

Benjamin E. Mays IB World School

Primary Years Programme

Assessment Policy

I. Overview

PYP Definition:

Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student performance and is designed to inform practice. It identifies what students know, understand, can do and feel at different stages in the learning process. The prime objective of assessment in the PYP is to provide feedback on the learning process. Students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing the student's progress as part of the development of their wider critical-thinking and self assessment skills. (*Making the PYP Happen: A Curriculum Framework for International Primary Education, December 2009. © International Baccalaureate Organization*)

II. Who is involved in Assessment?

Everyone concerned with assessment--children, teachers, parents, administrators, and board members--must have a clear understanding of the reasons for the assessment, what is being assessed, the criteria for success, and the method by which the assessment is made.

Both students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing student progress as part of the development of their wider critical thinking and self-evaluation skills. Teachers should also be concerned with evaluating the efficacy of the programme.

Student self-assessment is a key component of an IB program.

III. Why do we assess student work?

- Assessing prior knowledge and experience
- Differentiating instruction to meet individual needs
- Engaging learners in reflection to determine strengths and weaknesses and to set goals
- Providing feedback for students
- Expanding student learning opportunities
- Building a profile of student's understanding

Information about student learning is provided through

- Examples of student work or performances
- Statistics relating to benchmarks and/or rubrics or test scores
- Test results

Program evaluation uses a variety of student assessments to:

- Assess the levels of students' current knowledge and experience before embarking on new learning
- Assess new learning
- Guide teacher planning and presentation
- Assess student performance relative to national, state, and local standards as well as PYP expectations
- Focus on closing the achievement gaps among students

IV. What do we assess?

- Assessment of students' prior knowledge
- Formative assessment tasks—diagnostic; and one for each line of inquiry
- Summative assessment tasks—assess central idea
- Transparency—criteria for learning tasks are clear and known in advance by students, teachers, and parents (rubrics, etc.)
- Utilizing a range of assessment tools
- Expression of different points of view and interpretations
- Monitoring and assessing student progress in the five essential elements—skills, attitudes, concepts, knowledge, and student-initiated action
- Monitoring and assessing student progress in relation to the Learner
- Profiles including student self- and peer-assessment
- Creating rich tasks that cater to a variety of learning styles, multiple intelligences and differing abilities (differentiated products and performances)
- Gathering evidence from which sound conclusions can be drawn
- Ensuring student progress and performance are assessed in both the subject domains and the units of inquiry
- Creating grade-level grading policies to ensure consistency
- Documentation of student success, growth, ability and creativity through methods such as use of student portfolios

V. When do we assess?

Policy

Benjamin E. Mays IB World School recognizes the importance of continuous assessment. It is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Not only does it allow teachers to judge the effectiveness of their teaching but allows student to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use pre-topic, formative and summative assessments and students are provided the purpose and criteria of the assessments prior to being assessed.

Pre-assessment

Pre-assessment takes place prior to a unit of instruction. It helps teachers and students find out before the unit what they already know allowing for modification of activities and assessments to better meet the needs of the students.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is interwoven with the daily learning and helps teachers and students understand what they already know in order to plan the next stage of learning. It also indicates if more time is needed on the particular topic of instruction. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked; neither can function effectively or purposefully without the other.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment takes place at the end of the teaching and learning process and gives students opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned. Summative assesses may include, but not limited to: acquisition of data, syntheses of information, application of knowledge and processes.

The PYP Exhibition

The PYP Exhibition is a required summative assessment culminating the fifth grader's learning experience at Benjamin E. Mays. It unites students, teachers and parents in an activity that captures the essence of the PYP: transdisciplinary inquiry conducted in a spirit of personal and shared responsibility. Students in fifth grade develop their own unit of inquiry under a common theme. The whole school community gathers to celebrate the Exhibition.

VI. What are the characteristics of effective assessment?

- Have criteria that are known and understood in advance
- Allow children to synthesize and apply their learning, not merely recall facts
- Promote student reflection and self-evaluation
- Focus on the production of quality products or performances
- Highlight children's strengths and allow them to demonstrate mastery/expertise
- Allow children to express different points of view and interpretations
- Provide feedback regarding every stage of the learning/teaching cycle
- Based on student needs, interests and learning styles (student-driven)
- Involve collaboration between students and teachers
- Produce evidence of student growth and learning that can be clearly reported and understood by children, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members
- Identify what is worth knowing
- Begin with the end results in mind (backward design –what students should be able to know or do by the end of a learning unit, lesson, or process)

VII. How do students record student progress?

- Rubrics: Rubrics are established sets of criteria used for scoring or rating children's tests, portfolios, or performances. The descriptors tell the child and the assessor what characteristics or signs to look for in the work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale. Rubrics can be developed by children as well as by teachers.
- Benchmarks/exemplars: These are samples of children's work that serve as concrete standards against which other samples are judged. Benchmarks/exemplars can be used in conjunction with rubrics or continuums. Benchmarks should be appropriate and useable within a particular school context.
- Checklists: These are lists of information, data, attributes, or elements that should be present.
- Anecdotal records: Anecdotal records are brief, written notes based on observations of children. These records need to be systematically compiled and organized.
- Continuums: These are visual representations of developmental stages of learning. They show a progression of achievement or identify where a child is in a process.

VIII. How do we report?

IB Profile Reflections are completed at every grade level. Learner Profile are reflected in the comments that teachers write on every report card. District-mandated report cards are sent home every trimester. Since IB units are not reflected on our district report card, we strive to communicate, share, and reflect on student learning at the end of each unit.