

# Assessment

*Education, Culture and Employment. (2001). Student Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting. A Departmental Directive. NWT.*

## **The principles that guide assessment:**

Assessment will measure how well students are learning knowledge, and development skills and attitudes in relation to instruction and program. All assessment will be:

- Ongoing
- Fair
- Appropriate
- Consistent
- Culture-based
- Inclusive

## **Terms:**

The process of assessment, evaluation and reporting is an important part of all teaching and learning practices.

- Assessment – is the process of collecting and interpreting information about what a student knows, is able to do and is learning to do
- Evaluation – is the process of making judgments and decision based on interpretation of the information.
- Reporting – is the process of summarizing and communicating the information and related decisions

## **Reasons:**

Why is assessment necessary?

All assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices support decisions about:

- Student placement
- Program development
- Student promotion

In addition, system-wide assessments inform:

- Educational decision-making
- Policy development

## **Who decides what is assessed and how?**

### ***Classroom-based:***

Most often, teachers decide what to assess, and how to assess it. They design instruments to measure how well students are learning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes being taught in the classroom. Throughout the year, teachers assess students often, and use a variety of methods to:

- Help teachers plan
- Identify effective teaching methods
- Provide clear evidence of what is working

- Identify where improvement is needed
- Help students to understand what they have learned and how well they have learned it
- Improve student learning

***System-Wide:***

From time to time, teachers may also be required to administer system-wide assessments. (See Alberta Achievement Testing program information.) These assessments are designed to:

- Validate what is already known about student achievement
- Provide new information about teaching and learning
- Present a framework for informed discussion about standards of achievement and expectations

**Who is responsible for improving student achievement?**

Student learning is supported by:

- ◆ Parents – who are their child’s first teacher, and who continue to be involved and support their child throughout the school years.
- ◆ Students – who are motivated, and take responsibility for their own learning
- ◆ Teachers – who continue to improve their own knowledge and skills in assessment, evaluation, and reporting
- ◆ Administrators – who provide leadership to create a positive learning environment
- ◆ Education authorities – who represent and promote community values, visions, and cultures

***Teachers, administrators and other professionals are responsible for regularly reporting student progress in relation to the curriculum for each grade, or for an individual education plan.***

***Decisions and directions resulting from assessment must be reported to students, parents, the public, educators and other education decision-makers with:***

- ***Integrity***
- ***Accuracy***
- ***Openness***



**Types of Assessment – the process of collecting, in many different ways, information about student achievement and growth**

- Formative: (ongoing, daily/weekly assessment) – e.g. student activities, centre activities, problem of the week, student reflection, self-assessment, homework
- Summative (unit or topic assessment, a final or culminating assessment)
  - o Authentic – a performance task
  - o Cumulative – an activity that integrates subjects or assesses multiple outcomes, unit test
  - o Checklist – a checklist of all specific outcomes

How student learning may be assessed:				
Selected Response Items	Constructed Responses	Products	Performances	Process-Focused
Multiple choice True-false Matching Checklist	Fill-in-the-blank Short answer Label a diagram 'Show your work' Visual representation (flow chart, graph/table, illustration, Venn diagram)	Work sample Math journal Portfolio Model Video/audiotape Spreadsheet Multimedia presentation Scrapbook Collage	Presentation Math demonstration of problem solving Discussion Interview Peer teaching Math labs Retell/reteach	Portfolio Oral questioning Observation Process description 'Think aloud' Learning log/journal Self-reflection/self-assessment Goal setting Peer assessment

**Assessment FOR Learning**

At TCSA, we believe that one of the most effective ways to raise student achievement is through the effective use of assessment FOR learning (diagnostic and formative assessment) strategies.

According to the Alberta Assessment Consortium (of which all TCSA regional teachers are members – [www.aac.ab.ca](http://www.aac.ab.ca) id assessment/password T1chq), Assessment FOR learning is defined as:

**“assessment experiences that result in an ongoing exchange of information** between students and teachers about student progress toward clearly specified learner outcomes (also called diagnostic and formative assessment; refers to information not used for grading purposes).

## **Assessment FOR Learning is about helping students**

- 1. know where they are in their learning (current achievement),**
- 2. know where they are going (expected achievement or learning goals)**
- 3. know how to progress to reach their expected goals.**

There are many Assessment FOR Learning strategies that teachers can use to increase achievement.

Black and William (1998) make three recommendations. (Refocus, AAC)

1. Change classroom culture
  - a. Students need to have access to assessment information.
  - b. Feedback to a student needs to be provided information about the particular qualities of their work and ways to improve it.
  - c. Teachers should avoid comparing students.
  - d. Teachers should avoid focus on rewards, grades or class rankings. These practices degrade intrinsic motivation.
2. Have students self-reflect
  - a. Use self- and peer-assessment. Self-reflection is an essential component to learning.
  - b. Students need to be aware of their goals and be able to identify ways they can go about to reach these goals.
3. View assessment and teaching as the same thing
  - a. Effective programs of assessment FOR learning is more than adding a few strategies to classroom practice.
  - b. Assessment must work to inform instruction.

There are several starting points to foster change. The AAC document titled Refocus (in schools and online) provides teachers with many examples, including:

- student involved testing
- feedback from teachers to students
- questioning to promote learning
- developing a shared vision of success
- peer coaching and self-reflection
- planning for assessment FOR learning

A variety of sessions and in-services will continue to occur through the year to allow teachers to develop a shared understanding of assessment practices and participate in professional dialogue with peers.

Additional information and teaching resources are available at [www.aac.ab.ca](http://www.aac.ab.ca)

Members: Tlicho

Password: assessment

# Grading Practices Considerations

## Guidelines for Weighting Scores

- Give priority to the most recent evidence.
- Give priority or greater weight to the most comprehensive forms of evidence.
- Give priority to evidence related to the most important learning goals or expectations.

## Guidelines for Marking Quantity

- Some work can simply be recorded as done or not done.
- Some work, for example, first drafts, can be skimmed for a general overall impression, rather than examined for detail.
- Some work may be assessed by focusing on one or two key characteristics rather than everything. Strengths and weakness in central criteria can be identified clearly in this approach.
- Some work may be assessed by peers.
- Some work may be self assessed using a checklist to outline key characteristics.

## Principles for Effective Grading Practices

1. The use of zeros and penalties for late or missing work should be avoided.
2. Not everything should be graded. Only summative assessments, based on valid and reliable measures of targeted goals should be used for grading purposes.
3. Grades should be based on evidence related to achievement towards learning goals. To the extent possible, attitude, effort, participation, and other behaviours should be reported separately.
4. Grades should be based on clearly-defined, pre-established criteria, known to students in advance.
5. Grades should be based on a variety of assessment methods aligned with learning goals.
6. Grades should be based on most consistent, most recent evidence.
7. Final grades should (almost) never be determined by simply averaging the grades from several grading periods.

## Guidelines for Report Card Comments

- Comment first on strengths and/or areas of concern related to achievement of key learning goals.
- There is no need to comment on every single learning outcome, just a few key ones.
- Comment on progress towards learning goals, where appropriate.
- Comment on behaviours as they affect achievement (i.e. work habits, effort, etc.).

(AAC, Fall 2006, Deb McFarlane and Bryn Spence)

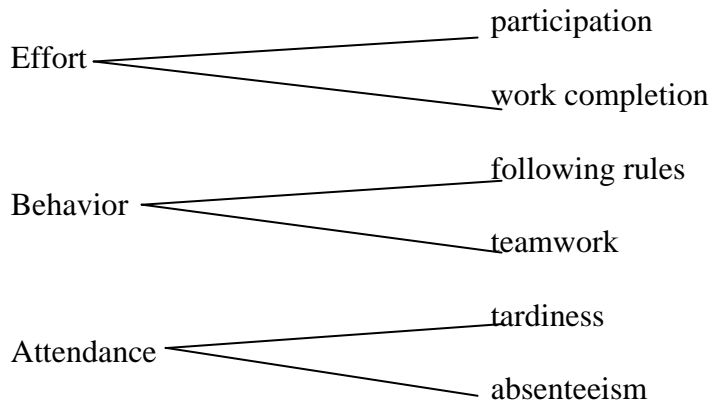
### **Ten Grading Practices That Inhibit Learning**

(Adapted from O'Connor, 2002)

1. Worshipping averages
2. Using zeros indiscriminately
3. Following the pattern of assign, test, grade and teach
4. Failing to match testing to teaching
5. Ambushing students
6. Practicing “gotcha” teaching
7. Grading first efforts
8. Penalizing students for taking risks
9. Failing to recognized measurement error
10. Establishing inconsistent grading criteria

### *Defining the Nonachievement Factors*

In Marzano’s work with teachers across the country, three nonachievement factors – effort, behavior, and attendance – seem to strike a chord. They intuitively sense that providing feedback on these factors gets at something very important. Yet, in talking with them, he discovered that educators define the factors somewhat differently. He found it useful to subdivide them in this way:



Those nonacademic factors are inherent in the student’s academic achievement and corresponding marks; they lead to those marks.

It seems counterproductive to muddy the waters further by doubling their influence (grading those characteristics while students are learning and also weaving them into the final graded assessments), and overtly entangling a teacher’s subjective insertions regarding nonacademic factors into a grade.

Specific feedback on these factors should be communicated to students and their parents, but it should remain a separate column on the report card.

(Wormeli,112).

## **Alberta Achievement Testing:** **One Tool of Assessment**

Alberta Learning website: [http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k\\_12/testing/](http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/testing/)

*It is important to remember that these achievement tests are only one of the many tools that we use to test student performance. Schools must think of the achievement-testing program as contributing to the overall assessment balance.*

### **What does the AAT assess?**

No single test can assess everything. The AAT assess only those learning outcomes that can be readily assessed by a paper-and-pencil test.

### **The clearest picture of the student is gained by a variety of assessment information.**

- The AAT provides part of that picture.
- Teachers must be encouraged to use many different assessment strategies to gain information about the student's growth and progress.

### **More information about the Alberta Achievement Testing program (AAT):**

In May and June, students in Grade 3 will write provincial achievement tests in English language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics.

#### *The Purpose*

- To determine whether students are learning what they are expected to learn
  - To inform the public about students' achievement relative to the standards
  - To assist schools, school authorities, and the province in monitoring and improving student learning.
  - To be a part of the accountability model
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- For students and parents, AAT provides feedback on how well the students have learned curriculum-based learning objectives
  - For teachers AAT provides information:
    - On how well their classes have achieved.
    - On the effectiveness of their teaching strategies.
    - To compare their assessment to the provincial standard.
  - For principals AAT provides information:
    - On school achievement patterns in comparison to standards
    - For setting school goals, priorities and targets
    - For annual education reports.
  - For the superintendents and board members, AAT provides system-wide information on student achievement levels in relation to other results and other areas.

- For Government officials, AAT provide information for monitoring student learning and targeting areas for improvement through curriculum redesign or program initiatives.

### Who is expected to write the texts?

*All students registered in Grade 3, 6 and 9 or in their third, sixth or ninth year of school (in the case of multi-graded classes) are expected to write the tests.*

- Test Accommodations:

Alberta Learning provides assistance for students with special test writing needs (ex. larger print, Braille, a scribe, audiotapes, more time etc) as are consistent with the classroom environment

- Permission to Excuse

A Superintendent should excuse a student from writing an achievement test if the student is not capable or responding to the test in its original or approved modified form, or if participation would be harmful to the student. This decision is based on a recommendation from the principal, accompanied by supporting documentation. Parental involvement in the decision can also be considered.

### The Test Format

	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 9
English Language Arts	Part A: Writing (70 min) - May  Part B: Reading (60 min) - June	Part A: Writing (Narrative and Functional) (120 min) - May  Part B: Reading (60 min) – June	Part A: Writing (Narrative and Functional) (120 min) - May  Part B: Reading (75 min) - June
Mathematics	Part A: Timed Number Facts (6 min) - May  Part B: Multiple Choice (60 min) - June	Part A: Multiple Choice (30 min) – May  Part B: Multiple Choice (60 min) - June	Math: (90 min) - June

### How are the tests developed?

Classroom teachers are involved at every stage of the development and implementation including writing questions, developing scoring guides, field-testing, and marking

### How are the tests marked?

The multiple-choice and numerical -response questions are machine scored. Written response sections of the LA tests are marked centrally, in July, by classroom teachers who have been nominated by their superintendents and have been trained by AB Learning.

## Local Marking of Tests

ECE has not mandated local marking. Local marking is at the discretion of the Superintendent in your region. This year TCSA is willing to provide one-day of sub costs to teachers who wish to participate, and have the approval of their principal, in the marking to mark the ELA Part A Writing section. Many schools include the AAT result as part of the student's final mark. Teachers who mark get confidential feedback on their marking. If teachers choose to mark locally, then they can use the results as part of the student's final mark. If they choose not to mark locally then they wouldn't have the results back until the fall.

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using scoring guides like those in the bulletin, before returning tests to Alberta Learning. To support local marking, samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided with the test materials. These exemplars are not to be shared with students, and are to be returned to Alberta Learning with the tests. Teachers have approximately two weeks from the scheduled administration date to mark their students' tests before returning materials to Alberta Learning. If teachers are also marking Part B: Reading, they are not to put any marks on the booklet. Additional marks may disrupt the machine-scoring process.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Learning and will be used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Learning as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In case of a discrepancy between the two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading that will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual and group results can be reported.

Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once. At least once a day, all markers mark a copy of the same paper for inter-rater reliability. All papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July.

Teachers may make a photocopy of students' writing from the Language Arts Part A test for inclusion in a portfolio of the year's work. Copies can also be made for parents who request them.

A scoring guide and secured student exemplars will be provided for teachers to complete the first-reading score on the back of the written-response booklet. All exemplars are secured and should be returned with testing materials.



## **The Results:**

Each school and school authority receives a detailed report of the results. The school gets two copies, one for the student's file and one for the parents. School staff and council look at what patterns and trends occur and how their programs should be improved. School boards and jurisdictions look at district-wide programs for areas of improvement. ECE will look at results to see if changes are needed in programming or policy

### *Examples of AAT Use*

- Using district data, over time, teachers look for trends:
  - o Missed questions
  - o Common errors
- Teachers address what the data says and then initiate a plan to move forward.
- Teachers can also look at own class data to investigate trends. They can make decisions on how to improve instruction.
- The goal is to provide the best possible learning opportunities for the students.
- Used in these ways, the test results support continuous improvement in program planning and in teaching.

*When discussing the results, consider. .*

- What are the strengths of our school?
- What are the areas requiring growth?
- What factors could be contributing to our school's performance?
- What plans can we develop to support growth?
- What trends in achievement test results can we identify for our school over the past several years?
- What are our local achievement targets for this year?

*Note: Ranking of schools - Alberta Learning does not support the comparisons of schools or authorities based on achievement test scores. Instead, in evaluating the school, people should consider factors relevant to that school.*

## **Preparing for the AATs**

Teachers should not have to halt instruction to prepare for the test. The knowledge and skills that are assessed on the AAT are those that should be a part of each student's daily classroom life. Many teachers feel pressured to 'teach to the test' to ensure that their students will do well. In contrast, teachers who work hard to follow their curriculum expectations will already be preparing their students. Student assessment is more than the high-stakes test. Standardized test scores and alternative student assessments both have an important place in our classroom. Assessment is an integral component of all teaching and learning processes. The Alberta Achievement Testing program is a tool that we can use to improve learning IF we remember that AAT is just one of many tools to assess student progress.

Balanced Assessment is the KEY!