

# South Shore Elementary School Assessment Policy

## 2020-2021

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### *Virtual Learning*

*From March 2020-March 2021, South Shore Elementary School conducted learning virtually for students due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. During this time, state testing requirements such as PARCC and District Assessments have not occurred. In addition some programs previously used, such as F&P, have been replaced with programs such as Foundational Literacy and iReady.*

## **I. Overview**

Assessment is a continual process that includes the entire range of learning experiences and their outcomes. Assessment allows for the gathering and analysis of information about student performance and informs future instructional planning. It determines what students know, understand, and can do at different stages in the learning process.

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. It is central to the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program's goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding children through the essential elements of learning: the understanding of concepts, the acquisition of knowledge, the mastering of skills, the development of the learner profile, and the opportunity to take responsible action.

All stakeholders 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. Grading should be transparent and easily understood. Both children and teachers should have an active role in assessment, as part of the development of wider critical thinking and self-evaluation skills.

Assessment is crucial to teaching and learning. Assessment focuses on the quality of student learning during the process of inquiry and instruction, and on the quality of the products of that learning. Assessment is, therefore, integral to the taught curriculum. It is the means by which we analyze student learning and the effectiveness of our teaching and acts as a foundation on which to base our future planning and practice. Assessment is a way to give students opportunities to develop a wide range of skills in expressing their understanding assessments should be rigorous, relevant and appropriate in assessing knowledge and skill.

Our belief that it is more important for students to engage in appropriately challenging learning experiences than it is for students to earn the highest marks, impacts our assessment beliefs. South Shore students will be challenged to strive for the highest levels of learning engagement and achievement. We, as a staff at South Shore, recognize the importance of grades, but we promote challenging students to learn and understand, not just earn a grade. We value the importance of vertical alignment, understanding the expectations at the next level and the implications for moving forward. Staff should also be concerned with evaluating the efficacy of the programme.

## **II. Why Do We Assess Students' Work?**

### **A. Purposes of Assessment**

Assessment is a continual process that includes the entire range of learning experiences and their outcomes; it is not always limited to the final product. Some evaluations are designed to result in formal grades (in grades 1-5), while others are designed to provide feedback on learning without being graded.

We, as a staff at South Shore, believe that:

- All students should be working towards mastery of learning outcomes, derived from the CCSS based curriculum, according to their identified needs.
- Assessment is crucial to teaching and learning; tasks should be relevant and appropriate in assessing knowledge and skill.
- Assessment tasks are an important part of the learning process and should not be distinct from learning experiences.
- Assessment allows teachers to give students many opportunities to show their understanding in a variety of ways.

# South Shore Elementary School Assessment Policy

## 2020-2021

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- Assessments are differentiated with modifications made when necessary.
- Assessments are based on a clear set of criteria, easily understood by all stakeholders.
- With regards to assessment, considerations are made for all student groups, including students with Special Needs, Exceptional Needs and English Language Learning goals.

We, as a staff at South Shore, believe that student learning is promoted through:

- Assessing prior knowledge and experience
- Engaging in authentic assessment tasks
- Assessing taught content in a novel context
- Personalizing instruction to meet individual needs and interests, and allowing for student agency, when appropriate.
- Engaging learners in self and peer reflection to determine strengths and weaknesses and to set goals.
- Providing relevant and timely feedback.

We, as a staff at South Shore, believe that information about student learning is provided through:

- Examples of student work or performances
- Data specific to benchmarks, rubrics, and/or test scores
- Student observation
- Test results
- Portfolios
- Student testimony about their own learning

We, as a staff at South Shore, believe that our program uses a variety of student assessments to:

- Assess students' prior knowledge
- Guide teacher planning and presentation
- Assess new/ongoing learning
- Assess student performance relative to national, state, and county standards while teaching PYP conceptual understandings and skills
- Focus on closing the achievement gaps among all students
- Inform entire school community & stakeholders

We, as a staff at South Shore, believe that Considerations for students with Special Needs must be taken due to the following reasons:

- Inclusiveness
- Ability to provide accommodations in the context of the units
- Legal

### **B. Principles of Assessment**

South Shore Elementary School's Essential Agreement on Assessment is a product of a collaborative effort by the staff. It recognizes that the fundamental purposes of assessment are to acknowledge student learning and the development of the whole child through the learner profile.

We as a staff at South Shore believe that effective assessment should:

- Provide feedback for students and teachers to revise/advance performance, learning, and teaching.
- Be formative and summative.
- Allow for personalization of learning, as appropriate.
- Be balanced in authentic tasks and standardized assessment.
- Have criteria that are known and understood in advance.
- Analyze and reflect on student learning processes and products.

### **III. What Do We Assess?**

# South Shore Elementary School Assessment Policy

## 2020-2021

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Through the IB PYP Programme of Inquiry, South Shore teachers strive to provide the opportunity for learners to construct meaning primarily through structured inquiry. This is accomplished by emphasizing the connections between subject-specific knowledge and transdisciplinary skills and themes. The transdisciplinary themes provide a focus for inquiry, while literacy and numeracy provide the tools. Feedback should be given on student progress and performance in each of these areas.

Additionally, feedback should be provided on the attributes listed in the PYP Learner Profile. This profile serves to increase the learner's awareness of, and sensitivity to, the experiences of others beyond the local or national community, thereby promoting an understanding that there is a commonality of human experience.

We assess performance and progress in each of the following subject areas as they comprise the required Report to Parents of students attending Anne Arundel County Public Schools: English/Reading, English/Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies, Art, Health, Music, Physical Education, citizenship education, and work/study skills. At South Shore Elementary, French is being taught as an authentic engagement in the language and is not formally assessed. However, students are evaluated on their participation in language instruction.

In order to allow our students to be balanced effective communicators, we as a staff value the importance of providing students with multiple and varied writing situations. We value the importance of legible penmanship and also emphasize the role of technology in promoting 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in our writing program.

We assess according to the mandates set into place and required by the State of Maryland. State testing occurs in Grades 3, 4, and 5.

## IV. When and How Do We Assess?

### A. Types of Assessments

- **Pre-Assessment:** Pre-assessment occurs before embarking on new learning to assess prior knowledge, skills and experiences.
- **Screening:** Screenings are conducted to identify baseline skills data: to plan groupings, interventions, special placements, and target instruction.
- **Formative Assessment:** Formative assessment is an integral part of the learning process. It provides feedback about the learning and helps with the planning of the next stage.
- **Summative Assessment:** Summative assessment occurs at the end of a teaching and learning cycle. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate what has been learned and prompt students towards action.
- **Diagnostic:** These tests are used to pinpoint skill weaknesses in students who are not making sufficient progress.

### Purpose:

The Exhibition is the culminating experience for the IB Primary Years Programme. It requires students to synthesize their prior knowledge and to apply it in a self-directed manner. The Exhibition provides an authentic summative assessment for the PYP years. The subject of the Exhibition is a student-selected, real-world problem which warrants an extended investigation. It is a celebration which unites the school community in an activity which represents the essence of PYP: Transdisciplinary Skills embedded with the IB Learner Profile Attributes.

The fifth grade Exhibition is undertaken by students in their final year of the PYP. The Exhibition represents a significant event in the life of our school, encapsulating the essence of the PYP and encouraging younger students to look forward to their final year of the programme and their future participation in the community at large.

### Essential Components:

- incorporates application of key concepts
- uses all transdisciplinary skills

# South Shore Elementary School Assessment Policy

## 2020-2021

- integrates the Learner Profile Attributes
- engages in action
- considers all PYP themes

### State Testing

A variety of state and district assessments are used in order to track student understanding and progress. These programs include iReady, F&P, and the [MCAP](#) assessment. These assessments, along with the other assessments outlined throughout this document, are used to collect data to assist staff, through learning implementation, and students, to see how their understanding translates to assessments.

### **B. Assessment Strategies**

Assessment strategies form the basis of a comprehensive approach and represent South Shore's answer to the question, "How will we know what we have learned?" These methods of assessment include a broad range of approaches and have been selected to provide a balanced view of the student.

- Observations: All students are observed regularly with a focus on the individual, the group, and/or the whole class.
- Performance Assessments: Students are presented with a task that represents the kind of challenges that adults face in the world beyond the classroom. It requires using a repertoire of knowledge and skills to accomplish a goal or solve an open-ended problem. In addition, it entails the thoughtful application of knowledge in a new context. It has an identified purpose or audience, involves a realistic scenario, it has an established criteria and requires developing an authentic product or performance with a range of possible answers.
- Transdisciplinary Skills Assessments (research, thinking, communication, self-management and social skills): The focus is on the process and skill application rather than on the product. These skills are regularly observed in real contexts using checklists, narrative notes, and inventories.
- Open-Ended Assessments: Students are presented with a challenge and asked to provide an original response.
- Tests/Quizzes: These single-occasion assessments provide a snapshot of students' specific knowledge.
- Portfolios: An ongoing, purposeful collection is composed of selected student work and is designed to demonstrate growth, creativity, and reflection. The staff reached an essential agreement that a digital portfolio will be containing student work for the current year's Programme of Inquiry. Throughout the year, teachers & students will upload the summative assessment with student reflection for each Unit of Inquiry, 1-3 student selected work samples per Unit of Inquiry into the student's electronic portfolio.

### Grading

- [Adherence to the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Grading Policy](#)
- The assessment task accurately measures what it claims to measure
- Consistency of scoring & grading among & between grade levels
- Common assessments among grade level
- Collaboratively developed and administered
  - Common rubric or grading criteria for items considered for mastery with a connection to the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Grading Policy
- Common assessments of fundamental skills (writing) carry through from primary and intermediate
- Impact of differentiated learning due to Gifted, Advanced Learner Program, special needs, 504 plans, IEPs, etc.
- Common writing rubric for K, 1- 2 and 3 – 5
- An assessment may be redone, depending on protocol set into place by the teacher, to show student understanding.

### **C. Assessment Tools**

The previously identified assessment strategies are put into practice at South Shore Elementary School by using the following assessment tools:

- Rubrics: Rubrics are established sets of criteria used for scoring or rating children's assessments as they demonstrate their learning. 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

# South Shore Elementary School Assessment Policy

## 2020-2021

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scale. Rubrics can be developed by children as well as by teachers. Work samples scored with rubrics collaboratively with students. Students self and peer assess using commonly created rubrics.

- Benchmarks/Exemplars/Anchor Papers: These are samples of children's work that serve as concrete standards against which other samples are judged. Benchmarks/Exemplars/Anchor Papers can be used in conjunction with rubrics or continuums. Criteria should be appropriate 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.

### V. How Do We Report?

Reporting is a means of giving feedback about learning. Effective reporting should:

- involve parents, students, and teachers as partners
- reflect what the school community values
- be comprehensive, honest, fair, and credible
- be clear and understandable to all parties

### A. Online Grade Book

Expectations set out by the county grading policy for quantity and frequency of recorded grades.

- Grades entered within a certain time of the assigned date
  - County policy = every 5-8 days
- At least half have to be entered by the time of Interims
- Grade books are to be updated weekly to facilitate open communication with parents and students for grades 1-5.

### B. Graded Assignments

By sending home graded assignments teachers are keeping parents informed of student progress. Teachers will clarify with parents at the beginning of the school year their expectation regarding how many/which grades will be sent home. Some work will be kept to become part of the student portfolio, and parents must be made aware of this and this will facilitate the understanding of the nature of an inquiry-based program. Teachers will indicate in assignments, when appropriate what type of grade the work will generate (e.g. Reading Comprehension & Science).

By sharing graded assignments with parents, there is a hope of creating an understanding of shared responsibility for student learning. This will also assist in extending the learning beyond the school day.

### C. Conferences

Parents, students, and teachers are all valued partners in the reporting process and in sharing the responsibility both for learning and for accounting student progress. Pathways for communication need to be open and reciprocal to share advancements as well as concerns.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools builds into the school calendar Parent/Teacher conference days. In addition, we provide many opportunities throughout the school year for conferencing. Parents, teachers, and/or students may participate, depending upon the purpose. Student led conferences in K-5 began occurring during the 2015-2016 school year, with Exhibition being a student led conference, of sorts, to share learning having begun in 2012-2013.

### D. Written Reports

# South Shore Elementary School Assessment Policy

## 2020-2021

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County-mandated report cards are sent home every quarter. Transdisciplinary Skills and Learner Profile Attributes are reflected in the comments that teachers write on the report card. Since POI 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 of inquiry.

IB Profile Reflections will be completed at every grade level and sent home at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> marking periods. Parents will complete an assessment of their child at the beginning of the year, in conjunction with conferences. Students complete a self-assessment by mid-year and at the end of the year. The end of the year one is placed in their e-portfolio. The reporting will differ from primary (K-2) and intermediate (3-5); however the same information will be reflected. Students who meet a certain standard of graded achievement will be recognized throughout the school year, formally and informally.

### **Implementing, Evaluating, Supporting, and Reviewing the Assessment Policy:**

The assessment policy is readily accessible in the school google drive and on the school's website. Teachers will be shown how to access policy documents at the beginning of each school year. Components will be explained through meetings with grade level colleagues, instructional coaches, and the PYP Coordinator. The policy will be reviewed annually by the whole staff and revised by a committee as necessary.