

Assessment

The purpose of evaluating student and school performance is to assess the educational and fiscal effectiveness of the District's efforts to achieve its goals. Therefore, assessment should most often be formative; results should be viewed in context, as part of a developing picture of a student or group of students' progress throughout a school career.

Assessments should be age and grade appropriate and require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding directly, to approximate real-world tasks, be interesting and engaging, and be as much a natural part of the learning process as possible. Conclusions about student performance must rest on a considered review of varied sources of information and on observations and data acquired over time. Our challenge is also to use the data generated, on an on-going basis, to further strengthen and enhance the learning experience for present and future students.

The Board of Education recognizes that the use of clear performance measures communicates a high degree of competence, establishes a culture of transparency and accountability, and builds support for our schools. The Board annually reviews in public session the Superintendent's Report on Student Achievement, and regularly reviews internally generated reports on curriculum and professional development and educational program initiatives, and external state reports on student performance.

The Superintendent shall distribute policy 4205 and regulation 4205R to all faculty and administrators on an annual basis, in order to clarify and monitor implementation of the District's Assessment Policy.

Adopted: November 29, 2007
Revised: January 6, 2011
Revised: May 22, 2014

Assessment Regulation

Public school stakeholders - district faculty, staff and administrators; students and their families; residents, and taxpayers - want detailed answers about how our schools are functioning. The Board of Education annually assesses major aspects of the district's performance - how well it is mobilizing its financial and human resources; how effective it is in day-to-day operations, and, most importantly, how it is progressing toward fulfilling its educational mission. This policy is concerned with the assessment of our educational program.

It is the shared responsibility of all district stakeholders to create an optimal environment for student learning to occur. Our richly-textured, well-articulated curriculum - aligned with the standards of New York State and various discipline-based professional organizations - lays out a vision of what it means to be a well-educated person in our globally competitive society and demands rigorous, sophisticated and complex learning.

Students today are expected to develop a broad knowledge of the disciplines and to be able to work collaboratively, to think creatively and to adapt quickly and imaginatively to changing circumstances. We expect our students to develop a broad knowledge base and a mastery of processes and skills that will help them become purposeful and responsible citizens. Since student learning is often invisible to others, our challenge is to find ways to measure what our students have learned.

Realizing that neither a single nor limited set of measures can adequately assess student progress, or meaningfully inform our goal of improving student learning, we support the use of a variety of assessments - formal and informal, summative and formative, high and low-stakes, anonymous and public, individual and collective.

The North Shore School Board of Education recognizes the value of summative assessments which generally appraise student learning at key junctures and compare performance against a standard or benchmark. In grades K-8 some summative assessments, such as the state's ELA and Math exams, are meant to be diagnostic of individual and collective proficiency of students, teachers and schools with results informing decisions about academic support, professional development and realignment of curriculum. The Board recognizes the need to familiarize students with the format of these assessments. However, it is expected that the teaching of a quality curriculum, aligned with the standards will provide students with the foundation necessary to perform well on these assessments. Others summative assessments are high stakes, such as high-point-value mid-term and/or final exams, papers, projects and the like in high school courses, and externally created Regents exams, IB and AP course tests. The Board recognizes that suitable preparation, which may include practice questions and exams are valid learning tools.

Data from summative assessments may be used formatively to guide efforts to improve student learning, but for the purpose of gauging the on-going efficacy of our programs and the effectiveness of our professional staff, the North Shore Board of Education favors the use of a diverse body of formative assessments.

Formative assessments are low-stakes activities that take a variety of forms and occur in all classes at all grade levels throughout the year and include basic classroom activities such as quizzes, spoken or written responses, projects, observations, group work, and a vast array of creative variations. Formative assessments provide rapid feedback to guide both a teacher's teaching and a student's learning. Some assessments are more useful than others for appraising particular learning objectives; all are most useful when properly aligned with curricular goals and instructional strategies. Respect for varied teaching styles and pedagogic autonomy dictate wide latitude for teachers to develop assessments best suited to their classroom practices.

A diverse body of formative assessments that are embedded as an intrinsic part of the learning process will enable students over time to become proficient at a wide range of performance measures, will better capture a broad spectrum of learning styles and intelligences, and will offer every student an opportunity to succeed and every teacher an opportunity to grow professionally. The best formative assessments:

- require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding directly;
- nourish capacities for creativity, evaluation and analysis;
- support collaborative learning;
- link learning meaningfully to big ideas;
- are understood as isolated, contextual and partial indicators of student proficiency;
- help students identify their own strengths and weaknesses;
- enable teachers to see where students are struggling and address individual problems and improve overall instructional practices;
- assist administrators in identifying patterns of student learning across grade levels or disciplines that indicate best practices to be shared or reveal areas in need of attention.

The Board of Education recognizes that the use of clear performance measures communicates a high degree of competence, establishes a culture of transparency and accountability, and builds public support for our schools. The board annually reviews in public session the Superintendent's Report on Student Achievement, and regularly reviews internally generated reports on curriculum and professional development and educational program initiatives, and external state reports on student performance. Recognizing the essential part that extra-curricular activities play in student development and in fostering a sense of community, The Board encourages the community to support student achievement in art, in music, in athletics, and in special interest organizations and activities that give our students an opportunity to shine outside the classroom.

Adopted: May 22, 2014