

# Palmer High School

## Assessment Policy

Since 2003, Palmer High School has been a member of the International Baccalaureate Organization, offering its Diploma Program to Palmer High School juniors and seniors. As a component of our membership with the IBO, Palmer High School has developed an Assessment Policy that addresses our school's approach to assessment in all of our classes—not just the Diploma Program.

This document is reviewed and edited on an ongoing basis. Please see the footnote at the bottom of the page to see the most recent revision date for this document.

This assessment policy includes the following:

- [International Baccalaureate and Palmer High School Mission and Vision Statements](#)
- [Assessment Terminology](#)
- [Philosophy and principles that underpin our assessment practices](#)
- [Connections to other IB Policies](#)
- [Roles and responsibilities for implementing, evaluating, and reviewing the assessment policy](#)

As in all things related to education, some aspects of how we approach assessment are a work-in-progress. In such areas where a practice is not uniform building-wide, notes will be provided that delineate the departments or programs which follow the practice and the extent to which a building-wide approach to the practice is a school goal. This document will be revised regularly, and especially as we meet and set new goals related to assessment at Palmer High.

For questions about assessment at Palmer High School, contacts will be listed at the end of this document.

# Mission and Vision Statements

## **IB Mission**

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

## **Palmer High School Vision**

To create a culture of caring and a culture where we believe in every student and their ability to learn.

## **Palmer High School Mission**

To prepare life-long learners, community assets, and citizens of integrity.

## Assessment Terminology

Assessment: a more formal term for *assignment*. An assessment is any type of activity which teachers use to determine what students know or what students can do.

Formative: a type of assessment used by teachers to assess what students know or can do while they are still *forming* knowledge. Formative assessments make up a smaller percentage (20-40%) of students' grades at Palmer High because they serve as snapshots of student progress rather than final evaluations of students' skills and knowledge. Examples of formative assessment at Palmer High include:

- Grammar Mini-Lessons, after-reading questions in English classes
- Journal entries, reading assignments/questions, listening activities with questions in French or Japanese.
- Terminology review worksheets; annotated reading notes in History and Philosophy
- Online simulations w/questions, microscope drawings in science
- Homework/practice questions on a new mathematical concept
- In-class practice of new skills in art

Summative: a type of assessment that serves as a final evaluation of students' skills and knowledge. Examples of summative assessment at Palmer High include:

- Essays in English classes
- Formal presentations in the language being acquired in French/Japanese classes
- Research papers in Social Studies
- Formal Lab Reports
- Unit tests from Math
- Submission of a piece of art and participation in a class critique in Art.

Criterion Referenced A type of rubric that outlines how many points each aspect of the assignment is worth, and what a student needs to do to receive maximum points for that aspect.

## Philosophies and Principles that Underpin Assessment Practices at PHS

Palmer High School's philosophy on assessment is that it is an integral part of teaching and learning; this policy is aligned among all teachers and courses at Palmer High School, not just the courses that exist as part of the I.B. program.

Teachers are expected to assign formative work which gives students the opportunity to practice, develop, and demonstrate skills and knowledge associated with their course, and summative work which measures the extent to which students have mastered skills and acquired knowledge. This delineation of work as either formative or summative is core to assessment at Palmer High. Other practices and policies that underpin assessment at Palmer High include our school's use of criterion-referenced rubrics for grading, inclusive assessment philosophies, the late-work policy, the grading and finals policies, and our academic honesty policies.

### The Purpose of Assessment & Indicators of Effective Assessment Practice

The purpose of all assessment should be to collect data that measures student learning, growth, and mastery of skills and concepts. Effective assessment practice requires instructors to be familiar with the educational objectives for their courses, designing assessments that measure mastery of those educational objectives, and measurable learning outcomes in students.

An assessment is any of a variety of ways teachers measure and evaluate student achievement. Some assessments are brief, while others can take place over a longer period of time. At PHS, teachers are expected to enter an average of two grades per week.

Within the I.B. program, some assessments are evaluated by PHS teachers; others are submitted to the I.B.O. for evaluation by an external examiner.

Guests in classrooms at Palmer High School would see indicators of effective assessment practice that include strategies such as:

- Reviewing a rubric with students before they begin work on a project
- Assessments taking a variety of different forms—tests, quizzes, essays, projects, oral presentations, visual presentations, & etc.
- Building rubrics for assessments with student input
- Formative assignments being given, scored, and returned with feedback for students before summative assessments are given.
- Identical or nearly-identical assignments and assessments given in like courses (all Algebra 1 teachers using the same unit tests; all English teachers reading the same works and assigning the same essay prompts with the same essay rubrics).

### Formative Assessment

Assessments which are labeled as formative should be useful for both students and their instructors. For students, it is an opportunity to practice skills and assess the extent to which they have learned important material. For teachers, formative assessments are opportunities to both gauge the extent to which a student or class has learned new material and to give students feedback on their learning. Formative assessments give teachers snapshots of student progress and should inform instruction—whether material has been learned and can be assessed or whether material needs further teaching and students need further practice.

### Summative Assessment

Assessments which are labeled as summative measure student achievement. They should be given after students have had the opportunity to learn, practice, and work with new skills and information and have been given the opportunity to receive feedback through formative work.

### Criterion-Referenced Rubrics

In courses that comprise the International Baccalaureate (I.B.) Diploma Program, criterion-referenced rubrics are used for all appropriate assessments. Rubrics for assignments that are outside of what students will need to do for their I.B. assessments (assignments other than essays, labs, research papers, etc.) are designed by the teacher of the course based on the learning objectives for that activity.

Criterion-based rubrics are the best way for students to see the skills and knowledge on which they will be assessed and are therefore a best practice for teachers to use in the classroom. Palmer High School's goal every year is to increase the rate at which teachers use rubrics to assess student work and increase the extent to which teachers of grade 9 and 10 courses use criterion-based rubrics based on or informed by the I.B. Assessment rubrics.

For assignments in I.B. courses that are related to I.B. assessments, assignment rubrics are based on the formal I.B. assessment rubrics. For example:

- Students in I.B. Literature write essays that are graded against the same criteria as is used on the Written Assignment, Paper 1, and Paper 2 criteria.
- In I.B. science courses, lab reports are assessed against the same criteria as the formal Internal Assessment.
- In I.B. French and Japanese, writing assignments are graded on criteria used in the IB Written Task rubric.

In courses at Palmer High School that are not related to the I.B. program, the use of rubrics to assess students' knowledge and skills is strongly recommended, but not a requirement. Over half

of PHS teachers consistently use rubrics for formative assessments and summative assessments. Our building goal is to increase the consistent use of criterion-based rubrics for all assessments to 75% by the end of school year 2020-2021.

### Inclusive Assessments

In all courses at Palmer High School, modifications outlined in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans are followed as prescribed. Students who receive modifications via an IEP or a 504 plan can participate in all I.B. courses for which they've met the prerequisites. Students with IPS and/or 504 plans are able to request accommodations for the assessments they do for the IBO as well. Students and their parents need to contact either the student's IB teacher or the IB Coordinator with the request and grant permission for the student's case-manager to forward accommodations paperwork that can be submitted to the IBO.

For more information, please see the Palmer High School Inclusion Policy.

### Late Work

Late work policies vary by department, and sometimes by teachers within each department. For information on an individual teacher's late work policy, please see his or her syllabus for that course.

Generally, late summative work is accepted by teachers at all points throughout the semester until the school-wide late work deadline. The school's philosophy is that summative assessment should measure student achievement, and not the time it took a student to master the skills or learn the knowledge used for the assessment.

### Grading and Finals

At Palmer High School, grades are made up of formative (20-40%) and summative (60-80%) assessments.

Some teachers break summative work down further with categories like labs, tests, and quizzes. Some teachers break formative work down further with categories like homework, reading checks, and in-class practice.

For the best understanding of how an individual teacher categorizes assignments, please see that teacher's course syllabus.

As part of the MSBSD's new grading initiative, students who participate in IB exams have two end-of semester opportunities. The first is that any student who completes all parts of their course's IB assessments is excused from taking an in-class final for their IB course.

Additionally, students who receive scores of 4 or better will have their overall academic grade

raised to an A. Students who receive lower than a 4 on IB exams will not see any change to their final course grade.

### Grade Reporting

In the fall of the 2019-2020 school year, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) adopted a new Student Information System (SIS)L: Synergy. All teachers report student grades on Synergy, which can be electronically accessed by parents and students through platforms called ParentVUE and StudentVUE, respectively. Teachers are expected to have grades updated each Wednesday at 2:45.

In years past, progress, quarter, and semester grade reports were sent out via mail. With Synergy, all grade reporting is accessed online; students and parents have access to individual classes and grades as well as report cards for Progress Reports, Quarter Report Cards and Semester Report Cards.

For assistance accessing ParentVUE, parents and guardians can call Palmer High School and speak to Lisa Bowman (746-8400) or the MSBSD Help Desk at 761-HELP). Students needing assistance with StudentVUE can contact Lisa Bowman at the PHS front desk.

### Academic Integrity

Palmer High School uses several approaches to teach students about academic honesty: what it is, how violations can be avoided, and the consequences for violating it. One of our building goals over the 2019-2020 school year is to develop a comprehensive approach to teaching students about the value and importance of academic honesty, types of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, approaches to citing and crediting research material, and how to approach different activities (group work, take-home tests, etc.) in an academically honest way.

The most frequently used tool for ensuring academic honesty at PHS is through the service Turnitin.com. PHS subscribes to Turnitin.com, and accounts are available for all instructors at PHS. While its use is uneven across all PHS courses, Turnitin.com is available for all Palmer High School instructors, both for regular coursework and formal I.B. assessments.

The goal in our school-wide approach to addressing academic honesty is to divvy up each smaller aspects of the topic into manageable lessons for teachers to use in the classroom. These lessons will be assigned by courses, not by teachers, so that over the course of four years, students should receive most of these lessons. General topics like citation formatting, creating a Works Cited page, citing primary vs secondary sources, citing graphs or diagrams, and citing images in presentations will be taught in core subjects like English, Social Studies, and Science.

Specialized topics like citing video footage, and interviews will be taught in courses where the course content is most likely to connect to those topics.

The current draft of Palmer High School's Academic Honesty Instructional Map is included in the PHS Academic Honesty Policy.

### Local Requirements

Assessment at Palmer High works to measure student achievement based on learning outcomes set by both the State of Alaska and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. At the state level, learning outcomes are prescribed for all courses at all levels. The MSBSD takes those learning outcomes and embeds them into the courses it offers. All courses in the MSBSD have clear learning outcomes and curriculum for instructors to assist with instruction towards those learning outcomes. Some courses have common assessments, but those are more frequently found within buildings than district-wide. PHS is working towards the development of common assessments for many of its courses. Mathematics courses have used common assessments for several years now; this year the English department received common assessments for English 1 and English 2. The design and implementation of common assessments is an on-going process.

### Internal Assessments

In the I.B. Program, students complete Internal Assessments (IAs). IAs are required components of all I.B. courses, are assessed internally by PHS instructors and then submitted to the IBO for external moderation.

All I.B. courses make individual components of the IA a part of a student's course grade. These components could include submission of a research topic and initial list of sources or the submission of a first draft of the IA to a teacher.

In some PHS courses, students' internal, teacher-assessed scores are a part of the student's grade for the course. In other courses, students only receive marks for meeting benchmarks in the creation and development of the IA. Streamlining expectations and grading policies across all IB courses is a goal that has been set and is in development.

Teachers conduct IA instruction in their respective courses; students should anticipate putting around 10 hours of independent work into the creation of their IAs. Please see the PHS IA calendar for specific due dates for each IA.

After IAs have been collected and scored by instructors, scores are forwarded to the Diploma Program Coordinator to be entered into the International Baccalaureate Information System (IBIS). After scores are entered, a digital copy of each student's work is e-mailed to the DP

Coordinator, who saves files electronically. These files, as well as files with teachers' criterion scores and marking comments are uploaded to the e-Coursework system within IBIS.

### Quality Assessments in a Digital Age

The I.B.O.'s publication "Assessment principles and practice—Quality assessments in a digital age" was consulted in the development of this policy.

To some extent, PHS instructors are already familiar with the use of on-screen assessment. Programs such as Turnitin.com and Google Classroom make it possible for teachers to read, comment on, and assess student work all through an online platform. The use of this tool varies widely, both among PHS instructors as a whole and among instructors of I.B. courses.

As the digital-based tools available to PHS instructors increase, the importance of developing quality, digital-based assessments will also increase. Palmer High School instructors participate in professional development opportunities offered by the MSBSD, discuss the school and departmental use of digital assessment in the Foundations Leadership Team and in I.B. meetings, and offer colleague-to-colleague professional development during our staff development days and staff meetings.

## Connections to other IB Policies

### Assessment and Access

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning, and it is through assessment that students' readiness for participation in the Diploma Program is determined. As long as students meet the language requirement and the prerequisite requirements, they are entitled to access to the IB Diploma Program.

### Assessment and Language

Assessment is an integral part of learning, and students' abilities to both understand their assessments and produce work as part of those assessments is essential to learning within the IB Diploma Program and Palmer High School. The Assessment Policy clearly outlines the definitions for and means of assessment within the IB program.

### Assessment and Academic Integrity

In order for assessments to be fair and accurate, students and teachers must complete work at the highest level of academic integrity. The assessment policy provides clear definitions and expectations for the types of assessments completed, and the Academic Integrity policy outlines the steps teachers and students must take in order to ensure that these assessments are completed and completed in such a manner that it reflects the student's own authentic work.

### Assessment and Inclusion

The Inclusion Policy outlines the means by which all students are given an opportunity to participate in the IB Diploma Program. Assessment, and especially assessment with appropriate accommodations, is essential to measuring students' progress and ensuring all students have the opportunity to be successful.

**For more information:**

For specific questions about the PHS Assessment Policy, or to request a copy of the document contact:

- Paul Reid, Principal – [Paul.Reid@matsuk12.us](mailto:Paul.Reid@matsuk12.us)
- Dave Booth, Assistant Principal – [David.Booth@matsuk12.us](mailto:David.Booth@matsuk12.us)
- Jim Simmons, Assistant Principal – [Jim.Simmons@matsk12.us](mailto:Jim.Simmons@matsk12.us)
- Nichelle Henry, I.B. Diploma Program Coordinator – [Nichelle.Henry@matsuk12.us](mailto:Nichelle.Henry@matsuk12.us)

To find an electronic copy of the PHS Assessment Policy, go to [www.matsuk12.us/phs](http://www.matsuk12.us/phs)

Find below links to documents used in the development of the PHS Assessment Policy

[Assessment Principles and Practices--Quality Assessments in a Digital Age](#)

[Understanding DP Assessment](#)

[Academic honesty in the IB educational context](#)

[State of Alaska Department of Education, Alaska Standards](#)

[The Diploma Program: From Principles into Practice](#)

# Roles and responsibilities for implementing, evaluating, and reviewing the assessment policy

## PHS Faculty

### In August

- A copy of the PHS Assessment Policy will be distributed to all staff at the beginning of the school year. An overview of all policies instructors are expected to adhere to will be reviewed with the staff as a whole.
- Before the school year begins, instructors will meet in departments to share and to whatever extent is possible, streamline policies within the department. Teachers are expected to outline all policies within the Assessment Policy (late work, formative and summative assessment, etc.) within their course syllabus.
- Faculty will receive a refresher course on how to use Turnitin.com and will receive technical support if accounts need to be created or passwords changed.
- Instructors who are new to PHS will receive a hard copy of the PHS Assessment Policy and will have the opportunity to review the policy in full with either their department chair or with the administrator who supervises their department.

### In January

- At the beginning of the second semester, a digital copy will be e-mailed to all PHS faculty, and time will be set aside in a January staff meeting to remind staff of the policy and answer any relevant questions.

### In March

- The PHS Foundations Team (a leadership team within the school, separate from department chairs) will solicit feedback from their respective departments on any aspect of the Assessment Policy that may need revision.
- Instructors of the I.B. courses will get together to discuss I.B.-related issues within the Assessment Policy that may need revision.

### In April

- As directed by the school administration, teachers from the Foundations Team and teachers of I.B. courses will work together to update the Assessment Policy.

### In May

- Before the end of the school year, teachers will receive digital copies of the updated Assessment Policy.

## PHS Students

### In August

- During class meetings, held within the first two weeks of the school year, PHS administration will review relevant aspects of the assessment policy with all PHS students and make them aware of where they can find the complete document online.
- Teachers will include relevant aspects of the Assessment Policy in their course syllabi. The syllabus and policies will be reviewed by each teacher within the first three weeks of the course.

### In January

- Teachers will include relevant aspects of the Assessment Policy in their course syllabi. The syllabus and policies will be reviewed by each teacher within the first three weeks of the course.

## PHS Families and Community

### In August

- An updated copy of the PHS Assessment Policy will be published on the PHS Homepage and on the PHS IB webpage.
- In the August Principal's Post (a monthly newsletter from PHS administration), the assessment policy will be introduced. A link to the complete document will be provided. If possible, an electronic copy of the document will also be attached.
- On the PHS Homepage, within the multimedia rotator (a place for current announcements and advertisements), the PHS Assessment Policy will be presented and electronically linked for parents.

### In December/January

- In the December or January Principal's Post a reminder about the PHS Assessment Policy will go out to PHS students and their families.