

Southgate Assessment Policy (Revised March 2017)

Initial Development Process 2012: Southgate staff defined common philosophy, values and goals for assessment and aligned assessment practices with those goals. Teachers revisited their core values related to assessment, the vital role it plays in guiding instructional practice and for reporting meaningful feedback to parents.

In reviewing and revising the Southgate Elementary School Assessment policy we revisited Making the PYP Happen (A school's assessment policy), several IB PYP school philosophy statements, and most notably McGraw Elementary School in Colorado for format and readability.

Philosophy of Assessment

Southgate Elementary faculty and staff are committed to education combining compassion, action and global thinking. We believe assessment is integral to the teaching and learning cycle, helping us to know and plan for what it is going to take to reach all students. Assessment is essential for reporting student progress and needs to be fair, differentiated, accurate and reliable.

The Assessment Policy includes three components:

Purpose for assessment (Why do we assess?)

Principles of assessment (What are the characteristics of effective assessments?)

Practice in assessing (What and how do we assess?)

Purpose—assessment

- To promote continuous student learning and growth
- To inform instructional decisions and planning
- To plan for differentiated student learning
- To set goals and plans for future student growth
- To celebrate what students can do
- To guide children through the five essential elements of learning contained in PYP (knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and action)
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the learning program

Principles—characteristics of effective assessment

- Valid and developmentally-appropriate indicator of student achievement
- Based on shared and well-communicated expectations
- Offers multiple means of representation, or ways to show what you know; and include authentic tasks
- Varied strategies to address different learning styles
- Balanced range of strategies, including self and peer assessments
- Formative and summative as well as informal and formal
- Used consistently to inform instructional decisions and planning

- Address instructional outcomes with regard to standards and practices
- Aid the school in collecting baseline data; screening present level of learning; and for placement testing
- Timely, orderly and consistent
- On-going, happens early and often and gives feedback to teachers, students and parents.
- Students are allowed to synthesize and apply their learning, not merely recall facts
- Promotes student reflection and self-evaluation
- Focuses on the production of quality products or performances
- Highlights students' strengths and allows them to demonstrate mastery and expertise
- Allows students to express different points of view and interpretations
- Provides feedback regarding every stage of teaching/learning cycle
- Based on student needs, interests, and learning styles (student-driven)
- Involves collaboration between students and teachers
- Produces evidence of student growth and learning that can be clearly reported and understood by children, parents, teachers, and administrators
- Identifies what is worth knowing
- Begins with the end result in mind (what students should be able to know or do by the end of a learning unit, lesson, or process)

Practices – what and how we assess

There are three points to consider with regard to what and how we assess:

Assessing – how we discover what students know and have learned (formative and summative)

Recording – how we make note of our findings about what students have learned

Reporting – how we pass that information on to parents, administrators and other parties directly involved in students' learning

Assessing: What do we assess?

- Acquisition of knowledge and use of what is learned
- Understanding of concepts (big ideas that transcend traditional subject areas)
- Development of approaches to learning (skills)
- Development of attitudes
- Decision to take action
- Demonstration of the attributes of the IB learner profile
- Student progress and performance in the following subject areas: language; mathematics; social studies; science; the arts; personal, social and physical education

Assessing: How do we assess?

Assessment is a continuous process that allows teachers, parents and children to identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement, as well as the effectiveness of the program. It is a daily activity and takes various forms. This includes self-, peer-, and teacher assessments as well as district-mandated tests (PAARC, MISA, County Benchmarks, Fountas & Pinnell). There are two main categories of assessment at Southgate:

Formative Assessment is interwoven with daily learning and helps teachers and students find out what students already know, understand, and can do in order to plan for further student learning and growth. It occurs throughout a learning unit or process. Teachers may utilize practices such as Exit Tickets, visual signals, technology-based assessment (such as Plicker), color cards, surveys, observations, checklists, etc. within daily instruction to assess and provide differentiated learning opportunities. These strategies may also help students self-assess their mastery and needs.

In accordance to AACPS curriculum standards, classrooms will participate in benchmark testing within subject areas. Teachers use data analysis from the benchmark assessments in grade level planning and where necessary will redo instruction. Instructional time is used to review and correct benchmark work.

Other assessments teachers use to plan effective instruction include DIBELS and Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment, WIDA, CogAT and Performance Series.

Summative Assessment takes place at the end of a Unit of Inquiry or process. It's an opportunity for students, teachers, and parents to evaluate progress and demonstrate what has been learned over time. It is a formal ending point to a taught unit or process, but not necessarily the end of student learning in the areas being assessed. The summative assessment for each Unit of Inquiry is developed so each student can show understanding of the Central Idea of the unit. Students may draw upon their learning, tasks, and projects done during their inquiry study, but are asked to show understanding by using that knowledge in a new context.

Recording: How we make note of our findings

All teachers record accurate, current, and precise student progress on a regular basis within the grade book format. Assignments may be graded using rubrics, mastery standards, set goals, etc. Anecdotal evidence of learning is recorded in a variety of ways (written, photos, etc.) and can be used to inform parents of learning progress and needs. Not all student work is graded for report cards. Southgate holds the philosophy that 'practice makes better' and deep learning is dependent on perseverance and finding solutions. The struggle to learn is as important to note as the success in learning.

Reporting: How we communicate student learning

Report cards and conferences are primary vehicles for reporting to parents. Grades (grades 3-5) or codes (grades 1-2) are given to document progress toward mastery of skills, concepts and standards. Grades are weighted differently according to the nature and complexity of the assignment, assessment or activity. Assignments completed at home are not be given as much weight as those completed at school. For art, music, and physical education, teachers keep a record of at least three assessments during a marking period.

Interim reports must be given to students receiving a D or E (1 or 2 for primary grades) in any subject area. After the 1st quarter, they must also be given to students who have dropped two letter grades from the last grading report (example: a grade changing from an A to a C).

Comments are an important means for communicating performance and positive feedback and for when improvement is needed. Teacher comments should always accompany any area marked for needing improvement to explain why student is not successful and what can be done for grade to improve.

Comments should be made when a grade has decreased two levels, or in the event of a failing grade. Comments are specific.

Southgate teachers and staff are committed to providing positive feedback and providing all feedback in a timely manner. Teachers are encouraged to be proactive and communicate home regularly through email, Class Dojo, and phone calls.

Portfolio Development and Use

Southgate is currently developing a digital portfolio platform for use at all grade levels.

Exhibition

Southgate fifth grade students engage in Exhibition in their final year of study. During Exhibition, students use their knowledge, concepts, skills (approaches to learning), and attitudes to research, take action and report upon something important to them. Exhibition takes the place of one of the six Units of Inquiry in PYP.

Parents and community members are invited to Exhibition and asked to reflect on how student actions and presentation show their learning as an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program student. Feedback reported to them during and after the Exhibition provides them with a foundation for reflection of their learning and growth over time.