North East School Division

Assessment and Evaluation Handbook

September, 2017

Purpose

The following document outlines the "effective practices" framework that every teacher within the NESD should adhere to. This framework reflects current understanding of successful practices in assessment and evaluation

NESD Context and Belief Statements

Our education system is in the midst of a tremendous opportunity to address changes in how we imagine learning for students within our school setting. With changes in the way we understand learning, we know that education must change to accommodate today's learners. Today, we are seeking to ensure all students leave school as lifelong learners who continue to build a sense of self in the community and who are engaged citizens.

When we make classroom assessment meaningful, it means changing the conversation from one of ranking and sorting students to one of assessing learning for the future. It means involving students and parents, giving choices, and sharing control. When it comes to classroom assessment, solutions can only be found in our informed conversations as we work together on behalf of students and their learning. Re-culturing schools to focus on assessment so it becomes embedded in school practices and habits will help strengthen the focus on learner outcomes as outlined by the Ministry of Education.

Teachers, students, and parents need the flexibility to address individual needs, as well as to provide for choice and diversity in order to support each student's learning. The role of the educator is to equip others with the understanding and necessary skills to assess their own learning, set goals for growth and to model how learning can continually occur.

The NESD holds the following statements of belief:

- **Effective instruction depends on high quality assessment**. Each assessment must reflect learning outcomes and standards of quality understood by all staff members.
- **The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning**. Therefore, we expect all assessments to provide accurate and timely information about student achievement. It is the expectation of the NESD that all assessments will be directly linked to specific student learning outcomes, use assessment methodology appropriate for the subject/grade level, and allow for effective and frequent communication of results.
- **Assessment can serve as a powerful form of instruction.** By involving students in the assessment of their own achievement under direct supervision, teachers can use assessment and feedback to ensure students progress towards meeting the expected learning outcomes for each subject, at each grade level.
- **A variety of assessment events based on consistent, outcome-based assessment tools are considered appropriate within the NESD.** Any progress report should result from varied assessment events, using criterion-established tools (rubrics).
- **A differentiated approach allows all students to be assessed on the same student learner outcomes in a manner appropriate to each individual.**
- **Achievement and behavior should be assessed and reported separately.** The purpose of this practice is to enhance and clarify information shared with others in order to make informed decisions about how learning will move forward

Guiding Practices for Schools and Classrooms

The following practices have been primarily based on Ken O'Connor's <u>A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades, 2nd Edition</u> (2012), Pearson: Toronto, Ontario.

Practice #1
Include only achievement in academic assessment; this does not include student behaviors in grades (effort, participation, attendance, adherence to class rules, etc.)

- Behaviours will be assessed and reported separately. Including behaviors in marks can cause grade inflation or deflation. Many believe we should reward well behaved students and punish others; this uses grades as extrinsic motivators to control student behavior.
- Grades should reflect only student performance in understanding the student learning outcomes of the province. This means everyone can know what a grade means in achievement terms.

Practice #2
Provide support for the learner; this does not include reducing marks on work submitted late.

- Set up support systems and interventions at the school and classroom level to reduce or eliminate the problem of late work.
- Students should have input into developing provisions for support and/or consequences and decisions about timelines.
- The fix for late work should be a positive, supportive approach that directly affects student behavior.
- Teachers should keep records of late demonstrations of learning and report it on the behavior portion of progress reports.
- Ensure work is leading to learning of outcomes and is not just work-for-work's-sake. Direct alignment to curricula will mean less "busy work."

Practice #3
Seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement; this does not include giving bonus points for extra credit.

- If students want to get higher grades, teachers may require "extra" evidence that demonstrates a higher level of achievement. Communicate clearly to students and families that better grades come from evidence of higher levels of performance, not from more work.
- If the work is not adequate, teachers can offer students opportunities to provide additional evidence. It must be clear that this will not result merely in points being added to a total – if students are able to show that they know, understand, or can perform at a higher level, their grade must reflect this.

Practice #4
Respond to academic dishonesty with consequences, including a re-assessment to determine actual level of achievement.

- It is important that teachers not assume students understand what is meant by the terms plagiarism or cheating, and should fully explain this to students in an age-appropriate manner, including an explanation of consequences as well as develop assignments that reduce dependence on cheating.
- Deducting marks does not deter academic dishonesty, nor does it accurately reflect achievement of learning outcomes. Other consequences should include re-demonstration of learning.
- Use grading to assign a consequence for academic dishonesty as a last resort only

Practice #5
Report absences separately; don't include attendance in grade determination.

- Because outcomes-based learning is not about seat time, it is about what students know, understand and can do – grades should be accurate reflections of achievement and achievement alone.
- Record attendance separately.
- Have attendance policies that address ways to offer another opportunity, consider personal issues, and provide support.

Practice #6
Use only individual achievement evidence; don't include group scores in grades.

- Understand that cooperative learning is a learning activity, not an assessment tool. Assess students individually **after** a class has experienced cooperative learning. Group scores may not accurately reflect the achievement of each student and therefore may be unfair to some.
- Assess skills in working effectively in groups separately and report separately on progress reports.
- Develop accountability strategies for groups other than those that affect grades.

Practice #7
Base academic assessments on provincial student learning outcomes only.

- Base assessments on provincial learning outcomes.
- Develop and share assessment and evaluation protocols with students before they begin the assessment event/ learning experience.
- Students must know what will be part of their summative assessment.
- Students and parents should have open access to records of learning progress.

Practice #8
Provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations/student learning outcomes; Assign grades using clear performance descriptors of student learning outcomes.

- Ensure the continuum of learning for provincial student learning outcomes are in understandable student and parent friendly language, made available before, during and after instruction.
- Exemplars of student work make various levels of proficiency clear.
- Have professional dialogue about student learning outcomes among teachers, to develop shared understanding, apply standards consistently and establish shared levels of proficiency.
- Don't grade homework. Assess knowledge gained from homework at another time.

Practice #9
Compare each student's performance to student learning outcomes. Do not assign grades based on comparisons to other students.

- There must be alignment between intended learning outcomes, assessment techniques, and learning experiences. This linkage provides for curriculum-based assessment.
- When changes are made to programming, we must document and communicate these changes to next year's teacher.

Practice #10

Rely only on quality assessments. This does not include relying on evidence gathered using assessments that fail to meet standards of quality.

- Avoid bias that can distort results. There can be problems with the students, the assessment setting, the scoring process, or the assessment itself that can cause the score to misrepresent student achievement.
- Assessment techniques should provide for a range of abilities, interests, and learning styles to accommodate students who learn at different rates and in different ways.
- All students are given an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do as part of the assessment process. Adaptations are available for students including students with learning or physical disabilities, to allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, provided that the adaptations do not jeopardize the integrity or content of the test
- Teachers should work together to address clear purpose, clear learning goals, sound design and avoidance of bias.
- The assessment environment should be consistent with the learning environment (no exams in the gym).

Practice #11

Use sound assessment practices when summarizing information and determining a final grade.

- Grades may mislead when they are based on simply calculating the mean (average) of a series of scores, due to the effect of outlier scores. Consider mean, most consistent and most recent when making assessment decisions.
- Think and talk about the determination of grades including standards.
- Recognize that grading should not be merely a numerical, mechanical exercise. Don't depend on the numbers to tell you how a student is doing. Examine all assessment information. If conflicting information exists, pursue the reasons behind the discrepancy.
- Ensure students understand assessment practices.
- All classroom practices should emphasize "continuous" assessment.
- In order to protect instructional time, exam week is not to exceed 2.5 days in length, including departmental exams.

Practice #12

Zero does not show evidence of learning. Don't include them; instead use alternatives, such as re-assessing to determine real achievement or use "IE" for incomplete or insufficient evidence. Give opportunity to replace an incomplete with a score without penalty.

- A zero skews a student's average to the point that it no longer reflects what students know and can do. Zeros give a numerical value to something that has never been assessed and that therefore has no basis in reality.
- Zeroes can have counterproductive effects on student motivation. Once a student has more than one zero, they have little chance to recover, increasing the likelihood they will give up.
- The best alternative to the use of zeros is the use of an "IE" for Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence. It is the student's responsibility to produce sufficient evidence required so the teacher can make a valid summary judgment.
- When students understand the impact of not submitting required assessment evidence, and know what alternatives are in place in their school, they are better able to decide about submitting needed academic evidence and/or making up an Incomplete.

- Students can also be involved in determining the consequences for failure to submit required assessment evidence.
- It is no longer acceptable for students to "opt out" of learning.

Practice #13

Student work is assessed frequently (formative assessment) and graded occasionally (summative evaluations). Allow students the opportunity to practice and increase their learning before summatively assessing.

- It is important teachers, students, and parents recognize learning as a process.
- Students will rarely perform at high levels on challenging learning tasks on their first attempt. Deep understanding or high levels of proficiency are achieved only as a result of trial, practice, adjustments based on feedback, and more practice. Therefore, learners must believe it is important and worthwhile to try and that it is acceptable to take risks and make mistakes; it is not necessary to always "get it" the first time.
- Frequent formative assessment events and clear feedback invite students to engage in metacognition and reflection in order to encourage optimal student learning.
- Formative assessments and other practice work (e.g., homework) are used descriptively as feedback to inform teachers and students of what has been learned and the next steps in learning.
- Engage in strategies that teachers can use to involve students including reviewing strong and weak samples in order to determine attributes of a good performance or product, practicing using criteria to assess anonymous work, working in pairs to revise anonymous weak work samples.

Practice #14

Utilize all assessment data when making instructional and reporting decisions, including mean, most recent and most consistent.

- Most recent evidence completely replaces out-of-date evidence when it is reasonable to do so. For example, how well students write at the end of the reporting period is more important than how well they write at the beginning, and later evidence of improved content understanding is more important than early evidence.
- By considering more recent information we acknowledge learning as a process. One of the most unfortunate effects of simply adding up all the scores is that many students will never be able to overcome the impact of early failures and very low scores. Rely on multiple sources of information.
- Establish procedures for re-submissions, improvements and do-over's.
- Re-demonstrating is not simply "making corrections" or "doing more." In order for students to show teachers that an increase in learning has occurred, they must demonstrate their understanding in new ways…not just fix old mistakes. In other words, more work does not always mean more learning. We must ensure we are measuring understanding and not measuring work.

Practice #15

Involve students. Students can – and should – play meaningful and key roles in assessment and grading that promote achievement; don't leave students out of the grading process.

- One of the most powerful and straightforward ways a teacher can provide feedback that encourages learning, is to have students track their own progress.
- Classroom assessment is one form of feedback. Timely and specific feedback is the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement.

- Feedback should originate from both teachers and learners, be continuous, allow students to self-adjust and try again, be specific and not evaluative in nature and tell specifically: 1) what they have done well 2) what needs improvement 3) how they can improve.
- Metacognition is what helps students develop their learning about their own learning.
- It is the teacher's responsibility to evaluate the summative evaluations, but students should be involved in peer and self-assessment of formative assessments.
- Students learn how to monitor/ track, and communicate about their own progress. Use graphs, charts and visuals to monitor their learning.

Practice #16
Use a Variety of Assessments - No single method can paint the picture needed and thus no single assessment should be the 'one' that gives the mark.

- A variety of assessment methods are necessary to create a complete picture of students understanding and mastery.
- When appropriate, provide students with options for how they will demonstrate their learning.
- If the aim is to deepen understanding, then the tasks must be grounded in real life situations and applications.
- Use Bloom's Taxonomy (or other models) to determine which kind of thinking the curriculum is asking for and develop assessments accordingly.
- Offer students a choice regarding variety of tasks, chance and assessments to show their understanding. Clarify whether the product students use to demonstrate their learning is flexible or whether the process they will use to get to a specific product is where the flexibility lies.
- At no time, should any student in grades K-9 write a comprehensive final exam.
- Carefully consider when assessments should be formative and when they should be summative.
- In Grades 10-12, at no time should a summative assessment event exceed a value of 20% of the overall mark.
- Comprehensive final exams will be limited to the following: no more than one comprehensive final in grade ten; two in grade 11; three in grade 12. Decisions about which subject area would warrant these comprehensive finals will be left up to the schools.

Communication with Home and Reporting

Pacing Guides and Assessment Plans

During the first week of classes, teachers will provide students and parents with age appropriate pacing guides and description of assessment practices, including how formative assessment will be used for descriptive feedback (coaching) and how summative assessment (judging/evaluating) throughout the grading period will occur. Teachers will also submit the pacing guides and assessment plans to the principal to ensure appropriate planning has taken place.

To monitor student achievement effectively, each classroom teacher should begin every unit of instruction or course of study with a clear vision of the specific student learning outcomes to be met. Teachers will begin planning with the curriculum outcomes, moving onto to determining the criteria for assessment, and then structure lessons to lead students to progress over time to demonstrate understanding of provincial curricula (UbD process).

Teachers will clearly indicate their intended learning outcomes or essential questions at the start of each lesson to ensure their students understand the focus of the lesson and that all learning experiences will support that outcome.

Reporting to Students and Families

For students enrolled in Prekindergarten, reporting will be conducted two times a year, at the end of Semester 1 and Semester 2. Reporting of the child's development will be reflected through documentation of learning within a play-based classroom. This documentation can include photographs, video, audio clips and anecdotal notes collected by the teacher. From this documentation, teachers will measure and report the child's development based on the four domains, as outlined in the Essential Learning Experiences for Children in Prekindergarten programs in Saskatchewan. Performance indicators to measure child development are as follows:

- Developing beyond the experience (EU)
- Actualizing the experience (FM)
- Beginning to actualize the experience (MM)
- Not yet engaged in the experience (NY)
- Insufficient evidence collected for report

Kindergarten reports will be distributed three times a year. Grade 1-12 students will receive reports four times per year.

For students enrolled in grade K – 8, grades will be based upon a "level" code that is reflective of the NESD Rubrics which are reflective of Saskatchewan Curricular Outcomes. For students in grades 9 – 12, grades will be based on a percentage scale. For these secondary students, teachers can utilize rubrics with the level codes to assess. These codes will be automatically converted to a percentage. The following levels identify the descriptors and codes that will be utilized on the progress report:

- Fully meeting grade level expectations, with enriched understanding (EU)
- Fully meeting or proficient grade level expectations (FM)
- Mostly meeting or exploring and practicing grade level expectations (MM)
- Not yet meeting grade level expectations, even with assistance; still building readiness (NY)
- Insufficient evidence collected for report (IE)
- Not yet part of current course work (NA)

The above codes will be used to report progress on NESD defined "Focus Areas". Focus Areas represent Saskatchewan Curricular Outcomes grouped together for reporting purposes. They tend to mirror a Curriculum's Goals or Strands, depending upon the subject area.

In addition to the reporting of Focus Areas, the new NESD Report Card will report on Personal and Social Development categories. The following are the categories that will be reported on within every subject of the report card:

- Attitude contributes to learning
- Follows directions and classroom routines
- Coursework completed on time
- Organizes work and workspace
- Works effectively in groups

The NESD has purchased a web-based grading computer system called StudentsAchieve. Teachers in the NESD will be expected to regularly utilize StudentsAchieve. Individual assessments will require a minimum of one outcome to be identified for the assessment. As well, teachers can identify any number of Personal and Social Development categories to report on. For K-8 students, outcome results will be determined based on a "most recent" calculation with the option of teachers applying Professional Judgement to alter this result, if deemed appropriate. For 9-12 students, outcome results will be determined by a combination of a weighted average, most recent, most consistent and Professional

Judgement. Teachers will utilize their professional discretion when selecting the most appropriate tool to determine a student's grade. For K – 12 students, Focus Area grades will be determined based on an average of the individual outcome results with the option of teachers applying Professional Judgement.

Parents and students will be granted online access to view the individual progress of a student through the Student-Parent Involvement Portal. Teachers will be asked to keep assessment information current and up-to-date. This is intended to enhance the communication between parents, students, teachers and the school as a whole.

In the NESD, teachers will involve their students in student led conferencing to engage the learner in the reporting process and to ensure that a high level of accountability and future planning takes place. The purpose of such conferences is to look at examples of student learning, highlight strengths, discuss areas requiring improvement, and set goals during the reporting period.

<u>**National and International Assessments**</u>

The NESD participates in national and international assessments as a means of collecting data on performance in targeted areas and, ultimately, informing instruction and learning. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) randomly choose students to assess within randomly chosen schools within the NESD. The following is a description these large scale assessments:

International: PISA
PISA is an international assessment that measures the skills and knowledge of 15-year- olds in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. The assessment has a primary focus on one of the key reporting areas. Reports that are generated can compare data on the variances between provinces as well as gender differences in the three academic areas. http://nesd.ca/~currcorner/files//u7/PISA%202006.pdf

National: PCAP
In April of 2003, PCAP was developed by Ministers of Education in the Provinces and Territories with the intent of improving learning. It replaced the old School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) that assessed 13 and 16-year-olds in mathematics, reading, writing, and science. The PCAP is designed so many subjects can be added if and when the need arises but will focus on reading, mathematics, and science for the time being. PCAP dovetails nicely with PISA results and other provincial and local school division results which can then be triangulated. http://nesd.ca/~currcorner/files//u7/PCAP2007-Highlights_0.pdf

Glossary of Assessment Terms

The world we live in is rich with terms and definitions that relate to assessment. But the definitions vary depending on what country, state or province they were created, which often dictates the meaning that is associated with the term and its definition. A common language needs to be developed in the area of assessment. Although the list of terms and definitions is not exhaustive of all terms that exist, it is important to define the terms below in order to increase "Assessment Literacy" in the North East School Division.

Key Definitions

1. **Accountability –** student performance on assessments linked to content standards that lead to rewards or consequences for schools and sometimes educators. Large-scale standardized tests are used to collect the information used for accountability decisions.
2. **Achievement –** a student's demonstration of knowledge, skills & attitudes relative to grade level learner outcomes.
3. **Assessment** – the process of gathering information about student achievement, most often in relation to defined learning expectations. Using a variety of methods can provide information to a variety of users for a variety of decisions.
4. **Authentic Assessment** – Authentic assessment clearly assesses the outcomes in a context that reflects the actual learning experience. In other words, we assess in the exact same way we have invited students to learn. Authentic assessment also invites us to ask how students may come to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained and assess them based on that information.
5. **Common Assessment** – teachers may work together in developing common assessment items, with accompanying rubrics outlining performance characteristics and examples of student work along a continuum of performance. Common assessment items may be utilized and scored in a classroom independently of administration in other classrooms or they could be used as a school or as a division.
6. **Criteria** – what students need to do to show they have achieved the learner outcomes (e.g. compare and contrast, explain, analyze)
7. **Criterion-Referenced Test** – an assessment that measures student progress toward specific curriculum goals or standards. Scores are reported in comparison to a predefined acceptable level of performance rather than in comparison to other students.
8. **Curriculum** –The provincial document of expectations for learning for each subject area at each grade level. Curriculum outlines the depth and breadth of learning experiences appropriate for students in the classroom.
9. **Descriptive feedback** – information related to the assigned learning task and provided to students to help them take the next steps in their learning by showing them what they already do well, what they need to improve, and how.
10. **Documentation –** a process by which a teacher collects (written notes, audio or video tape, artifacts) childrens' ideas, words, creations and learning, to encourage the development of and reflection about meaningful experiences. Documentation displays evidence of student learning and guides future planning.
11. **Formative Assessment (Assessment as and for learning**) – purposeful, ongoing collection of information about how students are learning while there is still time to improve. Both teacher and student then use the information to guide continuous improvement toward the intended learning.
12. **Grading** – the process of assigning letters or numbers at the end of a period of time (term, semester, etc.) as a way to summarize the quality of student performance.

13. **Learning Outcomes** – the expectations for students learning; the provincially mandated knowledge, skills and understanding we expect students to demonstrate as a result of schooling and are articulated through assessment.
14. **Norm-Referenced Test** – a test, often one of basic skills and concepts, developed to measure one student's performance against the performance of other students of the same age and/or grade who have previously taken the same test.
15. **Observation** - to observe the actions of students to determine their intellectual, socio-emotional, physical, and spiritual knowledge and behaviours. Observations can be recorded in a variety of ways including anecdotal records, audio recordings, checklists, photographs, and video recordings.
16. **Performance Assessment** – assessment based on authentic tasks such as activities, exercises, or problems that require students to show what they can do and ultimately, their degree of understanding. Assessment of the knowledge and/or skills displayed is based on criteria which are derived from outcomes.
17. **Performance Standard** – the predetermined level of acceptable performance on an assessment, answering the question, "How good is good enough?"
18. **Portfolio** – is a compilation of evidence collected over time of a student's learning. It demonstrates the student's efforts, progress, and achievement. A portfolio can be cumulative, working/developmental, or showcase in nature.
19. **Rubric** – a list of criteria and accompanying performance standards that describe the quality of products or performances used to assess student learning.
20. **Self-reflection** – considering the quality of one's own work by applying criteria; requires that a student feels safe enough to be honest in making objectives observations about the work (also referred to in the literature as self-assessment or self-evaluation).
21. **Summative Assessment (Assessment of learning)** – an assessment given in class at the end of the period of study, or an external, standardized test used to summarize what students have learned up to that point. Frequently evaluations of students are made and grades are assigned based on their results.
22. **Understanding by Design (UbD)** - A planning process whereby outcomes come to be clearly understood, assessment criteria and performance standards are clarified and the learning plan emerges from the first two processes. This process invites a deep knowledge about where the learning is going in order to better understand where students are now so that the steps taken are always in the right direction.

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