



# Northern Heights Elementary School

## Primary Years Program

### School Assessment Policy



#### Northern Heights Mission

Northern Heights Elementary School provides a balanced, engaging, and comprehensive education that prepares all students for success as global citizens. We strive to develop caring, principled individuals with a sense of community, who value individual differences and diverse perspectives. As reflective thinkers and inquirers, we are inspired to take actions that positively contribute to our ever-changing world.

#### School Assessment Philosophy

For successful citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Northern Heights' students must develop strong concepts, broad-based knowledge, diverse skills, personal attributes and perspectives leading to action. Individually, each of these is an important element of our instructional program at Northern Heights Elementary School. Collectively, these elements are essential to the IB-PYP curriculum model, providing students with both richness and depth in learning. Our assessment philosophy is predicated on an understanding that we have responsibility to assess, evaluate and provide feedback on student progress toward development and application of these elements through learning experiences and in daily life.

At Northern Heights we believe assessment:

- occurs at all times and in varied situations/environments.
- concerns everyone: students, teachers, parents, administrators, community members.
- is an integral part of planning, teaching and learning.
- takes many forms and has many purposes.
- must give consideration to the learner, as well as the learning to be assessed.
- practices must be clearly communicated and understood by students, parents and teachers.
- results must be shared with the learner, as well as with all stakeholders.
- is effective only if results are used to provide feedback to learners, make instructional decisions and evaluate program effectiveness, leading to an end outcome of high level student learning.

We believe the purpose of assessment is to:

- determine what students know and can do at a specific place and time.
- promote continuous learning and growth over time.
- provide feedback to students on their learning successes and areas of need.
- encourage student motivation.
- promote personal evaluation and self-reflection.
- support the development of individual learning goals.
- inform planning for individual, small and whole group instruction.
- measure student progress compared to others or a learning standard.
- support formal processes for reporting individual progress.
- measure effectiveness of instruction.
- inform curriculum and program evaluation.
- demonstrate accountability for learning to all stakeholders.

## **Practice**

### **What is assessed?**

The IB-PYP curriculum model incorporates five essential elements of learning:

- understanding of concepts
- acquisition of knowledge
- mastery of skills
- development of the learner profile attributes
- initiation of responsible action

This curriculum model encompasses and enriches Common Core State Standards, as well as other district learning standards. Student progress is assessed in each of these elements across all content areas. Assessment of specific knowledge and skills within literacy and mathematics is assessed both in and outside the units of inquiry. Common formative and summative, state and district assessments (such as SBAC, iReady, WaKIDS) are used to evaluate student performance in each of these core content areas.

### **Who is involved in assessment?**

Both teachers and students are actively engaged in assessing progress. Teachers are responsible for initiating and implementing assessment activities that are embedded throughout the transdisciplinary program of inquiry, as well as in areas of single subject skills-based instruction. Students are actively involved in self-assessment, reflecting on their progress and engaging in personal goal setting as it relates to their learning, development of attitudes and attributes and/or initiated actions. The school community, including specialists and the building administrator, are involved in analysis of assessment results for program evaluation.

### **When does assessment occur?**

Assessment is integral to all learning processes. It occurs on a continuous basis across time and throughout the instructional program. We believe the most effective assessments are those generated from and occurring within the ongoing teaching activities that take place in the context of everyday teaching and learning.

At Northern Heights we use a balanced assessment system that includes both summative and formative assessment, depending on purpose and information desired.

### **Assessment tools and strategies**

Authentic assessment of student learning is conducted through observation, performance assessment, process-focused assessment, open-ended tasks, and student reflections. Tests and quizzes are also used. Rubrics, exemplars, anecdotal records, checklists, continuums, and portfolios are used to evaluate student learning and provide feedback.

## **Celebrating and reporting assessment**

We are partners in education with our students, families and the Northern Heights community. This includes communicating standards and progress, requesting and implementing input for student need, and working to support the home as a parallel learning environment. We communicate with families regularly, both formally and informally. The following are methods of reporting and celebrating information about assessment currently used at Northern Heights:

### **Family Engagement**

Because we actively seek input from and work together with our families to provide the best educational experience for their children, each teacher communicates with students' families regularly and on an as-needed basis. Both ParentSquare and SeeSaw are digital tools used to communicate assessment and learning with families.

## **Report Cards**

Our report card is the standards-based Bellingham School District elementary report card, adapted to report on our Units of Inquiry, and the Learner Profile.

The focus of these comments may vary by level and units of inquiry studied in any given marking period. PYP elements are reported as observed, but not graded.

## **Classroom Guided Experiences**

Grade levels will determine how to engage the student and family in the student's learning. Examples may include student involved conferences, unit sharing, self-reflection activities, portfolio sharing, invitations to performances, activities or engagement in action.

## **Portfolios**

Portfolios are an important tool to support student development in all elements of the PYP. They are intentional, organized collections of work that provide students with the opportunity to self-assess, reflect on and celebrate their progress over time. It is a home for artifacts and reflections that represent the child's cumulative experience in the PYP. It also provides a foundation for the Exhibition process. Each student can review their portfolio and reflect on prior learning over their years in the PYP. Reflections are then applied to the development of the Exhibition project. Portfolio processes may be differentiated to reflect the developmental understanding of learners at each grade level.

## **Exhibition**

The exhibition is a culminating project that takes place in the final year of the PYP. Students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of the essential elements of the PYP through a unit of inquiry that is shared with the school community. In this way students show their development of learner profile attributes accomplished throughout their years in the PYP. The Exhibition also provides important information about our program, implementation of the PYP and areas that we might refine in future practice.

## **District/State Assessments**

Northern Heights follows the Bellingham School District calendar and guidelines for state/federal assessments across the range of academic areas. These assessments are based on our state standards (Common Core Standards for ELA, Math, Science, SEL). Our district assessments align with the IB assessment philosophy in how we view and use the data from them. These mandated assessments provide teachers with information about student learning, and to evaluate and support further professional development and program growth for student success. Further information and dates of assessments are developed yearly by the Bellingham School District.

### **Assessment Policy Review Process**

The Assessment Policy is a working document that will require review and revision as development and implementation of the PYP progresses.

We will review the school's Assessment Policy annually in the spring of each school year. We will determine whether our Assessment Policy accurately reflects current practice. If it does not reflect current practice, we will determine whether we need to alter our practices or the policy and make the necessary changes.

Subsequent revisions will be completed for implementation by August of each following school year.

Review of the Assessment Policy will be a collaborative process, involving all stakeholders (grade level teachers, specialist teachers, support staff, family/community, IB Coordinator, administration)

We will reach a consensus to support and implement all aspects of the Assessment Policy at the time of the review.

*Reviewed and revised by Northern Heights Staff: April 2024*

*April 2024*

*Future work—what we want to learn more about:*

- *Consider how we assess Social Emotional Learning in grades 1-5*
- *Dig into “Evidencing of Learning” and how to reconsider “Summative Assessments”*
- *What are additional effective ways to engage families with student learning and assessment?*
- *Use PYP Assessment Enhancements to Review and Revise [Assessment Enhancements.pdf](#)*