

Sequoia Middle School Assessment Policy

Assessment Principles and Practices at Sequoia Middle School

At Sequoia Middle School (SMS), an International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) school, we value assessment as a key tool to develop the whole student. Our assessment philosophy emphasizes both formal and informal methods, recognizing the importance of diverse forms of assessment, from daily observations to end-of-term exams. We aim to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes while fostering reflection on their learning. One goal of assessment at SMS is to inform and involve students, parents, teachers, and the broader community to enhance teaching, learning, and engagement.

Assessment at SMS is transparent and fair. Criteria for success are clearly defined in advance, often outlined in course syllabi or shared through rubrics. We believe that engaging students in the assessment process is not only fair but also empowers them to take ownership of their learning. Assessment is an ongoing process, with both formal and informal data used to adapt and improve instructional strategies. This dynamic approach ensures that assessment represents the whole student by drawing on multiple sources of evidence, reflecting a range of perspectives and learning experiences.

Reflection plays a critical role in the SMS assessment process. Students are actively involved in their own assessments, with regular opportunities for self-reflection through tools like exit slips, self-assessments, and culminating projects. By reflecting on their actions and accomplishments, students internalize the standards of the community, such as the IB objectives, Common Core State Standards, and state frameworks. Teachers and school leadership also engage in reflective practices, using assessment data to improve instruction and refine curriculum, ensuring a continuous cycle of improvement.

Summative assessments, which evaluate the culmination of learning, are used at SMS to gauge student progress. These assessments provide insights into students' understanding of the content, concepts, and global context of each unit. Through summative assessments, students demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, including written tests, projects, presentations, and collaborative tasks. Teachers utilize IB criteria to assess student performance and are committed to standardizing assessments across the school. Regular collaboration among teachers ensures consistency in applying achievement levels and in designing assessment tasks that reflect the goals of the MYP.

In addition to traditional assessments, SMS integrates various tools and strategies to collect comprehensive data on student growth and development. For instance, students may maintain design journals or art notebooks to track their progress and engage in individual reflection. Throughout the MYP, students are assessed through a mix of individual and group tasks, with a focus on collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. As students progress through the program, they participate in a variety of summative assessments. Through these diverse and reflective

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assessment practices, SMS fosters a comprehensive understanding of student achievement and growth.

Assessment Philosophy

Assessment plays a crucial role in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program at Sequoia Middle School. Our assessments are designed to capture the skills and understanding of all students as they progress academically and socially. We implement a range of effective assessments that foster inquiry-based learning and enhance critical thinking.

Our assessment approach is collaborative, transparent, specific, diverse, developmental, inclusive, and interactive. This variety of assessments generates constructive feedback that supports students' learning journeys, placing them at the heart of both the learning and assessment processes. Our primary objective is to utilize assessments to carefully examine student learning and assess the impact of our teaching methods and practices.

Goals of Assessment:

The assessment policy is designed to provide students, teachers, and parents with well-analyzed and timely feedback across all areas of learning. Sequoia Middle School is dedicated to implementing regular and constructive assessment practices. Both students and teachers will focus on utilizing assessments only when they contribute positively to the learning process. There will be no assessments conducted merely for the sake of gathering marks for reports.

The purpose of assessment is to encourage:

- Excellence in learning
- A love for learning
- Self-assessment and peer-assessment with active teacher support
- A mutual understanding between students and teachers regarding goal setting, learning pace, and the acquisition of knowledge and critical skills
- Demonstrable skills in expression, collaboration, and community service
- The essential qualities expected of ethical leaders and courageous learners.

Each of the three IB programs requires distinct assessment tools, tailored to the unique approaches of the programs and the varying maturity levels of the students involved.

General Assessment Practices

The guidelines of the IB program establish the framework for assessment while ensuring that each student is assessed on an individual basis, rather than being ranked or graded on a comparative scale. In today's competitive society, it is essential to highlight that assessment serves the purpose of enhancing learning, offering direction for focused learning, and meeting the standards of the program.

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- A diverse array of assessment tools will be utilized and shared among both teachers and students. Developing a mutual understanding of the objectives and precision of these assessment tools will foster a positive environment for assessment and its reporting.
- Assessment criteria will be clearly explained to students before the learning process begins. This clarity will allow learners to reflect on and evaluate their own progress based on the established criteria, thereby empowering them in their educational journey. It will also facilitate communication between learners and teachers, enabling students to reflect on their learning experiences, recognize their achievements, analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and comprehend and assess their learning paths.

Formative Assessment Overview

Formative assessment is a method of assessment designed to enhance learning, occurring continuously throughout the teaching and learning journey. It provides valuable insights that inform the planning of subsequent learning activities. This type of assessment is integrated into the learning process, enabling both teachers and students to gauge existing knowledge, skills, and the effectiveness of new learning.

The purpose of formative assessment is to foster growth by offering regular and timely feedback during the educational process. This feedback supports learners in enhancing their knowledge and understanding, encourages self-motivation and enthusiasm for learning, promotes reflective thinking, nurtures self-assessment skills, and helps students identify success criteria.

Students will have opportunities to engage in self-assessment and peer-assessment, building the confidence required to take charge of their own learning.

Teacher Involvement in Classroom Assessment May Include but is Not Limited to:

- Utilizing representative samples of students' work or performances to gather insights into student learning.
- Collecting evidence that reflects students' understanding and thought processes.
- Documenting learning experiences of both individuals and groups.
- Identifying exemplary work produced by students.
- Maintaining both qualitative and quantitative records of assessment results.

Learner participation in classroom assessment involves:

- Reflecting on their own learning experiences.
- Communicating their understanding and progress to teachers and peers.
- Evaluating their own work and that of others using established rubrics (level descriptors).
- Sharing their insights and comprehension with classmates.
- Demonstrating their learning through diverse styles and abilities.
- Analyzing their own learning and identifying areas for improvement.

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Summative Assessment

In accordance with IB guidelines, all MYP summative assessments are assessed with a criterion-related process and are based upon predetermined task-specific clarifications that are shared with students in advance. All assessments should inform curriculum planning.

Assessment in the MYP is:

- developed and conceived as an integral part of unit planning
- designed to incorporate a variety of methods and to be relevant and motivating to students, taking account of their different learning styles
- for assessing students across a broad range of concepts, attitudes, knowledge and skills appropriate to their age and year level
- criterion-related using the age-appropriate assessment criteria published in the MYP guides; these must be made clear to students at the beginning of any new unit
- for supporting and encouraging student learning
- for providing timely and constructive feedback to students
- designed to allow graduated differentiation

Each student's success will be measured in terms of 'levels of achievement' across the different subject groups. The level of achievement attained on each criterion will be decided by the subject teacher according to a 'best fit' in the appropriate assessment criterion level descriptor after a standardization process with teachers of the same course.

Assessment criteria

- are task specific and made available to students prior to any formal assessment
- have rubrics which focus on positive achievement

Each criterion strand must be assessed a minimum of twice a year in each year of the MYP. All MYP achievement levels are determined after standardization and moderation within the department.

Assessment in Practice

Informal formative assessments are essential components of each lesson. These assessments can take various forms, such as observations, both open and closed questioning, methods like "thumbs up, thumbs down," "think, pair, share," "traffic lights," as well as peer and self-assessments.

During lessons, teachers will review each student's work, although how often this occurs may differ by subject and the nature of the tasks being completed. Teachers are committed to evaluating student work whether it be a written assignment, oral presentation, or practical project. This evaluation may include assigning a level of achievement based on an appropriate MYP task-specific clarification or

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providing students with descriptive feedback. All evaluations will be documented by the teacher in a mark book and/or through electronic means.

Educators across all subjects are tasked with fostering literacy and will appropriately address issues related to spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Marked assignments will be returned to students promptly, accompanied by relevant oral and written feedback. Comments will focus on positive reinforcement and guidance to help students enhance their skills.

Methods of Assessment

Methods of assessment used in the MYP will be varied in design and cover a broad range of learning and

communication styles. Formal assessments allow for graduated differentiation.

Methods of assessment include (but are not limited to):

- observation (of expressions, behavior, attitudes etc.)
- dynamic interaction
- questioning
- exercises, essays and compositions
- mind maps
- projects
- presentations
- debates
- quizzes
- investigations
- experiments
- physical skills
- role plays
- performances
- tests

Assessment Criteria and Grading Scales

In MYP students are scored using an IB grading scale. **Teachers will use the 1-8 MYP criteria and translate these grades to the local grade equivalent.** Students' cumulative grade is not a percentage, but a scaled number. In the MYP, subject group objectives correspond to assessment criteria. Each criterion has eight possible achievement levels (1–8), divided into four bands that generally represent beginning (1–2); approaching (3–4); meeting (5–6); and exceeding (7–8) performance. Each band has its own unique descriptor that teachers use to make “best-fit” judgments about students' progress and achievement.

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IB Subject Area Objectives/Assessment Criteria Overview

Subject	Criterion A	Criterion B	Criterion C	Criterion D
Language & Literature	Analyzing	Organizing	Producing Text	Using Language
Mathematics	Knowing & Understanding	Investigating Patterns	Communicating	Applying Mathematics in Real-Life Contexts
Individuals & Society	Knowing & Understanding	Investigating	Communicating	Thinking Critically
Sciences	Knowing & Understanding	Inquiring & Designing	Processing & Evaluating	Reflecting on the Impacts of Science
Arts	Knowing & Understanding	Developing Skills	Thinking Creatively	Responding
Physical & Health Education	Knowing & Understanding	Planning for Performance	Applying & Performing	Reflecting & Improving Performance
Language Acquisition	Comprehending Spoken & Visual Text	Comprehending Written & Visual Text	Communicating in Response to Spoken, Written, & Visual Text	Using Language in Spoken & Written Form
Design	Inquiring & Analyzing	Developing Ideas	Creating a Solution	Evaluating

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Assessment Criteria

Grading Scale and Rubric Language

<i>I.B. Eight Point Scale</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Rubric Language varies by department. Examples below.</i>
8 7	A A-	Perceptive, extensive, sophisticated, high-degree
6 5	B B-	Clear, sufficient, competent, logical
4 3	C D	Adequate, some degree
2 1	D- F	Limited, inappropriate, minimal, rarely
0	(I) Incomplete (Change to "F" if not completed by end of semester)	No work turned in
ALL ASSIGNMENTS ENTERED WITH A TOTAL POSSIBLE OF 8 PTS		

We use a 1-8 scale commonly used across IB campuses.

0 NO EVIDENCE: I have not completed or submitted work that shows evidence of my skill for the learning target.

1-2 BEGINNING: I don't understand the learning target yet, but I'm still practicing. I need additional support from the teacher in order to develop my thinking and understanding.

3-4 APPROACHING: I have some understanding of the learning target, but I need assistance from the teacher in order to develop my thinking and understanding.

5-6 MEETING: I have knowledge of the learning target, but I may have gaps in my understanding. I can complete the skill mostly independently.

7-8 EXCEEDING: I have mastered the learning target and can complete the skill independently. I can apply this skill to new situations.

Standards-based IB grading eliminates the concept of academic grade penalties for late work. Students may continue to work on a learning target until they master it, until the unit ends, or until the semester ends, whichever is communicated by the teacher. However, it is important to complete all

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work when it is due to keep up with activities in class. Additionally, turning in assignments late may adversely affect a student's work habits score. Retaking summative assessments will require students to complete an Action Plan. Redoing an assessment will require extra work (and/or making up missing work) and opportunities to practice the skill, so it's important and worthwhile to do your best the first time.

Teachers will provide timely feedback to students and families on formative and summative assessments.

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