



Council of School Councils

Questions from February 25, 2014 Meeting

The Board of Trustees and representatives from Learning Services provided an information session about assessment and reporting at a Council of School Councils meeting. Below are responses to questions that were generated as part of this session and were related to the topic of assessment and reporting.

It is important to note that in the responses provided, the term 'parent' is meant to be inclusive of all families and is representative of guardians and caregivers.

Assessment and reporting is always best understood in relation to your child(ren), and in the context of their classroom and school. Questions and comments are best directed to your child's teacher and the school-based administrative team.

General information about assessment and reporting, including definitions, can be found at:

<http://www.cbe.ab.ca/Parents/assessment-and-reporting/introduction.asp>

Questions:

Is tonight's presentation (slideshow) available to share with our schools?

Yes. The presentation is available at: <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/Parents/assessment-and-reporting/introduction.asp>

Why can't we (CBE) just send home examples of math/reading/writing each month? It's easy to then see where kids are at and communication can flow from there.

Schools and teachers communicate with parents about student progress on an ongoing basis in a variety of ways. In addition to the report card, you can learn how your child is doing through informal conversations with your child and your child's teachers as well as celebrations of learning, conferences, and online tools such as D2L, HomeLogic and Iris. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher with any questions, concerns or comments about how their child is doing in school. For more information see "[Questions to Support Your Child's Learning](#)" in the resources section.

Surely there are best practices that will fit 80% of schools and then [the CBE could] let parents decide [the] other 20%.

Principals, in consultation with their staff, parent and student communities and Area Director, will develop a plan for ongoing communication about student learning. It is important for parents, staff and students to have a voice as principals develop plans for ongoing communication about student learning at their schools. These plans will

consider the input schools gather from parents, students and staff and reflect what is unique to their community.

A consistent report card format for all K-9 schools will be beneficial as students move from one grade to another and from one school to another. It will allow parents and students to have a clear indication of student achievement over time as it will be expressed in a consistent way. The other ways schools communicate with students and parents about progress, outside of report cards, may vary from school to school.

It is important to give schools the flexibility to respond to the unique needs of their community while also reporting student achievement in a consistent way.

Reporting

Could there be an overall grade for each subject area in addition to the achievement levels for each outcome/stem?

Outcomes-based reporting gives parents more specific information about how their child is doing. When achievement is assessed against each outcome/stem, an overall grade would not provide any additional information.

Outcomes-based report card:

Course	Mathematics			
	Teacher(s):	Rpt 1	Rpt 2	
	Understands mathematical concepts and relationships			← Indicator Goes Here
Report Card Outcome/Stem	Uses mathematical reasoning to analyze and solve problems			
	Develops effective strategies for mental mathematics, estimation and computation			
	Visualizes, models and communicates mathematical ideas			
<p>X can consistently multiply and divide fractions. She finds it difficult to explain whether the solution she gets is reasonable or not. X will be guided through a variety of strategies to determine whether or not the answers she gets make sense. In solving algebraic expressions she is effective at reducing and solving for single variables. She has difficulties representing models of equations using two-pan balances or algebra tiles. X would benefit from additional practice around seeing equations as a balance or scale. I have invited her to join the lunch-time math group on Wednesdays.</p>				

VS

Traditional percentage based report card:

Math 6	Rpt 1	Rpt 2	Rpt 3
Teacher(s):	72		
Demonstrates Skills in Math			
X needs support recognizing, modeling, identifying, finding and describing common multiples and common factors. His ability to explain prime and composite numbers using words, diagrams and examples is emerging. He has demonstrated his understanding of integers by creating a board game entitled Legs VS. Clay Integer Game and by comparing plus/minus statistics for two NHL teams. X took initiative to come in a t lunch to get help with his corrections on his math test.			

How does homework contribute to assessing and grading student learning and progress?

Homework allows students to *practice* what they are learning (concepts and skills.) Testing and grading are about *achievement* of learning. Homework can support ongoing progress towards the achievement of the outcomes of the Alberta Programs of Study.

How can one report card serve the needs of both a kindergarten and a Grade 9 student when their needs are so vastly different?

The needs of a kindergarten student and a student in Grade 9 are very different. Programs of Study consist of general outcomes that apply to kindergarten to grade 9, and specific learner outcomes that are unique to a particular grade. For example, the English Language Arts Program of Studies consists of five general student outcomes. General outcomes are broken down into specific outcomes for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade.

The kindergarten to Grade 9 report card stems represent big ideas (general outcomes) of a Program of Studies. Teachers make decisions about student achievement based on the evidence they have gathered.

For more information about general and specific learner outcomes, go to:
<http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/mychildslearning/>



Is there going to be a consistent way to communicate across all schools?

Each school communicates with students and parents in different ways to reflect the unique characteristics and needs of their community. Informal and formal conferences, phone calls, emails, celebrations of learning, curriculum evenings, and online tools are all possible ways of providing feedback about student learning. The use of online tools such as D2L, HomeLogic and Iris is determined at the school level in order to consider the needs of each community.

Ensuring students and parents have access to timely and appropriate feedback is an expectation for all schools.

Is training provided for teachers to ensure competency and consistency?

Yes. Professional learning for teachers and staff is fundamental to the CBE's philosophy of continuous improvement. This commitment is spelled out very clearly in the CBE's Three-Year Education Plan. Through the professional development of teachers and staff, we are able to help students be successful now and into the future.

Professional development is ongoing for all CBE staff. Professional learning occurs in a variety of contexts including classrooms, school and system based learning teams, as well as school and system level networks. Provincial, system and other research-based resources are provided to support teachers and leaders.

Practices regarding teacher competency and consistency in Alberta are determined by Alberta Education.

How will IPPs be affected? What's the process around IPP with individualized/personalized learning? Will that change and how does that fit?

An Individual Program Plan is based on learning outcomes from the Alberta Programs of Study or individual program goals. Individual Program Plans target the areas unique to a student that he/she needs support with in order to be a successful learner, and identify strategies and supports necessary for that student's success.

IPP's continue to be a requirement from Alberta Education for students formally identified with a special education code.

Will teachers be supported and mandated to use tools like D2L so parents do get timely feedback?

The use of online tools such as D2L, HomeLogic, and Iris is determined at the school level in response to the particular needs and characteristics of the community.



Ensuring students and families have access to timely and appropriate feedback about student learning is an expectation for all schools. The way in which a school community communicates with students and families will differ, and may happen in a variety of ways. Informal and formal conferences, phone calls, emails, celebrations of learning, curriculum evenings, and online tools are all possible ways of giving feedback about student learning.

What is the reason we are not getting the first assessment report until January this year?

For the 2013-14 school year, schools are expected to send home a report card a minimum of twice a year. In consultation with families and staff, schools determined the appropriate frequency of reporting for this year. If a school moved to reporting twice a year, the first report card was to be sent home mid-year.

Reporting periods may shift for the 2014-15 school year based on feedback from families and schools.

Is there a plan to help parents understand the new assessment system beyond the website and/or meetings?

Yes. Changes in assessment and reporting are best understood as they relate to your child.

The first point of contact regarding your child's progress and achievement is your child's teacher.

The next point of contact is the school-based leadership team. They can provide you with information about assessment and reporting at the school.

As a parent, you can better understand assessment practices to support your child's learning by looking at the learning outcomes for your child's grade level: [My Child's Learning: A Parent Resource](#) (an Alberta Education resource).

When will all K-9 students have the same report card format?

It is anticipated that all schools will be using a common K-9 report card by the 2015-16 school year. The CBE priority right now is to enable schools and communities to work together to determine logical next steps towards a common K-9 report card. This journey will be different for each school and will require flexible timelines.



You mentioned that a common indicator scale is still being determined, what else is still being decided moving forward?

Over the next few months, feedback from parents, students and staff will be collected. Decisions about comments, frequency, indicators and report card outcomes/stems for the 2014-15 school year will be made by the end of June 2014.

How are past and recent performance considered in assessment of student achievement?

Over the course of a term students are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate achievement. Students develop understanding of concepts over time. Student achievement is based on the most consistent and generally the most recent, evidence of a student's understanding.

For example, a student may take several quizzes about the same concept. The student receives 3/10, on the first quiz, followed by 7/10, 8/10 and on the last quiz receives 8/10. In this situation, the most recent and most consistent evidence (the last two quizzes) would indicate the student has strong understanding of the concept. The student was able to develop their understanding over time, and the first quiz (3/10) no longer represents what they know and can do.

Will report card stems/outcomes and rubrics be standardized?

Report card outcomes/stems will be the same from kindergarten to Grade 9.

Rubrics are clearly outlined sets of criteria that explain what a learner should know and be able to do. They may be student and teacher generated, teacher generated, specific to a particular concept or more general to a subject area.

What does more face-to-face contact mean?

Face-to-face contact is an opportunity for families, students and teachers to meet and talk about student learning, progress and achievement. Traditionally, this may have been in the form of a 'parent/teacher interview.'

Face-to-face opportunities to understand student progress include but are not limited to: individual conferences, student-led conferences, Individual Program Plan meetings and celebrations of learning.

Communicating student progress is an ongoing conversation between teachers, students and families throughout the school year with the goal of improving student learning. The nature of the communication must respond to the needs and characteristics of individual students, families and communities. Communication *may* be face-to-face. It also may be through email, phone calls, written notes, blogs, Iris, D2L, and HomeLogic.



How does personalized learning factor into student achievement and assessment?

The personalization of learning is a critical aspect of student achievement and assessment.

Understanding individual strengths and areas of growth against well-understood outcomes from the Programs of Study and/or appropriate individual program goals allows for personalized assessment and reporting.

How are teachers going to be able to generate a more comprehensive assessment vs. current practice?

Assessment practices are continually evolving. Many schools are already using an outcomes-based assessment and reporting model. For those schools, new practices may not change current assessment practices. At other schools, the move to an outcomes-based report card may result in a more comprehensive picture of student learning and progress at the school than what is currently available.

Differences are so varied in parent's willingness to engage in the education process. How is the board going to respond to the very different levels of involvement?

The Calgary Board of Education serves over 110,000 students and their families each and every day. Many of the discussions about reporting and assessment practices are happening at schools. Schools have the best understanding of their community and how best to communicate with them. CBE schools remain committed to ongoing dialogue about reporting and assessment practices.

How do we know what the competencies "should" look like and how students are guided to create goals?

Competencies are interrelated sets of attitudes, skills and knowledge that can be applied in a variety of contexts and developed over time. Students, with their teachers, set both short and longer term learning goals throughout a variety of tasks.

For example:

A group of Grade 5 students who live in a new community have been given a challenge to design, plan and build a new recreation facility to meet the needs of the people in their community.

Some important cross-curricular competencies that are necessary to consider during this task could be:



- **Innovate and create:**
 - *Eg. Design a new recreation facility to meet the needs of your community*
- **Identify and solve complex problems:**
 - *Eg. How will you respond and meet the needs of all members of your community?*
- **Manage information:**
 - *Eg. Gather, analyze and respond to feedback from community members, experts; examine current features of recreation facilities*
- **Demonstrate good communication skills:**
 - *Eg. Seek and articulate information, ask and respond to questions, develop strategies for interviewing*
- **Ability to work cooperatively with others:**
 - *Eg. Negotiate ideas and plans with peers, make decisions*

This task could also involve key aspects of both the math and the social studies curriculum. Students might work towards setting goals and understanding curricular outcomes such as:

- Understanding community needs (balancing individual and group perspectives)
- Gathering, researching and analyzing data (through surveys, interviews)
- Representing and articulating information (graphs and writing)
- Collaborative decision making (understanding roles and responsibilities)
- Planning, designing, measuring, building (area, perimeter, angles, number sense)

For more information on Alberta's cross-curricular competencies and the Alberta Program of Studies:

http://erlc.ca/resources/resources/cross_curricular_competencies_overview/documents/competencies-poster_11x17.pdf

<https://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program.aspx>

Instruction and assessment during this investigation would happen on a daily basis as students work together to set goals, represent their learning and receive feedback from peers, teachers and experts.

Competencies are acquired over time, in relation to tasks given and the skills and processes necessary to complete an assignment such as the design of the recreation centre. At the end of the investigation, students would be evaluated on how well they were able to work towards the outcomes across subject disciplines and in relation to both competencies required, skills developed and learning goals met.

How are high schools going to be able to select students for special programs?

Report card grades and comments are only one consideration for the appropriate placement of students in courses and/or special programs. Currently, all CBE high schools manage information from a wide variety of report card structures, both from within and from outside our organization. In determining appropriate courses, conversations with students and families about a student's strengths, areas for growth and future goals are important factors in decision-making, as are report card grades and comments. Middle/junior and high schools work closely together to ensure that students transition well and have access to appropriate courses in their high school setting.

When the new assessment rolls out, if someone is in Grade 9, they'll be assessed under the "new" system and then in Grade 10 go back to the old system?

The reporting structure in high school is **not** changing. High schools will continue to use percentage grades to communicate student achievement on the report card.

The ongoing, daily assessment practices that a child experiences in a K-12 classroom are based on common guiding principles. In Grades 10-12 student achievement is summarized and reported with percentage grades and in K-9 it is reported against report card outcomes/stems.

