Hopkinton Public Schools

Assessment Framework

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Director of Elementary Education, Merideth Ekwall wrote this document with input from Director of Secondary Education, Robert Berlo, and Assistant Superintendent, Mary Colombo. The document provides guidance for the district's assessment program and can be used as a resource for professional learning activity.

Introduction

Rationale

The Hopkinton Public School District's Assessment Plan articulates a balanced system of assessment that:

- Aligns with Massachusetts Common Core and local standards;
- Supports our district mission, values, and philosophy of learning;
- Provides assessment information that is compatible with information from previous grades;
- Provides students, their parents and teachers, and administrators with information about student achievement;
- Provides formative data to be used by Professional Learning Communities (a.k.a. Data Teams) for instructional and programmatic improvements;
- Supports the requirements of the Educator Evaluation System, and
- Utilizes an array of assessment methods to determine the understandings, knowledge, and skills that students have acquired.

District Mission, Values, and Philosophy of Learning

The mission of the Hopkinton Public Schools is to *learn, create, and achieve* together. We accomplish our mission by embracing these values:

- Achievement
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Social, Emotional, and Physical Well-Being
- Continuous Learning

We believe that *understanding* is the ultimate goal of learning, and that the acquisition of knowledge and skills are necessary to attain understanding, and therefore are also assessed. In order to reach the level of understanding[1], all students must have equal access to a clearly articulated curriculum that is taught through inquiry, exploration, discovery, application, and reflection. Effective learning activities that lead to deep understanding begin with clear goals, and are designed to capitalize on strengths while addressing the needs of individual students. Learning begins as the acquisition of knowledge and skills; deep understanding requires a safe and vibrant learning community that allows risk-taking and fosters continual dialogue. The measure of learning and the evidence of understanding is the student's ability to apply what is learned in school to authentic purposes and real life situations. A balanced system assesses:

- Understanding, knowledge, and skill acquisition.
- Ability to think critically and creatively.[2]

Ensuring Quality Assessment

The Essential Role of Assessment in Curriculum and Instruction

The Hopkinton Public School uses the Understanding by Design philosophy and process to structure curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Standards/curriculum, instruction, and assessment are inextricably intertwined in the learning process—one component cannot function well without the other. Optimally, the three components work together to produce high levels of student achievement.

[1] *Understanding* is demonstrated in assessments when students can use knowledge flexibly in a variety of contexts.

[2] From the Hopkinton Public Schools *Philosophy* policy.

- Standards and curriculum answer the question, "***What do we teach?***" State standards and locally created curriculum define what we expect students to know, understand, and be able to do. The curriculum articulates a progression of learning goals that is aligned with state standards.

- Instruction answers the question, *"**How do we teach?**"* It includes the learning experiences, ways of engaging student interest, and means by which teachers differentiate those experiences to scaffold student learning. To be most effective, teachers employ powerful learning strategies (e.g., writing across the curriculum, Problem-Based Learning, inquiry, critical and creative thinking, integration of technology, interdisciplinary curriculum, use of real world data and experts).

- Assessment answers the question, *"**How well do we teach?**"* Assessment measures the attainment of learning and provides data that is used formatively, that is, to inform any needed changes in curriculum or instruction for individual students or collectively for grades or content areas. This includes data that is used to determine individual student's needs for intervention or enrichment/acceleration.

Definition of Assessment

In order to answer the question, "How well do we teach?", assessment is best seen as "the process of observing learning" that entails "describing, collecting, recording, scoring, and interpreting information about a student's or one's own learning. At its most useful, assessment is an episode of learning that provides opportunities for reflecting on an individual's understanding of progress."[3] The aim of assessment is to improve performance, not merely to audit it. Therefore, data is used to make informed decisions and to provide a clear picture of student learning progress.

In summary, we assess in order to:

- Adjust instruction for students' needs,
- Inform students and teachers about learning,
- Determine the effectiveness of instruction and the curriculum, and
- Communicate individual and school-wide performance to students, parents, and the public.

Balancing Assessments

A balanced approach to assessment includes a continuum of tools and strategies that are fair, varied, reliable, and sufficient measures of student learning. It is essential that schools provide varied and frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding and reflect on their own learning. Unless a teacher knows what a student knows and is able to do, and what a student does not know and is unable to do, he or she cannot design effective instruction for that student. Therefore, a balanced system utilizes *both formal and informal* information about student learning.

A balanced system encompasses several layers of assessment:

- At the **district level** balance reflects a continuum of assessment tools whose data correlate and measure all dimensions of student learning rather than focusing on a single domain.
- At the **school or grade level**, balance requires the use of multiple measures to gain a big picture view of student performance. It includes standardized tests, typical classroom assessments, as well as informal observation. Often the data is used to inform whole group instruction or curriculum adjustments. In other words, the data is used to monitor the progress of a class or cohort of students.
- Balanced assessments at the **individual level** are used to form instructional groupings, identify interventions, monitor progress, determine a student's specific learning needs, and provide opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect on their learning. Again, multiple measures (formal and informal) are used to guide decision-making.

At-a-Glance: Critical Components of a Balanced System of Assessment

- Variety of assessments – both types and purposes – provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate learning;

[3] Stuart, Lynn. *Assessment in Practice: a View from the School: Creating a School Culture of Learning and Assessment*. Newton, MA: Teachers 21, 2003. Print.

- Constructive and specific feedback is regularly provided for all students;
- All components of assessment fit together to provide a performance profile for each learner;
- Data collection occurs regularly within the classroom; progress of at-risk learners is closely and frequently monitored;
- Individual and aggregated assessment data is made accessible to both teachers and administrators;
- Analysis or interpretation of data is performed regularly through a process of inquiry;
- Data is used to guide daily instruction, make changes to curriculum, and guide program development; and
- Students have an integral role in the assessment process as they reflect on their progress and set personal learning goals.

Roles and Responsibilities

A balanced assessment system involves all professionals and the learner within a culture of inquiry, or *professional learning community*, that utilizes assessment data to make the best decisions for all learners. The following sums up the roles of each:

Administrator

- Provide continuous professional development in classroom assessment practices for faculty and staff;
- Identify and agree on district-wide standardized and locally developed benchmark assessments, and how to score and disseminate results in a timely manner;
- Monitor student assessment data and provide access to the state Data Warehouse (or similar data center) for teachers to monitor student assessments and learning;
- Establish data teams to review and disseminate aggregated, district-wide and school-wide assessment and other data, and to serve as data coaches for the schools
- Accommodate time within the schedule for teachers to collaborate with colleagues and teaching partners (for example, using Looking at Student Work [LaSW] protocol)

Educator/Team

- Ensure that all instructional units developed in the district's curriculum database employ a balanced system of assessment;
- Involve students in the assessment process through reflection and setting of personal learning goals;
- Clearly communicate district and individual learning goals to students;
- Identify criteria, set benchmarks, gather continua of exemplar/benchmark student work;
- Regularly interpret and discuss grade level, classroom, and individual student performance data; and
- Problem-solve within the context of LST, PLCs, departments/grade levels, etc. to determine best interventions for struggling learners or best enrichment strategies for students who have mastered learning goals.

Learner

- Assume ownership of learning;
- Use assessment information and reflection to set personal learning goals;
- Self-assess progress toward the attainment of personal learning goals.

The charts on the following two pages reflect the importance of balancing classroom level assessment with program and policy level assessments. Each summarizes important decisions to be made, by whom, and using what information. [4]

[4] Stiggins, Rick. "Assessment for Learning: A Key to Motivation and Achievement." *EDge* 2.2 (2006). Phi Delta Kappa International, Nov.-Dec. 2006. Web. Apr. 2011.

Level 1: Classroom Assessment Users [5]

Decision Makers	Important Questions to be Answered	Information Needed	Assessment System Implications
Students in the Classrooms	What am I supposed to learn?	Learning targets described in student-friendly language at the beginning of learning	Accurate assessments must reflect the learning targets students are given
	What have I learned already, and what do I still need to work on?	Evidence must allow student to track progress and understand where they are now in relation to expectations at any point in time	Continuous sequence of accurate classroom assessments must provide descriptive feedback in student-friendly terms during learning
	Have I met or am I progressing toward the important achievement standards?	Status regarding mastery of each standard in student-friendly language	Assessments must provide evidence of standards mastered periodically throughout the year
	Have I met the state achievement expectations?	Status regarding meeting state standards in student-friendly language	Annual state assessments reporting standards mastered and not yet mastered
Teachers in the Schools	What are my students supposed to learn?	Standards deconstructed into classroom targets leading, over time, up to each standard; district curriculum maps of learning progression	All assessments must reflect these targets; it must be clear which target any assessment reflects
	What have they learned already, and what do they still need to learn?	Continuous evidence revealing of each student's current place in the learning progressions leading up to each standard	Continuous sequence of accurate classroom assessments used during the learning to provide a picture of progress toward mastery of standards
	Which students need learning supports or special services?	Evidence of how students are doing in relation to grade- or age-level expectations	Assessments must provide evidence of students' relative status or progress to determine eligibility
	Have my students met or are they progressing on the important achievement standards?	Status of each student's mastery of each state standard	Periodic, interim, benchmark assessments reflecting student mastery of standards throughout the year
	Did they meet state achievement expectations?	Status regarding each student's mastery of each state standard	Annual assessment of each student's mastery of each state standard
Parents in the Community	What is my child supposed to learn?	Learning targets in family-friendly language provided from the beginning of learning	Assessments must accurately reflect these targets
	What has my child learned already, and what does he or she still need to learn?	Assessments providing information on current place in the progression toward each learning target at any point in time	Continuous sequence of accurate classroom assessments used during the learning need to provide a picture of progress
	Is my child progressing satisfactorily in meeting the teacher's classroom learning expectations?	Information gained from my child through self-assessment, indications from the teacher or from my child	Periodic summative classroom assessments must feed into report card grade or summary of classroom standards met
	Does my child need additional learning supports or the services of a specialized program?	Student's learning in relation to grade- or age-level expectations	Assessment evidence needs interpretation in terms of expected achievement levels

[5] Stiggins, Rick. "Assessment for Learning: A Key to Motivation and Achievement." *EDge* 2.2 (2006). Phi Delta Kappa International, Nov.-Dec. 2006. Web. Apr. 2011.

Level 2: Instructional Support Users [6]

Decision Makers	Decisions to be Made	Information Needed	Assessment System Implications
Principals, Curriculum Leaders, Teacher Teams	What standards are students expected to master by subject across our range of grade levels and classrooms?	Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject as they unfold within and across grade levels	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards and their associated classroom-level learning targets
	Which of these standards are students mastering or progressing appropriately toward? Are there problem areas?	Information revealing patterns over time within the school year of achievement within and across teachers, grades, and subjects	Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically during the year
	Did enough of our students meet standards this year?	Proportion of students meeting and not meeting each standard	Annual assessments reveal how students did on each standard
	What standards are students expected to master across our classrooms, grades, and schools?	Standards mastered by grade and subject mapped within and across grade levels across schools	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards

Level 3: Policy Level Users [7]

Decision Makers	Decisions to be Made	Information Needed	Assessment System Implications
Superintendent, Various Policy-Makers	What standards are to be met?	Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards
	Which of these standards are students mastering or making appropriate progress toward and in which schools?	Information revealing patterns of achievement within and across schools	Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically during the year
	Did enough of our students meet standards this year?	Proportion of students meeting and not meeting each standard	Annual assessments show how each student scored on each standard
	What standards are students expected to master in our schools?	Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards
	How many of our students are meeting standards?	Scores reflecting patterns of achievement within and across schools and districts	Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically

Methods of Assessment

Various assessment strategies provide information at differing intervals and for different purposes. Each one provides a different perspective, and one cannot take the place of another. Together, they provide a balanced approach to assessment that informs decisions at the classroom, school, district, state, and national levels. Assessments can be categorized as small-scale or large scale. Within each category reside various types of assessments.

Large-scale assessment occurs annually or less-frequently and can be either criterion referenced or normed.

[6-7] Stiggins, Rick. "Assessment for Learning: A Key to Motivation and Achievement." *EDge* 2.2 (2006). Phi Delta Kappa International, Nov.-Dec. 2006. Web. Apr. 2011.

State and national assessments typically occurs annually but may be as frequent as twice annually for certain student populations or may occur only once. Information is used to show how students are performing against state standards or national norms, and to hold school districts accountable for student performance. Assessment instruments and procedures are standardized so that comparisons can be made across student groups. Examples of large-scale assessments include Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS, MCAS-Alt, MELA-O, MEPA), Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE).

Universal screening assessment can occur only once or it may occur multiple times annually, depending upon its purpose. Information is used for early identification of learning needs. Examples of universal screening assessments include the Early Screening Inventory (ESI) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Some universal screenings take the form of curriculum-based measures (CBM) as is the case with DIBELS.

Benchmark assessment occurs two to three times annually. Information is used to identify strengths and gaps in curriculum and instruction and to determine how student groups are progressing. Grade-level curriculum may be refined, and teachers may adjust instruction for student groups based on their progress. Locally developed benchmark assessments should be based upon Massachusetts Common Core State Standards.

Small-scale assessment occurs frequently and should be standards-based or criterion-referenced.

Classroom formative assessment occurs continuously as students are learning and is considered assessment *for* learning. The purposes of formative assessment are to provide students with insight about their current level of achievement, to inform students about how they can improve their learning, and to help teachers identify and respond to student learning needs. Information is used to adjust teaching strategies. Students receive frequent and meaningful feedback on their performances. Examples of formative assessment strategies include observation and immediate feedback during learning experiences, quick checks for understanding, class discussion, strategic questioning techniques, rubrics (used by both teachers and students), non-graded student work samples, and student self-assessment.

Classroom summative assessment occurs after student learning has taken place and is considered assessment *of* learning. The purpose of summative assessment is to document achievement or mastery of standards at a point in time. It is used to inform others about students and used to certify competence or to sort students. Information is used to adjust unit instructional strategies or assessment tools that will be implemented in the future. Examples of summative assessment strategies include graded student work or essays, tests and quizzes, and final projects or performance assessments.

Curriculum-embedded assessment also occurs continuously within the instructional process. As the name implies, these measures are naturally embedded in instruction. Often students are not aware that the activity is in fact an assessment. Information is used to monitor student learning, inform instruction, or identify students in need of intervention, remediation, or enrichment. Curriculum-embedded assessments may be formative (assessment *for* learning) or summative (assessment *of* learning) in nature, and may include performance tasks, oral or written response, presentations/exhibitions, or other examples of student work. Common curriculum-embedded assessments also provide basic program evaluation data essential for grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

Diagnostic assessment occurs only as needed. Such tests are used to identify a specific learning need, or to determine intervention techniques or strategies for targeted instruction. The information is commonly used during the Learning Support Team (LST) or referral process.

Progress monitoring assessment occurs regularly over time. Frequency depends upon the tier of instruction (within the Pyramid of Interventions). Information is used to mark student progress over time at frequent intervals when strategic instruction or intensive intervention is necessary. Data is commonly used within the context of a problem-solving situation (RTI or LST) when determining if, or to what extent, an intervention has been effective. Progress monitoring data is best analyzed by plotting it on a time-series chart.

District Assessments

Elementary, secondary, and district level assessment calendars are currently under development. Each will append this document as it is approved.

Definitions of Assessment Terms

- **Achievement Test** – A standardized test used to measure acquired knowledge or skills in a specific subject area (such as mathematics or reading.)
- **Aggregate** – All students in a district, school, or grade level.
- **Anchor Paper** – A student work sample identified for the purpose of exemplifying a specific level or score on a criterion-based rubric. Typically, one-two anchor papers are selected for each rubric level.
- **Authentic Assessment** – A strategy for assessment in which students are asked to perform engaging, real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills.
- **Benchmark Assessment** – A form of assessment most often developed within a school district and administered to students at particular intervals of the school year. The assessments serve several purposes: providing evaluative information about the impact of a curriculum or a program, offering instructional information that helps diagnose student strengths and weaknesses, and informing and guiding teachers' instructional decisions.
- **CBM (Curriculum Based Measures) and CBA (Curriculum Based Assessment)** – An assessment method used to determine the extent to which students are progressing in basic academic areas such as math, reading, writing, and spelling.
- **Cohort** – A group of students with a common defining characteristic, most often age group.
- **Common Assessment** – An assessment typically created collaboratively by a team of teachers responsible for the same grade or subject area and administered across student groups or classes.
- **Constructed Response** – A problem or question item that requires the respondent to compose an answer rather than select from list of choices. Essays, short answer, project presentation
- **Criterion-Referenced** – An assessment where an individual's performance is compared to a specific learning objective or performance standard and not to the performance of other students.
- **Curriculum-Embedded** – Assessment that occurs simultaneously with learning in the classroom setting. If properly designed, students should not be able to tell whether they are being taught or assessed.
- **Diagnostic Assessment** - Assessment that provides the teacher with an understanding of the prior knowledge and skills of students, as well as the strengths and specific learning needs of an individual or groups of students in relation to the expectations that will be taught.
- **Formative Assessment** – Non-graded assessment of student learning that a teacher uses to inform instruction. Formative assessment is often described as "assessment *for* learning."
- **Performance-Based Assessment** – An alternative to traditional testing that requires a student to create an answer or product that demonstrates his or her understanding of the content.
- **Portfolio Assessment** – A purposeful collection of student work that demonstrates the student's learning, development, and achievement over time. Often the portfolio includes written student reflections and rubrics used to "score" work.
- **Progress Monitoring** – The National Center for Student Progress Monitoring defines progress monitoring as, "a scientifically based practice that is used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction."
- **Rubric** – A scoring tool that lists criteria against which a student work sample is compared.
- **Standardized Test** – Tests that are designed, administered, and scored in a consistent manner. MCAS and DIBELS are considered examples of standardized tests.
- **Stanine** – Short for "Standard Nine," stanine refers to a method of scaling scores along a nine-point (often

nationally normed) standard scale. A stanine 5 is considered average nationally.

- **Summative Assessment** – Graded assessment of student learning that demonstrates whether or not a student has met expectations. Summative assessment is often described as "assessment *of* learning."
- **Universal Screening** – A quick, simple assessment of specific skills used for early identification of students who might be struggling. Universal screenings can be administered one or more times annually.

Supporting Resources

Hopkinton District-Developed Resources

- District, elementary, and secondary assessment calendars
- K-5 Literacy Tools, Benchmarks, and Criteria chart
- HPS Curriculum maps on Rubicon Atlas
- HPS Learning Support Team Process and Forms documents
- District Pyramid of Interventions model

Published Print and Electronic Resources

- *The Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High-Quality Units* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2011)
- Easy CBM http://www.easycbm.com progress monitoring tools
- DIBELS 6th edition https://dibels.uoregon.edu and DIBELS NEXT http://dibels.org/next.html
- Looking at Student Work protocol http://www.lasw.org/index.html
- Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html