ASSSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND REPORTING PHILOSOPHY

Teacher Expectations

As part of the District’s efforts to develop an assessment literate culture and to ensure that authentic, meaningful evaluation takes place in all of our classrooms and with all of our students, this short summary of expectations will allow all staff to operate from a common foundation. This is our effort to provide a common reference point of procedures for assessing and evaluating student achievement, regardless of grade level. For a more complete understanding of Yellowknife Catholic Schools’ philosophy on assessment, please see the document: Assessment Framework & Guidelines.

Grading for Learning

1. When assessing student learning, assignments and tests shall be returned to students in a timely fashion to allow for student learning.

2. When assessing student learning, separate learning habits from achievement. Attitudes, effort, attendance and other learning habit-related performance, while important, are not part of student academic achievement or learning. Including these aspects in a grade blurs the assessment of the product and affects the validity and thus the meaning of the grade. Strong effort, active participation and positive attitude are highly valued attributes, but if grades are to have clear meaning they should not be included in grades; they are reporting variables, not grading variables. These attributes need to be assessed as accurately and rigorously as possible and reported separately and regularly.

3. When assessing student learning, homework or practice marks shall not be included in a grade. Homework should be a risk-free opportunity to experiment and explore new skills or concepts. Homework is a chance to apply new learning and must be considered formative. Formative assessments are critical to the learning process because they provide feedback during the process. This is at the heart of teaching and learning and students should not be penalized or credited based on the results of homework.

4. When assessing student learning, penalties shall not be applied to late work. Again, this practice is not about student learning but is about work habits. An example illustrates this best:
   - There are two reasons for this practice. First, the penalty that students receive distorts their achievement and thus contributes to a mark and, ultimately, to a grade that does not have clear meaning. Secondly, the punitive nature of the penalty provides a powerful disincentive for students to complete any work after it is more than one or two days late. The more appropriate approach would be for the teacher to record an incomplete (INC) and include the mark in the student’s grade in the next grading period. The goal should always be to get the work done and to assess the learning. Students should not be let off
the hook or given an easy way out. See Assessment, Framework & Guidelines document for alternative solutions, pages 39-41.

5. **Students must be given every opportunity possible to complete their work and schools must hold their students accountable for work that has not been completed. When assessing student learning, it must be recognized that there are a number of serious problems with the use of zeros:**
   a. The effect of such extreme scores, especially when coupled with the practice of averaging;
   b. The lack of proportionality between 0 and 50-70 as the passing score compared with the much smaller differentials between the other score points in the grading scale;
   c. The inaccurate communication that results from the use of zeros; and
   d. The in-effectiveness of zeros as responsibility-creating mechanisms.

Again, the objective should be to get students to complete work and the associated learning. *While an* “incomplete” designation *might very well be* the appropriate response along with mechanisms that support students and make it possible for them to complete the missing work, *(See Assessment, Framework & Guidelines document for alternative solutions, pages 39-41), teachers may also use their professional discretion in assigning a zero when they deem it is warranted. In such cases, teachers should be able to demonstrate that parents have been contacted and that students have had ample opportunity and adequate support in completing any such project or assignment.*

6. When assessing student learning, extra credit or bonus marks should not be used. Bonus marks distort achievement grades because they mix other factors with achievement. It is better not to use them – if students do something worthy of extra credit, consider it to be a reporting variable and recognize it with a note home or phone call.

7. When assessing student learning, weight more recent complete evaluations of a specific outcome more heavily than earlier evaluations of the same outcome. The fullest and latest data is always a more accurate reflection of student achievement and learning. The key question is, “What information provides the most accurate depiction of students’ learning at this time?” Continuing to rely on past assessment data mis-communicates students’ learning.

8. When assessing student learning, teachers must abandon the average or arithmetic mean, as the predominant measurement of student achievement. Averaging falls far short of providing an accurate description of what students have learned. Grading by the median *(see Terms of Reference in Assessment Framework & Guidelines)* provides more opportunities for success by diminishing the impact of a few stumbles and by rewarding hard work. Regardless of what method of calculation is used to determine central tendency, grades need to be supplemented by as much information as possible.

9. When assessing student learning, don’t distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Excused and unexcused absences are not relevant to an achievement grade. In either case a student has missed time and both would require making up the work and the support of a teacher.
10. When assessing student learning, teachers shall not apply academic penalties to academic dishonesty. Again, the goal is to have students complete work and be responsible for their learning. A grade should reflect a student’s achievement or learning; the matter of the academic dishonesty should be dealt with separately.

11. When assessing student learning, group grades shall not be used. The fundamental reason for this is to ensure that individual accountability and learning is at the heart of any achievement. No student’s grade should depend on the achievement (or behavior) of other students.

12. When assessing student learning, base grades on high quality assessments. It is essential that teachers know, understand and apply quality standards when they plan and implement assessment in their classrooms. Five quality standards for assessment include:
   a. Setting clear and appropriate targets
   b. Stating clear purposes
   c. Matching target to method
   d. Selecting appropriate samples for the learning domain, and
   e. Controlling interference or distortion

13. When assessing student learning, base grades on clear and complete performance standards. The use of standards always involves comparison and judgment because we are trying to answer the questions, “How good is it?” or “How good is good enough?” Grading should be based on clear, high quality assessment of students’ achievement with respect to a target. This means that criterion referenced standards must be used. The question is, “What reference points do we use?” Marks and grades must reflect actual student performance based on publicly available criterion-referenced standards and not artificially determined distributions. These standards must be based on expert knowledge, be clearly stated in words or numbers and supported by exemplars or models.
YELLOWW KNIFE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PROCEDURE #211

Mark – “the score” given on any single test/performance
Grade – the score given at the end of the period of time as a summary statement

1. Grading procedures shall be related directly to stated learning goals.

2. Criterion-referenced standards shall be used to determine grades and marks.

3. a. Individual achievement of stated learning goals shall be the only basis for grades.
   b. Effort, participation, attitude and other behaviours shall not be included in marks but shall be
      reported separately unless they are a stated part of a learning goal.

4. Late work shall be handled as follows:
   i. Teachers shall set due dates and deadlines for all marked work that will be
      part of a student grade.
   ii.) Students have up to one week following the end of a unit or chapter to hand in an
        assignment. Following this time, teachers may use their professional discretion in
        assigning a zero.
   iii.) When an assignment or project is late, the onus is on the teacher to
        connect with, support, and attempt to establish an alternate due date for students.

Absences shall be handled as follows:
   i. Students shall not be penalized for an absence.
   ii. Absent students shall be given make-up opportunities for all missed
       summative assessments (marked work that will be part of student grades) without
       penalty.

Incomplete work shall be handled as follows:
   i. In determining grades, teachers must decide whether they have sufficient evidence of
      achievement. If not, the grade recorded shall be an INC for Insufficient
      Evidence/Incomplete OR a 0% if, at the discretion of a teacher a zero is warranted.
      Where credits are involved, an INC means no credit until the missing work is completed
      and the grade is updated.

5. a. Teachers shall mark and/or provide feedback on formative assessment.
   b. Marks from formative assessment (ie: homework, rough drafts, quizzes) shall not be
      included in grades.
   c. Marks from summative assessments only shall be included in grades.

6. a. Where repetitive measures are made of the same or similar knowledge, skills, or
    behaviours, the more recent mark or marks shall replace the previous marks for grade
    determination.
b. Second chance (or more) assessment opportunities shall be made available to students; students shall receive the highest, most consistent mark, not an average mark for any such multiple opportunities.

Test Rewrites: (High School)

a. Students will be given one opportunity to rewrite a test.
b. Rewrites of a test must be within two weeks of the original test being returned to students.
c. Relearning must be evident prior to the test. This can be in the form of tutorials, additional assignments, re-submission of an old assignment or other measures at the discretion of the teacher.
d. Re-test dates and times will be set by the teacher.

Assignment Resubmission: (High School)

a. In order to resubmit an assignment, the original assessment must have been submitted on the assigned due date.
b. Late assignments will be accepted but not considered for resubmission.

7. a. Grades shall be determined to ensure that the grade each student receives is a fair reflection of his or her performance.
b. Consideration shall be given to the use of statistical measures other than the mean for grade calculations; for example, consider using median or mode.
c. Grades shall be weighted carefully to ensure the intended importance is given to each learning goal and to each assessment.

8. a. Teachers shall use quality assessment instruments. “Each assessment must meet five standards of quality. It must arise from:
   i. a clearly articulated set of achievement expectations,
   ii. serve an instructionally relevant purpose,
   iii. rely on a proper method,
   iv. sample student achievement in an appropriate manner,
   v. control for all relevant sources of bias and distortion that can lead to inaccurate assessment.

   All assessments must be reviewed and adjusted as needed to meet these standards.” (Stiggins 2001 p.25).
b. Teachers shall properly record evidence of student achievement on an ongoing basis.

9. a. Teachers shall discuss assessment with students, in an age appropriate manner, at the beginning of instruction. Where feasible, students shall be involved in decisions about methods of assessment and scoring scales.
   b. Teachers shall provide to students and parents a written overview of assessment, including grading, in clear, easily understandable language at a minimum within the first month of classes in each course or grade.
c. Teachers shall provide students (given age appropriateness) with a written overview in clear, easily understandable language, indicating how each summative assessment throughout the course will be evaluated before each assessment is administered.

Material has been borrowed and adapted from: O’Connor, Ken
How to Grade For Learning, Pearson Professional Development, 2002