Northern Heights Elementary School
IB-Primary Years Program
School Assessment Policy

Northern Heights Mission

Northern Heights Elementary School provides a balanced, engaging, and comprehensive education that prepares all students for success as global citizens. We strive to develop caring, principled individuals with a sense of community, who value individual differences and diverse perspectives. As reflective thinkers and inquirers, we are inspired to take actions that positively contribute to our ever-changing world.

School Assessment Philosophy

For successful citizenship in the 21st Century, Northern Heights' students must develop strong concepts, broad-based knowledge, diverse skills, personal attributes and perspectives leading to action. Individually, each of these is an important element of our instructional program at Northern Heights Elementary School. Collectively, these elements are essential to the IB-PYP curriculum model, providing students with both richness and depth in learning. Our assessment philosophy is predicated on an understanding that we have responsibility to assess, evaluate and provide feedback on student progress toward development and application of these elements through learning experiences and in daily life.

At Northern Heights we believe assessment:
- occurs at all times and in varied situations/environments.
- concerns everyone: students, teachers, parents, administrators, community members.
- is an integral part of planning, teaching and learning.
- takes many forms and has many purposes.
- must give consideration to the learner, as well as the learning to be assessed.
- practices must be clearly communicated and understood by students, parents and teachers.
- results must be shared with the learner, as well as with all stakeholders.
- is effective only if results are used to provide feedback to learners, make instructional decisions and evaluate program effectiveness, leading to an end outcome of high level student learning.

What is the purpose for assessment?

"Assessment involves the gathering and analysis of information about student performance and is designed to inform practice." (Making the PYP Happen, 2007)

"…learning is enhanced when teachers pay attention to the knowledge and beliefs that learners bring to a learning task, use this knowledge as a starting point for instruction and monitor students' changing conceptions as instruction proceeds." (Bransford, Brown and Cocking. 1999. How people learn: brain, mind, experience and school. National Academy Press)

We believe the purpose of assessment is to:
- determine what students know and can do at a specific place and time.
- promote continuous learning and growth over time.
- provide feedback to students on their learning successes and areas of need.
- encourage student motivation.

- promote personal evaluation and self-reflection.
- support the development of individual learning goals.
- inform planning for individual, small and whole group instruction.
- measure student progress compared to others or a learning standard.
- support formal processes for reporting individual progress.
- measure effectiveness of instruction.
- inform curriculum and program evaluation.
- demonstrate accountability for learning to all stakeholders.

Assessment Practices

What is assessed?

The IB-PYP curriculum model incorporates five essential elements of learning:
- understanding of concepts
- acquisition of knowledge
- mastery of skills
- development of positive attitudes
- initiation of responsible action

This curriculum model encompasses and enriches Common Core State Standards, as well as other district learning standards. Student progress is assessed in each of these elements across all content areas. Assessment of specific knowledge and skills within literacy and mathematics is assessed both in and outside the units of inquiry. Common formative and summative, state and district assessments are used to evaluate student performance in each of these core content areas.

Who is involved in assessment?

"Students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing the students' progress as part of the development of their wider critical-thinking and self-assessment skills. Teachers should also be concerned with evaluating the efficacy of the program." (IB-PYP Assessment Handbook, pp1-2))

Both teachers and students are actively engaged in assessing progress. Teachers are responsible for initiating and implementing assessment activities that are embedded throughout the transdisciplinary program of inquiry, as well as in areas of single subject skills-based instruction. Students are actively involved in self assessment, reflecting on their progress and engaging in personal goal setting as it relates to their learning, development of attitudes and attributes and/or initiated actions. The school community, including specialists and the building administrator, are involved in analysis of assessment results for program evaluation.

When does assessment occur?

Assessment is integral to all learning processes. It occurs on a continuous basis across time and throughout the instructional program. We believe the most effective assessments are those generated from and occurring within the ongoing teaching activities that take place in the context of everyday teaching and learning.

At Northern Heights we use a balanced assessment system that includes both summative and formative assessment, depending on purpose and information desired. Our understanding of these assessment forms is consistent with that of the IB:

Pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment occurs as part of each Unit of Inquiry. The information gathered in the pre and formative assessments guide teacher decision-making as the unit unfolds. The summative assessment measures student learning relative to the unit central idea. It also provides teachers with useful information as they reflect on each unit of inquiry. Students are expected to reflect on their learning, as well as their processes and products throughout the unit.

Pre and summative assessment is also required as part of the school district and state assessment systems. These assessments occur, as scheduled events, throughout the year. While standardized external assessments provide some information that informs instruction, their primary purpose is program evaluation and systems accountability.

How do we assess?

We seek to use effective strategies and tools that incorporate the most current understanding of best practice in both assessment and evaluation.

Strategies for assessment and tools for recording data include:

- Observation-individual, small and whole group observations of student learning behaviors with formal and informal processes for recording information. (*Recording Tools: anecdotal records, checklists, rubrics, continuums)*

- Process-focused-take place over time and are focused on learning processes and application of skills. *(Recording tools: rubrics, anecdotal records, continuums, exemplars)*

- Performance Assessments-provide learners with authentic, meaningful challenges that require problem-solving and application of learning. These tasks typically represent real-world contexts. Multiple approaches to the task are expected. Student responses are frequently varied in nature, complex and require use of many skills. *(Recording tools: rubrics, exemplars, anecdotal records, continuums)*

- Open-ended tasks-students communicate an original response to a given stimulus. Traditional written, as well as visual responses are acceptable. *(Recording tools: rubrics, exemplars, anecdotal records, continuums)*

- Selected-response-Single event, one-time snapshots of student performance. *(Recording tools: standardized test protocols, exemplars, checklists, continuums)*

- Self-assessment-student assessment of their progress, based on self-developed criteria and standards. *(Recording tools: rubrics, exemplars, checklists)*

What is the Role of Reflection?

Self-assessment and reflection are integral and highly valued elements of the PYP. As such, these strategies have their own place in our school-based assessment policy. Common understanding and consistent practice with regard to reflection and self-evaluation are supported by foundation agreements and operating guidelines adopted by all staff, school-wide. Foundation Agreements include:

- All students should be engaged in ongoing opportunities for self-evaluation/reflection
- Self-evaluation and reflection should occur both in and outside the Program of Inquiry.
- The skills for self-evaluation and reflection must be modeled and developed over time.
- It is appropriate to differentiate self-evaluation and reflective processes based on developmental levels and understanding of children.

Reflective processes that occur within the unit of inquiry incorporate common practices across all grade levels. All students are to be engaged in self-reflection at multiple points through the unit of inquiry. This can be formal or informal and may include activities such as journaling, verbal self-reflection, checklists, rubrics, whole group and small group reflection. These ongoing self-reflective engagements provide the backbone of the student's experience within a particular unit, as contrasted to a single reflective process at unit conclusion.

Each grade level will establish a developmentally appropriate focus for reflections that are to be included in the Portfolios. This allows teachers of very young students to more deeply model and provide student practice in reflective thinking and self-assessment. Older students who have engaged in self-reflection over extended time are expected to give consideration to their work across multiple program elements. Differentiated areas of focus for Portfolio reflection are outlined in the following table:

Grades	Reflection Focus
K-1	Learner Profile Attributes
2-3	Beginning Approaches to Learning (continue Learner Profile)
4-5	Approaches to Learning & Learner Profile

Reporting Progress In the PYP

Reporting student progress includes feedback based on evaluation of information gained from both formal and informal assessment. In addition to sharing information about student development within the PYP, reporting also includes sharing student progress toward core content knowledge, as defined by standards. The following are methods of reporting progress currently used:

- Classroom Conferences- Teachers meet individually or in small groups to provide feedback to students. Students may also conference and provide feedback to one another, with specific established criteria and conference goals.

- Progress Conferences-provide opportunity for review of student progress over time and may include assessment results that are both formative and summative. These conferences may be organized as meetings between parent-teacher, parent-student-teacher or parent-student. Implementation of student led conferences, in which students take responsibility for sharing their learning with parents, is a goal. Progress conferences may occur at any time, but are formally scheduled once a year for all students.

- Portfolios - are an important tool to support student development in all elements of the PYP. They are intentional, organized collections of work that provide students with opportunity to self-assess, reflect on and celebrate their progress over time. It is a home for artifacts and reflections that represent the child's cumulative experience in the PYP. It also provides a foundation for the Exhibition process. Each student is able to review their portfolio and reflect on prior learning over their years in the PYP. Reflections are then applied to the development of the Exhibition project. Portfolio processes may be differentiated to reflect the developmental understanding of learners at each grade level.

- Student-Guided Conversations-engage the student and family in a conversation about the student's learning. Examples may include student-involved conferences, unit sharing, self-reflection activities, Portfolio Sharing, invitations to performances, activities or engagement in action. Each grade level will host *at least one* opportunity for student guided conversations about learning each year.

- The Exhibition-is a culminating project that takes place in the final year of the PYP. Students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of the five essential elements of the PYP (knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and action) through a unit of inquiry that is shared with the school community. In this way students show their development of learner profile attributes accomplished throughout their years in the PYP. The Exhibition also provides important information about our program, implementation of the PYP and areas that we might refine in future practice.

- Report Card-Individual report cards are issued twice per year. These provide parents with information about student progress toward meeting content standards. Additionally, the report card reflects the content of the PYP by indication the units of inquiry taught each semester. Evidence that student's demonstrate Learner Profile Attitudes, Attributes and Approaches to Learning are communicated through personalized comment. The focus of these comments may vary by level and units of inquiry studied in any given marking period. PYP elements are reported as observed, but not graded.

Assessment Policy Review Process

We view the Assessment Policy as a working document that will require review and revision as development and implementation of the PYP progresses at Northern Heights. To formalize the timeline and process for review and revision the following will be adopted:
- Bi-annual review of content and working agreements, to be conducted in the spring of each designated school year (next review to be spring, 2016).
- Subsequent revisions to be completed for implementation by October of each following school year.
- Involvement from stakeholder representatives in the review, revision process (i.e. grade level, support staff, parent/community, IB Coordinator, administration)
- Consensus support from all instructional staff and support staff charged with implementing the policy.