ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Assessment, evaluation and communication of student achievement and growth are essential parts of the teaching and learning process. Each part of the teaching and learning process should be a positive experience for students and promote personal growth. Practices should be carried out in such a way that they support continuous learning and development.


To assist students in meeting the aim of the physical education program, assessment should be a continuous, collaborative and comprehensive process and include clearly identified and communicated criteria.

Principle 1: Continuous

Assessment practices should be carried out in such a way that they promote, encourage and support ongoing student learning and development.

Assessment practices:

- are to be based on the general and specific outcomes of the curriculum
- should be used to encourage student learning rather than a final judgement
- should be part of instruction done in a variety of contexts, using varied methods and instruments that match the specific outcomes
- should be part of an ongoing process rather than a set of isolated events, often at the end of a unit or term
- should focus on both process and product
- should encourage the gathering of information about the prior learning of students to allow a teacher to diagnose what each student knows and can do
- should provide ongoing feedback to the teacher about the effectiveness of instruction
- should provide a status report on how well students can demonstrate specific outcomes at that time.

Making connections among curriculum outcomes, instruction and assessment can enable students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for leading an active, healthy lifestyle.
Principle 2: Collaborative  
Both students and parents benefit when they are involved in the assessment process.

Assessment practices:

- should engage students so they will become more responsible for their own learning and develop a positive attitude toward leading an active and healthy lifestyle
- should help to make students feel competent and successful related to their own physical abilities and encourage them to set goals for further improvements
- should involve parents, and possibly the community, to different degrees and at different times. The purpose would be to create awareness of the program outcomes and criteria and to communicate that student learning is occurring.

Principle 3: Comprehensive  
Assessment practices should address the curricular outcomes and include a variety of strategies that meet the diverse learning needs of students.

Assessment practices:

- should be developmentally appropriate; e.g., age and gender appropriate, and consider cultural needs and students’ special needs
- should be constructive, focusing on student strengths, and encourage further learning by creating positive atmospheres and positive self-images.

Principle 4: Criteria  
Assessment practices should identify the critical aspects of performance that describe, in specific terms, what is involved in demonstrating student learning.

Assessment practices:

- should include students in identifying and/or creating the criteria
- should be communicated to students so that they know what the target is in relation to grade-specific outcomes
- should ensure communication, prior to and throughout instruction, to both parents and students about the criteria the teacher is looking for that are important at that particular time.

In the physical education program, achievement of the outcomes is based on individual student growth and improvement. The active living approach is based on the importance of creating a desire to participate in physical activity for life. Comparing one student’s physical abilities with those of others in class can have the reverse effect in terms of motivating students for future involvement in physical activity. Meaningful and realistic criteria for achieving the outcomes can motivate students toward taking responsibility for their own learning and developing a lifelong desire to be active.
ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

There are many sources of information about student performance. The most accurate profile of student performance is based on the findings gathered from assessing student performance in a variety of contexts and using a variety of strategies. The key to valid results is the match between each specific outcome and the selected assessment strategy.

Assessment strategies/activities should be of interest to students and should be meaningful, engaging and related to life. A variety of activities from all dimensions are important so that students have different experiences. Different assessment strategies provide different information, and what is suitable for one purpose may not be suitable for another.

In order for assessment information to be useful to students, teachers and others, it must be focused and specific. For instance, if a Grade 2 teacher wants to observe students demonstrating a variety of locomotor movements during a creative dance lesson, the teacher must decide what skill or knowledge the students are to demonstrate, and then share this information with students at the beginning of the class or unit. A Grade 9 teacher, designing a question/answer session on stretching during the warm-up phase of a lesson, needs to be clear on the purpose of the discussion in order to guide the learning and judge the thinking and quality of responses from students.

Quality assessment is a learning activity that enables students to reveal what they know and can do. It also provides students with information about their performance that is useful in guiding improvements.

Observing Students

Observing students is the basis for many assessment strategies. Some factors to consider when observing students include:

- predetermine the specific outcomes to be observed
- decide what to look for—the criteria—which is evidence you will accept that the student has learned
- before assessing an outcome, ensure the students are aware of the criteria
- decide who and what to observe in advance:
  - select four to five students per class
  - choose one or two specific skills to observe
- find a personally comfortable and manageable way to make your observations:
  - clipboard with class list to take anecdotal notes
  - clipboard with an evaluation tool; e.g., checklist, scoring guide/rubric or analytic rating scale
  - video camera
  - cassette recorder—oral communication
- team teaching may assist with the process—one observes while another teaches; involve teaching assistants, students from a higher grade, parents, administrators, community resources or volunteers
• collect observations on a number of occasions during a reporting period, and look for patterns of performance
• share observations with students both individually and together in a group; e.g., “Tyler: I liked how you shared equipment and worked with your team today.”; “Class: I saw how you communicated positively and encouraged your teammates. Well done!”
• use observations to enhance or modify future instruction, as well as to guide messages to students about improvements.

Information on student progress is required for reporting clearly to students, parents and others. As well, this information “is essential so that teachers can change or refine instructional plans to ensure learning activities are appropriate for all students. … The information is [also] required for evaluation of program effectiveness and for revision of programs to improve student learning.”


A variety of assessment strategies are included in Appendix B.

**EVALUATION**

Judgements about student achievement and growth follow assessment. Evaluation is based on comparing a student’s work to the grade level outcomes upon which achievement criteria are based. These criteria form the basis for evaluating and communicating student learning.

Suggested steps to develop criteria include:

- focus on a specific outcome
- select a student performance task/illustrative example
- determine criteria, the acceptable evidence, of the specific outcome in the performance
- inform students, prior to the activity, about the criteria upon which their work will be evaluated.

**Benefits of Using Criteria**

Using criteria provides teachers with:

- a clarification of what students are to know and be able to do
- a basis for increasing the level of consistency in evaluating student performance
- a basis for creating specific and informative comments for students and parents
- clear targets for instruction
- information about outcomes to be reviewed or taught again
- a basis for selecting and designing appropriate evaluation strategies.
Using criteria provides students with:
- clear performance targets, and the opportunity to know what excellence would look like
- a way for reflecting on their learning and setting goals for improved performance.

Using criteria provides parents and community members with:
- information about what is important in physical education
- a basis for working with students and the school to help improve performance.

**Evaluation Strategies**

Resources for teachers to use to judge quality of performance include checklists, analytic rating scales and scoring guides/rubrics. These are effective strategies that promote successful learning because of the clear explanations they provide to students. It is essential that the evaluation strategies are shared with students before they start the activity. To maximize student learning, it is also important to involve them in developing the criteria.

A checklist is a list of performance criteria for an activity upon which an observer determines the quality of student performance, using a scale that has only two points—yes or no.

An analytic rating scale is an evaluation strategy of three or more points that illustrates how frequently a student demonstrates the criteria.

A rubric is an evaluation strategy designed to lay out a **continuum of quality** from excellent to limited. Attached to the rubric is a narrative describing what a product or behaviour (performance) at a particular level would look like. The goal is to create a tool that places student work on a continuum of quality and to encourage improved performance. This enables two or more evaluators to view the performance in a similar way, thereby increasing rating reliability.

A variety of evaluation strategies are provided in Appendix B.

**COMMUNICATION OF STUDENT LEARNING**

School and jurisdiction policies for communicating student learning should be based on regulations authorized under the Province of Alberta School Act. The School Act outlines evaluation, reporting and recording requirements, as well as the roles and responsibilities of Alberta Learning, school boards, administrators and teachers with respect to implementation of policy.

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1 Background information on Communication of Student Learning has been adapted with permission of the Alberta Assessment Consortium from *A Framework for Communicating Student Learning*, 1999, pp. 14–21.
Student achievement is communicated and reported ethically to the extent that there is a reasonable relationship between:

- the expectations of the program of studies (general and specific outcomes) and classroom instruction
- classroom instruction and student assessment and evaluation
- student assessment and evaluation, and the communication of student learning.

### What Are the Roles of the Teacher, Student and Parent?

#### The role of the teacher is to:

- ensure that students know what is expected of them
- establish clear and fair criteria and standards, with involvement of the student when appropriate
- provide an evaluation process of student performance based on these criteria and standards
- communicate this information in a manner that is meaningful and understandable.

#### The role of the student is to:

- know what is expected of him or her
- “be diligent in pursuing his/her studies” (*School Act*) as demonstrated by completion of assigned work and achievement of curriculum outcomes
- participate in developing criteria and standards where appropriate
- self-evaluate based on these criteria and standards
- learn from the feedback obtained through self-evaluation, from the teacher and from others if provided
- communicate this information in a manner that indicates responsibility for learning.

#### The role of the parent is to:

- support learning at home through active living opportunities and motivating strategies
- join the student and teacher in discussions about learning, including goal setting
- look for and acknowledge progress rather than perfection; this agrees with the active living philosophy.
There are various ways to communicate student learning. Some include:

- telephone calls
- newsletters about program philosophy and course offerings
- videocassettes of class activities circulated among the homes of the students
- collections of student work; e.g., fitness tests throughout the year
- student self-reflections and goal setting
- celebrations of learning; e.g., conferences and demonstrations
- progress reports.

**Newsletter Articles/Curriculum Handbooks for Parents**

Updating parents and the community about activities students are participating in helps to communicate the learning and experiences occurring in the program. Newsletter articles or bulletin boards should include what teachers want students to know and do—the prescribed program outcomes—while they are participating in various activities. For a school newsletter or course outline you may choose to identify the four general outcomes and the activities students will participate in to achieve those outcomes. Curriculum handbooks for parents are available from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre for each specific grade and include an overview of the physical education program as well as grade-specific outcomes.

**Sample Student Reflection/Student-led Conferences**

The following goal-setting sample was completed by students for a number of purposes: for student reflection, for teacher information related to program delivery and for sharing during parent conference time. This sample describes what students have been learning and includes questions that can lead to goal setting for the next term and to demonstration of current learning for parents if shared during a student-led conference.

This term in physical education we participated in space awareness and game activities. These activities helped us to be aware of how our bodies move individually and in relation to one another. We worked at our own level and further developed our physical skills, including running, chasing, fleeing, dodging, throwing, catching, kicking, dribbling and balancing. Another focus we had in class this term was working with others—specifically, cooperating and being part of a team.

Please answer the following questions.

What do you like best about physical education?

What do you feel you do best in physical education class?

Describe what you do in class to be a team player.
Write about one thing that you would like to get better at in physical education. It could be related to a physical skill or being a team member. This will be a goal to work on for next term.

Developing Quality Progress Reports and Grading

Progress reports provide parents with information about their child’s learning and growth in school and are seen as the primary source of formal communication with parents and students.

As information about student performance and grading, quality progress reports and comments should:

- reflect what students know and can do relative to the provincial curriculum outcomes
- represent, through a number, letter or comment assigned to a student at a given time, how well the student has performed based on the prescribed outcomes, using the information collected during the assessment process
- use clearly defined criteria when assessing effort, attitude, behaviour, participation and attendance
- communicate performances in relation to grade level/learner outcomes, and assist in goal setting.

As messages directed specifically to the student, quality comments will reflect the most current and reliable information on performance and achievement. When developing comments, consider the following:

- identify curriculum outcomes being addressed for that term
- promote, within the student, feelings of confidence in his or her capabilities and anticipation of further success
- reflect student efforts and responsibilities
- identify units of study and, if required, provide information about the context in which learning took place
- identify the student’s achievement based on the grade-specific outcomes and criteria set
- identify plans for continued learning.

Quality comments are those that are clearly understood by students and parents, are grammatically correct, and reflect school beliefs and practices.

A progress report sample is included in Appendix B.
The most crucial part of the communication process is to ensure a shared understanding between the person providing the information and the information receiver. Letter grades, percentages, percentiles, or comments resulting from an activity, test, or assignment must be clear and comprehensive.

Effective communication informs the student, parent, and others about what has been accomplished and what the next steps are in the learning sequence. … The communication process involves all the key players. However, the greater the role students are given in this process, the richer the information that is shared and the greater the impact on future student learning.
