

2017

Assessment Policy

A GUIDELINE INTO ASSESSMENTS

GRASSROOTS SCHOOL

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What is an Assessment?

Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information regarding student performance. It identifies what students know, understand, can do and feel at different stages of the learning process. At Grassroots School, assessments provides the basis of informed teaching, helping students overcome their challenges and ensuring teaching builds upon prior knowledge. Grassroots School views assessments as reflections that aid to improve classroom instruction rather than as the basis for judgement and /or competition. The school has made sure the assessment compliments the schools vision that “Everyone can learn” and works well in conjunction with other policy documents.

All assessments aim at assessing one or more critical elements of the learning process. These include:

- 1) A student understanding of concepts
- 2) A knowledge acquired by the students in specific subject areas
- 3) Mastery of core skills
- 4) Translation of this knowledge into action
- 5) Students attitudes, work habits and behaviours

All assessments comply with guidelines of authentic assessments where students use the same competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes as required in their respective life situations.

Assessment within the PYP Context

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. It is central to the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme’s goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding students 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.

Everyone concerned with assessment - students, 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.

Both students 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.

The PYP describes the taught curriculum as the written curriculum in action. Using the written curriculum, and in collaboration with colleagues and students, 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 student, from novice to expert, through the learning process.

The assessment component in the school’s curriculum can itself be subdivided into three closely related areas:

- Assessing – How we discover what the students know and have learned.
- Recording – How we choose to collect and analyse data.
- Reporting – How we choose to communicate information.

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. Both students 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.

Assessment at Grassroots School

What Do We Assess?

Through the IBPYP Programme of Inquiry, Grassroots School teachers strive to provide the opportunity for students to construct meaning primarily through structured 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, and Sharing the Planet provide a focus for inquiry, while literacy and numeracy provide the tools. Feedback should be given on student progress and performance in each of these areas.

Additionally, feedback should be provided on the attributes listed in the IB Learner Profile: Balanced, Caring, Communicator, Inquirer, Knowledgeable, Open-Minded, Principled, Reflective, Risk-Taker, and Thinker. This profile serves to increase the student'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 Grassroots School, we assess performance and progress in all Units of Inquiry and in addition standalone skills that may be taught in Physical Education, the Arts, Language Arts, Mathematics, Second Language, the Transdisciplinary Skills (Communication, Research, Self-Management, Social, and Thinking) and the Learner Profile. We also continue to incorporate student attitudes and attributes to everyday learning.

Assessing – How do we discover what the students have learned?

Assessment is something that occurs every day in some fashion. The use of a variety of assessment tools demonstrates our belief that students learn in different ways, at different rates, and at different times. The result of assessment is considered a critical element that influences teacher decision-making and guides student learning. One fundamental aspect of assessments at Grassroots School is that they should be authentic.

Authentic Assessments is defined as 'a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills' -- Jon Mueller. We use authentic assessments as an approach to measure student performance in a direct, relevant way to see if the learning objectives were met. An authentic assessment usually includes a task for students to perform and a rubric by which their performance on the task will be evaluated. Assessments are conducted at different points of the learning through formative and summative methods.

Formative Assessment provides information that is used in order to plan the next stage in learning. It is interwoven with learning, and helps teachers and students to find out what the students already know and can do. Formative assessment aims to promote learning by giving regular and frequent feedback. This helps learners to improve knowledge and understanding, to foster enthusiasm for learning, to engage in thoughtful reflection, to develop the capacity for self-assessment, and to recognize the criteria for success.

Summative Assessment aims to give teachers and students a clear insight into students' understanding. Summative assessment is the culmination of the teaching and learning process, and gives the students opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned.

Authentic Assessment in the classroom will include:

- using representative examples of students' work or performance to provide information about student learning.
- collecting evidence of students' understanding and thinking.
- documenting learning processes of groups and individuals.

- engaging students in reflecting on their learning.
- students assessing work produced by themselves and by others.
- developing clear rubrics.
- identifying exemplar student work.
- keeping records of task results.

Authentic assessments are effective and allow students to:

- share their learning and understanding with others.
- demonstrate a range of knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skills.
- use a variety of learning styles, multiple intelligences, and abilities to express their understanding.
- know and understand in advance the criteria for producing a quality product or performance.
- participate in reflection, self- and peer-assessment.
- base their learning on real-life experiences that can lead to further inquiries.
- express different points of view and interpretations.
- analyse their learning and understand what needs to be improved.

Authentic assessments are effective and allow teachers to:

- inform every stage of the teaching and learning process.
- plan in response to student and teacher inquiries.
- develop criteria for producing a quality product or performance.
- gather evidence from which sound conclusions can be drawn.
- provide evidence that can be effectively reported and understood by the whole school community.
- collaboratively review and reflect on student performance and progress.
- take into account a variety of learning styles, multiple intelligences and abilities including different cultural contexts.

Authentic assessments are effective and allow parents to:

- see evidence of student learning and development.
- develop an understanding of the student's progress.
- provide opportunities to support and celebrate student learning.

The assessment of the development and learning of young students is an essential component of the curriculum, and helps to inform continued development, learning and teaching. Students should be observed in a variety of situations, and a wide range of assessment strategies should be implemented.

The teacher observes the young student in order to:

- build up a clear picture of the student and his or her interests.
- identify what and how the student is thinking and learning.
- assess the effectiveness of the environment on the student's learning.
- extend the student's learning.

Recording – How do we collect and analyse the data?

Assessment strategies and tools form the basis of a comprehensive approach to assessment and represent the school's answer to the question "How will we know what we have learned?" The strategies are the methods or approaches that teachers use when gathering information about a student's learning. Teachers' record this information using a variety of tools, which are the instruments, used to collect data.

Assessment Strategies

Portfolio:

These are collections of children's work that are designed to demonstrate successes, growth, and higher order of thinking, creativity and reflection. A portfolio should be thought of as an exhibition of an active mind at work.

Here are some examples - amongst many others - of work to be included in the students' portfolios:

- Journal and Creative writing.
- Creative work (Composing music, Art work, Science experiments).
- Formative and Summative assessments in all subject areas and units of inquiry.
- Examples of students' questions (questions related to provocations; "I wonder" questions, etc.).
- Self-evaluations of Learner Profile Attributes, Attitudes, Transdisciplinary Skills.
- Students' reflections.
- Continuum.
- Anecdotal records on social interactions.

Process-focused Assessments:

The students' transdisciplinary skills (social skills, communication skills, thinking skills, research skills and self-management skills) are monitored often and regularly. Here are some guidelines to assist teachers in how they record their observations.

- Noting both typical as well as non-typical behaviours.
- Collecting multiple observations to enhance reliability.
- Synthesizing evidence from different contexts to increase validity.
- A system of note taking and record keeping is created that minimizes writing and recording time. Checklists, inventories and narrative descriptions are common methods of collecting these observations.
- Checklists: for transdisciplinary skills for one task.
- Anecdotal records on observations made.
- Reflections on learning style and strategies.
- Reading strategies.
- Running records.

Open-ended tasks :

These are situations in which children are presented with a stimulus and asked to communicate an original response. The answer might be a brief written answer, a diagram or a solution.

- Drawing a story related to a book.
- Creative movement activity (choreography).
- Graphic design or other artwork.
- Depicting environmental issues through the creation of posters, 3D models.
- Examples of students' work in digital format (Power Point; Prezi; Note Book, etc.).
- Journal.
- Writing an original end or a story.
- Reading responses, drawing related to personal experience.
- Brainstorming sessions.
- Dramatic production (skit, or play).
- Song, music, rap, or poem.
- Video.

Performance assessments:

These are assessments of goal-directed tasks, with established criteria that are situations in which children are presented with a problematic scenario and asked to communicate an original response. Children can present in a format of their choice reflecting the many different ways they think and learn (multiple intelligences).

- Process writing.
- Reading response.
- Research projects.
- Graphs, diagrams.
- Surveys.
- Story mapping.
- Art projects, illustrations.
- Role playing, drama.
- Composing music.
- Reflections on social and environmental issues.
- Examples of students' work in digital format (Power Point; Prezi; Note Book, etc.).

Selected responses:

These are single occasion, one-dimensional exercises. Tests and quizzes are the most familiar examples of this form of assessment.

- Reading comprehension.
- Spelling tests.
- Grammar tests (grammar rules, verbs).
- Solo performances, oral presentations.
- Math: basic facts, operational techniques (+, -, x, ÷).
- Associations.
- Situating events on a timeline.
- Putting events in the right order.
- Categorizing elements.

Observations:

Children are observed in a variety of settings ranging from the whole class to dynamic groups to individual students. Each context provides a different set of opportunities for the teacher to analyze students' actions and interactions. Here are some suggestions about how to proceed:

- Teacher led conference.
- Listen and look (anecdotal records).
- Chart paper with Post-it notes (to record observation made).
- Small group where teacher focuses on a specific child.
- Teacher's journal (anecdotal records).
- Taking pictures or videotaping the students in action.
- Creative writing conferencing.
- Observing performance activities in the gym.
- Checklist: student profile, attitudes, skills.
- Observing how children solve problems (skills, manipulative, asking a friend, drawing pictures).
- Observing children's social interactions.
- Observing physical mannerisms when working in class (class chart, anecdotal records).
- Observing facial expression (interest, understanding, feeling).
- Portfolio.

Transdisciplinary Skills Assessments:

These involve the assessment of 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 in real contexts using checklists and anecdotal records.

Note: These lists are not exhaustive and teachers are encouraged to explore other avenues independently and in cycle and grade level teams.

Assessment Tools

- **Rubrics:** Rubrics are established sets of criteria used for scoring or rating student's tests, portfolios, or performances. The descriptors tell the student 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 students as well as by teachers.
- **Benchmarks/Exemplars:** These are samples of student'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 students. These records need to be systematically compiled and organized.
- **Continuums:** These are visual representations of developmental stages of learning. They show a progression of achievement or identify where a student is in a process.

Reporting – How do we choose to communicate information about assessment?

Reporting on assessment is about communicating what students know, understand and can do. It describes the progress of the students' learning, identifies areas for growth, and contributes to the efficacy of the programme. Reporting may take many forms including conferences and written reports.

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.

Conferences: The purpose of conferences is to share information between teachers, students and parents. These conferences may take a formal or informal structure.

- **Teacher–Student:** These are designed to give students feedback so they can reflect on their work and further refine and develop their skills through self-evaluation (See Annexure I). These individual conferences occur at the end of each term, in order to support and encourage the student's learning and teacher planning.
- **Teacher–Parent(s):** These are designed to give the parents information about the student's progress development and needs, and about the school's programme. They are held a minimum of three times a year usually via a "Gallery Walk" where the children's work and portfolio's are displayed.
- **Student-Led:** Student-led conferences involve the student and the parent. The students are responsible for leading the conference, and also take responsibility for their learning by sharing the process with their parents. Student-led conferences are also ways in which children celebrate their progress; identify areas of improvement; and demonstrate and develop areas of the PYP learner profile and attitudes. It may involve students demonstrating their understanding through a variety of different learning situations. There may be several conferences taking place simultaneously. (Refer Annexure I)

The Exhibition: In the final year of the PYP, students participate in a culminating project, the PYP Exhibition. This requires that each student demonstrates engagement with the five essential elements of the programme: Knowledge, Concepts, Skills, Attitudes and Action. It is a transdisciplinary inquiry conducted in the spirit of personal and shared responsibility, as well as a summative assessment activity that is a celebration as students move from the PYP into the middle years of schooling.

The exhibition represents a significant event in the life of a PYP school and student, synthesizing the essential elements of the PYP, and sharing them with the whole school community. It is an opportunity for students to exhibit the attributes of the learner profile that have been developing throughout their engagement with the PYP. Students are required to engage in a collaborative, transdisciplinary inquiry process that involves them in identifying, investigating, and offering solutions to real-life issues or problems.

The PYP exhibition has a number of key purposes including the following:

- for students to engage in an in-depth, collaborative inquiry.
- to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate independence and responsibility for their own learning.
- to provide students with an opportunity to explore multiple perspectives.
- for students to synthesize and apply their learning of previous years, and to reflect on their journey through the PYP.
- to provide an authentic process for assessing student understanding.
- to demonstrate how students can take action as a result of their learning.
- to unite the students, teachers, parents and other members of the school community in a collaborative experience that incorporates the essential elements of the PYP.
- to celebrate the transition of learners from primary to middle/secondary education. Annexure I - Student Self-Evaluation

Annexure I- End-of-Term Reflections and Goal Setting

With your teachers' help, reflect on your work and conduct during this semester.

Goals	Always	Sometimes	I need to put more effort
I am proud of the quality of my work.			
I like to learn new things.			
I try to solve problems.			
I complete my work on time.			
I participate in group activities.			
I show self-control.			
I listen and respect others.			
I respect my school's environment.			

Set one goal for next semester in each category

My Goal for learning (For example think: Communication, Research and Thinking Skills)	
My Goal for my conduct (For example think: social and self-management skills)	
How will I take action?	

Student's signature: _____

Teacher's signature: _____

Parents' signature: _____

Annexure II – Student Led Conference Agreement

Student led conferences will take place on a regular school day afternoon and evening. Students will present their portfolios in each of their homeroom classrooms. Teachers send home a letter explaining the student led conference and including a sign-up time-slots that parents may choose from (Priority sign-up will be given to parents that have other siblings in the school). There will be several conferences going on at the same time per time slot. During the conference, students will present their portfolios to their parents/guardians and complete a reflection sheet together with their parents. The portfolio may also be brought home to further reflect and be brought back to school once it had been fully examined. Parents are given guidelines prior to the conference in order to ask their child questions about his or her work and how he or she demonstrates the five essential elements of the PYP programme. The teachers should take an active role in facilitating the discussion. They will be observing and answering any questions parents/guardians may have. Teachers will also be making sure that each time slot is respected.

Note that should parents wish to discuss matters of a more personal nature, private interviews may be requested. They will be scheduled according to the teachers' availability during their regular working hours.

Roles of the participants during the student-led conference

- Students:**
- Be on time
 - Discuss work selection in portfolio with parents/guardians.
 - Speak clearly
- Parents:**
- Be on time for scheduled appointment
 - Be positive and interested
 - Discuss areas of improvement with child
 - Ask questions
 - Listen
 - Write a brief comment to encourage your child to further his/her learnings.
- Teachers:**
- Manage the time
 - Facilitate the conference
 - Provide probing questions and highlight achievements
 - Circulate to answer any questions if necessary