which we analyze student learning and the effectiveness of our teaching and acts as a foundation on which to base our future planning and practice. It is central to our goal of guiding the child, from novice to expert, through the learning process. (Assessment in the PYP © International Baccalaureate Organization)

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning.

It is central to the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program's goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding children through the five essential elements of learning: the understanding of concepts, the acquisition of knowledge, the mastering of skills, the development of attitudes, and the decision to take responsible action.

Who is involved in student assessment?

Everyone concerned with assessment--children, teachers, parents, administrators, and board members--must have a clear understanding of the reasons for the assessment, what is being assessed, the criteria for success, and the method by which the assessment is made. (Assessment in the PYP © International Baccalaureate Organization)

Both children and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing student progress as part of the development of their wider critical thinking and self-evaluation skills. Teachers should also be concerned with evaluating the efficacy of the programme.

*Student Self-assessment is a key component of an **IB program**.*

Why do we assess?

The PYP describes the taught curriculum as the written curriculum in action. Using the written curriculum, and in collaboration with colleagues and children, the teacher generates questions which guide structured inquiry and instruction. These questions address the eight key concepts, which help lead to productive lines of inquiry. Assessment focuses on the quality of student learning during the process of inquiry and instruction and on the quality of the products of that learning. Assessment is, therefore, integral to the taught curriculum. It is the means by which we analyse student learning and the effectiveness of our teaching and acts as a foundation on which to base our future planning and practice. It is central to our goal of guiding the child, from novice to expert, through the learning process. (Primary Years Program Assessment Handbook, January 2000. © International Baccalaureate Organization)

Assessment is an essential part of the instructional cycle. It provides information about student learning and development, as well as a framework for planning, self-reflection, and collaboration. Students' learning is promoted through:

- Assessing prior knowledge and experience
- Differentiating instruction to meet individual needs
- Engaging learners in reflection to determine strengths and weaknesses and to set goals
- Providing feedback for students
- Expanding student learning opportunities
- Building a profile of children's understanding

Information about student learning is provided through

- Examples of student work or performances
- Statistics relating to benchmarks and/or rubrics or test scores
- Test results

Program evaluation uses a variety of student assessments to:

- Assess the levels of students' current knowledge and experience before embarking on new learning
- Assess new learning
- Guide teacher planning and presentation
- Assess student performance relative to national, state, and local standards as well as PYP expectations
- Focus on closing the achievement gaps among students

What does ISD assess?

Through the IBPYP Program of Inquiry, ISD teachers strive to provide the opportunity for learners to construct meaning primarily through inquiry. This is accomplished by emphasizing the connections between subject-specific knowledge and transdisciplinary skills and themes. The transdisciplinary themes--Who We Are, Where We Are in Place and Time, How We Express Ourselves, How the World Works, How We Organize Ourselves, How We Share the Planet--provide a focus for inquiry, while literacy and numeracy provide the tools. Feedback which is timely, immediate, corrective, should be given on student progress and performance in each of these areas.

Additionally, feedback should be provided on the attributes listed in the PYP Student Profile: Inquirer, Communicator, Thinker, Risk-Taker, Knowledgeable, Principled, Caring, Open-Minded, Balanced, Reflective. This profile serves to increase the children's awareness of, and sensitivity to, the experiences of others beyond the local or national community, thus promoting an understanding that there is a commonality of human experience.

At the International School at Dundee, we assess performance and progress in each of the following subject areas: English language arts, Spanish, math, science, social studies, physical education, art, music, technology and information, social skills, learning behaviors and work habits. We continue to incorporate student attitudes and attributes to everyday learning. We assess learning through the IB units and incorporate the CT Core Standards and assessments as they relate to concepts.

When does assessment take place at ISD?

Assessment is an essential component of the learning process and occurs everyday. A variety of assessments demonstrates our belief that children learn in different ways, at different rates, and at different times. The result of assessment drives teacher decision-making and guides student learning.

What are the characteristics of effective assessments at ISD?

- Have criteria that are known and understood in advance
- Allow children to synthesize and apply their learning, not merely recall facts
- Promote student reflection and self-evaluation

- Focus on the production of quality products or performances
- Highlight children’s strengths and allow them to demonstrate mastery/expertise
- Allow children to express different points of view and interpretations
- Provide feedback regarding every stage of the learning/teaching cycle
- Based on student needs, interests and learning styles (student-driven)
- Involve collaboration between students and teachers
- Produce evidence of student growth and learning that can be clearly reported and understood by children, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members

Identify what is worth knowing

- Begin with the end results in mind (backward design –what students should be able to know or do by the end of a learning unit, lesson, or process)

A. Types of Assessments

Pre-assessment

Pre-assessment occurs before embarking on new learning to uncover prior knowledge and experiences.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is woven into the daily learning process. It provides teachers and students with information about how the learning is developing. It helps the teacher to plan the next stage of learning.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment occurs at the end of a teaching and learning cycle. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned by applying their knowledge in new and authentic contexts.

The Exhibition as Summative Assessment

Purpose:

The Exhibition is the culminating experience for the IB Primary Years Program. It requires students to showcase their acquired skills and learning and apply them in a synthesized, self-directed manner. The Exhibition provides an authentic summative assessment reflecting the PYP years. The subject of the Exhibition is a student-selected, real-world topic which warrants an extended investigation. It is a celebration which unites students, teachers, and families representing the essence of the PYP.

The fifth grade Exhibition is undertaken by students in their final year of the PYP. The Exhibition represents a significant event in the life of our school, encapsulating the essence of the PYP and encouraging younger students to look forward to their final year of the program and their future participation in the community at large.

Essential Components:

- incorporates application of all key questions
- uses all transdisciplinary skills
- display of attitudes
- engaged in action plan
- application of all PYP themes

Standardized Assessment

The state of CT has chosen to adopt the Common Core Standards, now known as CT Core Standards in our state, to prepare students for college and career readiness. The state of CT has chosen the Smarter Balanced Assessment (grades 3-5) to assess these standards. The Smarter Balanced Assessment is administered in the spring and the results are available in the fall.

Fifth graders also take the Connecticut Mastery Science Test in the spring and the results are available in the fall.

All GPS students participate in the Star Assessment for reading and math three times a year (Kindergarten students take the Star Assessment twice a year.) The Star Assessment is used as a screening tool and for progress monitoring.

How do teachers assess student learning at ISD?

Assessment strategies form the basis of a comprehensive approach and represent ISD's answer to the question, "How will we know what we have learned?" These methods of assessment include a broad range of approaches and have been selected to provide a balanced view of the student.

- Observations/Formative Assessments: All students are observed and assessed regularly with a focus on the individual, the group, and/or the whole class. Formative assessments inform the teaching process.
- Performance Assessments: Students are presented with a task that represents the kind of challenges that adults face in the world beyond the classroom. It requires using a repertoire of knowledge and skills to accomplish a goal or solve an open-ended problem. In addition, it entails the thoughtful application of knowledge rather than recalling facts. Using an established criteria and having an identified purpose or audience, the performance assessments involve a realistic scenario requiring the development of an authentic product or performance.
- Transdisciplinary Skills Assessments (research, thinking, communication, self-management and social skills) : The focus is on the process and skill application rather than on the product. These skills are regularly observed or self-assessed in real contexts using checklists, narrative notes, and inventories.

- **Tests/Quizzes:** These single-occasion assessments provide a snapshot of students' specific knowledge.
- **Digital Portfolios:** An ongoing, purposeful collection is composed of selected student work and is designed to demonstrate growth, creativity, and reflection. Grade Level Digital Portfolios are in use throughout the school and are often shared with parents and guardians at student led conferences scheduled at the end of each school year.

How do ISD teachers assess student progress?

The previously identified assessment strategies are put into practice at ISD by using the following assessment tools.

- **Rubrics:** Rubrics are established sets of criteria used for scoring or rating children's tests, portfolios, or performances. The descriptors tell the child and the assessor what characteristics or signs to look for in the work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale. Rubrics can be developed by children as well as by teachers.
- **Benchmarks/exemplars:** These are samples of children's work that serve as concrete standards against which other samples are judged. Benchmarks/exemplars can be used in conjunction with rubrics or continuums. Benchmarks should be appropriate and useable within a particular school context.
- **Checklists:** These are lists of information, data, attributes, or elements that should be present.
- **Anecdotal records:** Anecdotal records are brief, written notes based on observations of children. These records need to be systematically compiled and organized.

How is student growth reported to parents and students?

Reporting is a means of giving feedback from assessment. Effective reporting should:

- involve parents, students, and teachers as partners
- reflect what the school community values
- be comprehensive, honest, fair, and credible
- be clear and understandable to all parties
- allow teachers to incorporate what they learn during the reporting process into their future teaching and assessment practice

A. Conferences

Parents, students, and teachers are all valued partners in the reporting process and in sharing the responsibility both for learning and for accounting student progress. Pathways for communication need to be open and reciprocal.

Greenwich Public Schools builds into the school calendar **an annual parent-teacher conference**. In addition, we provide many opportunities throughout the school year for conferencing. Parents, teachers, and/or students may participate, depending upon the purpose.

Students in every grade level engage in **student-led conferences** with parents/guardians/school administrators at the end of the academic year. Students take responsibility for their learning, lead the conferences, and demonstrate this via a variety of different work samples.

B. Written Reports

IB Profile Reflections are completed at every grade level and are sent home at the 2nd and 3rd marking periods.

District-mandated report cards are sent home every trimester. Transdisciplinary Skills, Student Profile, and Attitudes are reflected in the comments that teachers write on every report card. Since IB units are not reflected on our district report card, we strive to communicate, share, and reflect on student learning at the end of each unit.

Assessment—It's a team effort!

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