

Highland Park Elementary Assessment Policy

Purpose for Assessment:

Highland Park Elementary believes assessment to be an integral part of the planning, teaching, and learning process. It is an ongoing evaluation where teachers use a variety of assessment tools to identify students' prior knowledge, ensuring new learning takes place. Assessment informs each stage of the learning cycle and leads to effective feedback on the learning process. Highland Park teachers see assessment as the focus for learning that measures student understanding.

We assess to:

- Gather and interpret data
- Improve instructional practices
- Evaluate instructional practices which reflect student inquiry
- Provide feedback for student learning
- Determine how to differentiate instruction
- Determine appropriate accommodations and modifications (ELL, IEP, 504)

Principles of Assessment:

At Highland Park Elementary the assessments are linked to concepts, lines of inquiry, or to the central ideas of the transdisciplinary units. The teachers use formative and summative assessments to provide insight into the students' understanding, knowledge, skills and achievement of the concepts and standards. These assessments give teachers the chance to identify learning styles, individual differences of students and differentiate the curriculum/assessment to most accurately reflect the needs of the learners.

Effective assessments allow the student to:

- have criteria that are known and understood in advance
- analyze their learning and understand what needs to be improved
- demonstrate the range of their conceptual understanding, their knowledge and their skills
- synthesize and apply their learning, not merely recall facts
- base their learning on real-life experiences that can lead to other questions to ask, or problems to solve
- focus on producing a quality product or performance
- highlight their strengths and demonstrate expertise
- express different points of view and interpretations
- promote reflection, self- and peer-evaluation

Effective assessments allow the teacher to:

- acquire data on what students have learned/mastered
- plan and build assessments into the learning, not add them after the fact
- identify what is worth knowing and assess it
- include collaboration between the student and the teacher, or among students
- take into account different cultural contexts and different ways of learning and knowing
- use scoring that is both analytical and holistic
- produce evidence that can be reported and understood by students, parents, teachers, administrators and board members
- inform every stage of the teaching and learning process
- plan further activities, which address areas of interest for the teachers and students

Effective assessments allow the families to:

- See evidence of student learning and development
- Develop an understanding of the student's progress
- Provide opportunities to support and celebrate student learning

Assessment Practice:

Highland Park Elementary 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 it allows students to identify their strengths and opportunities for growth. Students are provided the purpose and criteria of the assessments prior to being assessed.

Teachers use pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments to reflect on student performance and to support effective learning and teaching. Formative assessments used during instruction help identify what students are learning so we can differentiate and adjust the pace of instruction, including reteaching and enrichment activities. Summative assessments measure students' understanding and application of concepts taught, and assist teachers in reflecting upon and modifying the units of inquiry.

Students at Highland Park need to be actively engaged in the assessment process. Our students should see assessment as a tool to help them self-assess and reflect on their own work, as well as the work of their peers. Assessment is not a secret; our teachers identify, define and align assessments for students at the beginning of a unit of inquiry or other concept being assessed. In addition to this, students need to understand the rating system, and as appropriate, be involved in creating that system. Highland Park Elementary students should *know what the expectations are and how "good" is defined*. (Sparks, 1999) Involving our students from the beginning with assessment, empowers them to meet their goals, work toward standards and measure their understanding along the way. We recognize the importance of establishing consistent criteria for assessing student work through the use of exemplars.

Report Cards

Highland Park Elementary will assess performance and progress as required by the St. Paul Public School District #625. This includes literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, arts, world language, social and emotional, and technology. The purpose of our report cards is to give students and parents a clear description of the child's progress towards mastery of grade level expectations, based on the Minnesota State Standards. In addition, we report overall understanding in our transdisciplinary units of inquiry.

Standardized Testing

Highland Park Elementary is required by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning and the St. Paul Public School District mandates to participate in the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement (MCA) tests in the Spring. We recognize that the general public requires some measure of accountability, which is addressed through this test. However, we believe standardized tests alone do not provide a total measure of student achievement. According to Wiggins and McTighe (1998), assessment means *the deliberate use of many methods to gather evidence to indicate that students are meeting standards*. Standardized tests are used by teachers at Highland Park Elementary as one of the many pieces of data collected on students when planning and evaluating curriculum.

Pre-assessment

Pre-assessment takes place prior to an 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 and drive the instruction within the classroom.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is interwoven with daily learning. It helps teachers and students discover 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 assessments may include any combination of the following: acquisition of data, synthesis of information, application of knowledge and processes.

The PYP Exhibition

The PYP Exhibition is a required summative assessment culminating the fifth graders' learning experience at Highland Park Elementary. 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 specific IB transdisciplinary theme. The focus of their unit is a real-world issue or problem, local and global with sufficient scope and significance to warrant an in-depth inquiry. The whole school community gathers to celebrate the culmination of the PYP experience.

Portfolios

Students are provided opportunities for self-assessment and reflection on a regular basis, particularly as a part of the IB planners. Reflections are a part of the students' portfolios. Portfolios are collections of the students' work that are designed to demonstrate successes, growth, higher order thinking, creativity and reflection. Highland Park Elementary Portfolio System is a selection of student work from each of the organizing themes. The portfolio communicates to parents, teachers, and students, what we want them to learn (the written curriculum), how best will they learn (the taught curriculum), and how will we know what they have learned (the learned curriculum). Highland Park Elementary teachers and staff developed an essential agreement regarding the use of portfolios.

Portfolios' Essential Agreement:

- Grade level teams will collect evidence to document progress towards standards. Evidence would include samples or pictures of samples from various unit planners incorporating a variety of disciplines, attitudes, student profile, and assessments. Students will choose pieces accompanied by a written reflection. The teacher is the manager of the portfolios. Students have access to them.
- Individual classrooms develop systems to support continuous student and teacher access to portfolios.
- Portfolios will be updated and completed before passing them onto the next grade level.
- Opening week, the PYP portfolio is passed to the next grade level teacher.
- If a student transfers to another school, the portfolio will be sent home with the student, if possible. Teacher will remove work and return the binder to the PYP coordinator.

Assessment Tools

The previously identified assessment strategies are put into practice by using the following assessment tools. We use a variety of strategies to provide a comprehensive view of each of our students.

Assessment Strategies	Rubrics	Benchmark/exemplars	Checklists	Anecdotal records	Continuums
Observation	X		X	X	X
Performance	X	X		X	X
Process-focused assessments			X	X	X
Selected responses		X	X		X
Open-ended tasks	X	X		X	X