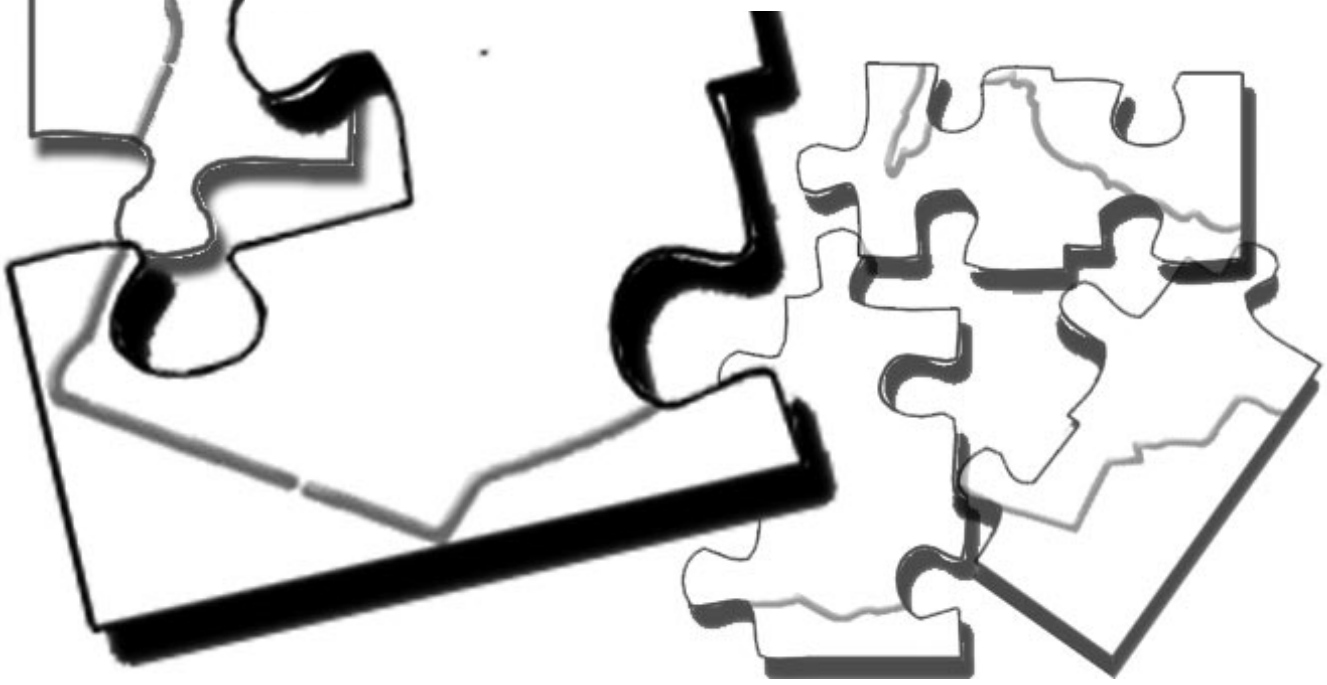
Assessment FOR Learning

BLUEWATER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

POLICY TO PRACTICE

SECTION 3:
GATHERING THE EVIDENCE



a) Introduction

Ongoing assessment and evaluation is used to determine student needs and generate/influence teaching practice. One hundred percent of the grade will be based on evaluations conducted throughout the course. The final report card grade should reflect the student's most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration given to most recent level of achievement. Information in this part of the resource document will assist teachers in gathering relevant evidence of student learning in an appropriate manner.

This part of the resource document includes:

- Four Categories of Learning
- Levels of Achievement
- Understanding Assessment and Evaluation and the Roles of the Teacher and Student
- Planning Your Course Assessment and Evaluation
- Teacher as Observer: Look, Listen, Interact
- Understanding Assessment Methods, Strategies and Tools
- Exemplar Resources

b) Four Categories of Learning

The four Categories of Learning are outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents for each subject. They can be generalized into 4 key categories across all subject areas and from grades1-12 to include:

Knowledge/Understanding
Thinking/Inquiry
Communication
Application/Making Connections

The achievement chart provides a standard province-wide method for teachers to use in assessing and evaluating their students' achievement.

In order to ensure that assessment and evalaution are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of student learning, teachers must use assessment and evaluation strategies that... are based both on the categories of knowledge and skills and on the achievement level descriptions given in the achievement chart that appears in the curriculum policy document for each discipline.

(*Program Planning and Assessment*, 2000)

Elementary

From grades 1-8, these 4 categories appear in slightly different wording for each subject area but remain basically the same.

Subject Area	Knowledge / Understanding	Thinking / Inquiry	Communication	Application/ Making Connections
Language	Organization of Ideas	Reasoning	Communication	Application of Conventions
Math	Understanding Basic Concepts	Problem Solving	Communication of Knowledge	Application of Math Procedures
Social Studies	Understanding Basic Concepts	Inquiry/Research Map and Globe Skills	Communication of Knowledge	Application of Concepts/Skills
Science	Understanding Basic Concepts	Inquiry/Design Skills/Safety	Communication of Required Knowledge	Relating Science and Technology to each other and the World
The Arts	Understanding Basic Concepts	Critical Analysis and Appreciation	Communication of Required Knowledge	Performance of Creative Works
Phys. Ed and Health	Understanding Basic Concepts	Active Participation	Communication of Knowledge	Movement Skills
FSL	Organization of Ideas	Comprehension	Communication	Application of Language

Secondary

From grades 9 –12, subject associations have developed their own interpretation of the four categories to suit their discipline and broken them down further to aid understanding. These subject specific breakdowns can be found in Part 4 B of the CODE Policy to Practice Document. A sample for Math is included below:

Achievement Chart Category	**Knowledge**	**Thinking / Inquiry**	**Communication**	**Application**
i) What are the names of the category in the **Mathematics** document?	Knowledge/ Understanding	Thinking / Inquiry / Problem Solving	Communication	Application
ii) What are the criteria for this category?	• Understanding concepts • Performing Algorithms	• Reasoning • Applying the steps of an inquiry/problem-solving process (e.g. formulating questions, selecting strategies, resources, representing in mathematical form)	• Communicate reasoning orally, in written, and graphical formats • Using mathematical language, symbols, visuals and conventions	• Applying concepts and procedures relating to familiar and unfamiliar settings
iii) What do the criteria mean?	• Performing an algorithm by hand, mentally or using technology • Demonstrating understanding of a concept	• Formulating and defending hypothesis • Selection and creation of a model to solve a problem • Selection and sequencing of a variety of tools and strategies to solve a problem • Justification of reasoning and/or conclusion	• Degree of clarity in explanations or justifications • Appropriate use of mathematical vocabulary • Correct use of mathematical symbols, units, labels and conventions • Ability to integrate narrative and mathematical forms of communication	• Selection and “fitting” of a single tool to solve a problem • Use of a strategy in a unfamiliar setting (not just like the example) • Use of a strategy or tool in a complex setting or in a different way (working backwards, students developing question)
iv) How do the curriculum expectations fit into each category?	• Every expectation has a knowledge base • Each specific expectation is not necessarily aligned	• Each specific expectation is not necessarily aligned to a single category	• Each specific expectation is not necessarily aligned to a single category	• Each specific expectation is not necessarily aligned to a single category

c) Levels of Achievement

The achievement chart for each discipline is included in the curriculum policy document for that discipline. The chart provides a reference point for all assessment practice and a framework within which to assess and evaluate student achievement. The descriptions associated with each level of achievement serve as a guide for gathering assessment information and enable teachers to make consistent judgements about the quality of student work and to provide clear and specific feedback to students and parents.

Achievement Level	Percentage Grade Range	12 Point Scale Equivalent		Summary Description
Level 4	80-100%	4+	90-100%	A very high to outstanding level of achievement. Achievement is consistently ***above*** the provincial standard **(not above grade level)**
		4	88%	
		4-	82%	
Level 3	70-79%	3+	78%	A high level of achievement. Achievement is ***at*** the provincial standard.
		3	75%	
		3-	72%	
Level 2	60-69%	2+	68%	A moderate level of achievement. Achievement is ***below, but approaching,*** the provincial standard.
		2	65%	
		2-	62%	
Level 1	50-59%	1+	58%	A passable level of achievement. Achievement is ***below*** the provincial standard.
		1	55%	
		1-	52%	
R or below 50%				Insufficient achievement of curriculum expectations. Remediation is required at the elementary level. A credit will not be granted at the secondary level.

d) Frequently Asked Questions - Achievement Charts

1. Categories and levels do not appear on the report card; therefore, why are we using them?

- Categories ensure that we plan and deliver a balanced program as well as ensuring that students develop higher cognitive and creative thinking skills beyond rote memorization.
- Each of the levels of the achievement chart is related to a range of percentage grades.
- The achievement chart describes the characteristics of performance that can be used to validate the percentage grade given at reporting times.
- The achievement chart categories can provide valuable information on student performance for reporting, communicating, assessing, and goal setting.

2. What is the difference between meeting the provincial standard and achieving a pass?

- The provincial standard is Level 3 of student performance.
- Provincial standard implies that the students are well prepared for work in the next grade or the next course.
- Achievement at Level 1 indicates a student is considered to be “at risk” of not achieving the expectations at the next grade level.
- At the secondary level, achievement at or above level 1 (50%) earns the student a credit; however, only achievement at or above level 3 indicates the prerequisite knowledge and skills necessary to perform successfully at the next grade level.

What is the meaning of an "A"?

The grades of A- to A+ (or 80%-100%) correspond to Level 4 achievement of the curriculum expectations – the highest level. The student's achievement exceeds the provincial standard. Level 4 achievement does not mean, however, that the student is working beyond the expectations for the grade.

To allow students to demonstrate Level 4 performance, learning opportunities such as open-ended questions and assignments that allow for a range of achievement from Levels 1 to 4 **must** be provided within the regular classroon program. It is not appropriate to predetermine the number of students who can receive an "A" (or 80%-100%). Since grading on report cards is based on the achievement of the curriculum expectations for each reporting period, it is also not appropriate to withhold assigning these grades until the final term(s).

Descriptors
thorough / complete
general / considerable
some / developing / approaching
limited / few / simple

– Guide to the Provincial Report Card, 1998.

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3. What is the basis for determining the emphasis of the achievement chart categories in each course?

- The categories in the achievement chart have been created to ensure that a balance of knowledge and skills is a focus of student learning.

4. Should the achievement charts be used as the basis for each assessment or only when determining final report card grades?

- The achievement charts should be used to design all assessment strategies and tools. It is Ministry Policy.
- The categories will help to determine the criteria for the assessment and the levels will assist the teacher in developing a more detailed assessment tool (e.g. rubric, rating scale, checklist, etc.).
- All four categories do not have to be addressed in each assessment task.
- The mark reported should reflect the most consistent level of achievement as described in the achievement chart.
- The use of the achievement chart should be communicated clearly to students and parents.

e) Understanding Assessment and Evaluation

Successful practice will require a common understanding of the terms of assessment, evaluation, diagnostic, formative and summative.

Assessment:
The systematic and ongoing process of collecting, describing and analyzing information about student progress and achievement in relation to The Ontario Curriculum Expectations and related achievement charts. The primary goals of assessment are:
- to provide students with feedback to improve their learning; and
- to provide teachers with information needed to adapt and refine programs to meet student needs.

Evaluation:
Refers to the process of judging the quality of student work on the basis of established criteria, and assigning a value to represent that quality.

> "When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guest tastes the soup, that's summative."
>
> (Robert Stake)

Assessment:

- checks learning to decide what to do next;
- designed to assist teachers and students;
- used in conferencing;
- detailed, specific, descriptive feedback in words, not scores;
- focusses on the improvement of student's previous best;
- needs to involve the student, the person most able to improve learning.

Evaluation:

- checks what has been learned to date;
- designed for those not directly involved in daily teaching/learning;
- is presented in a periodic report;
- summarizes information into numbers, letter grades;
- compares students with a standard;
- need not involve the student.

(Damian Cooper as adapted from Ruth Sutton)

Gathering Evidence	Diagnostic	Formative
What?	• Assessing what students know and are able to demonstrate prior to instruction	• Assessing what students know and are able to do as they progress through the learning and practice opportunities
When?	• Occurs before instruction begins	• Is ongoing as students learn and practice
Why?	• Helps determine starting point and helps the teacher program appropriately for individual students	• Provides ongoing, meaningful feedback to help students improve as the learning/ practice builds
How?	• Assessment strategies provide information about the learning students have acquired in the past	• Assessment strategies to provide opportunities for students to learn and practice
Note:	• Information from diagnostic assessments is not included in the determination of the final grade	• Formative assessment may be used to support professional judgement in determining the final grade

Weighing a pig does not make it grow.

(Source unknown)

"

As students work with teachers to define what learning is and what it looks like, they shift from being passive learners to being actively involved in their own learning. By being engaged, they use and build more neural pathways in their brains.

"

(Jensen, 1998)

f) The Roles of the Teacher and Student in Assessment and Evaluation

There is no "right way" to gather evidence. Rather, teachers can choose from several methods using varied strategies and tools. However, which one he/she chooses must be appropriate to gathering evidence of the expectations and the criteria of the achievement chart of the subject discipline. Instruction must promote achievement of expectations and provide opportunity for practice with similar tasks. Professional judgement used in the determination of students' final grades must be supported by evidence gathered through appropriate strategies.

Students are accountable for providing sufficient evidence for this process. Self assessment and peer assessment tools may be used to engage students in the assessment of formative activities. However, the evaluation of summative activities is the responsibility of the teacher. People tend to hit the targets they set for themselves. When students are involved in the development of the standards and directions(not the curriculum or academic standards) for the classroom and tasks, they take ownership while developing a deeper understanding of the expectations. In other words, the process of developing procedures, directions, standards, and options is often more important than what is actually developed.

Summative
• Assessing what students know and are able to do at certain points in the learning process
• Occurs at one or more checkpoints throughout the learning process (e.g. end of a block of learning, unit, course)
• Provides students with the opportunity to synthesize knowledge and skills and demonstrate their achievement
• Assessment strategies to synthesize and to apply the key learning and are relevant to the expected learning at the point the students have progressed to in the learning process and the subsequent summative strategies occuring at the end of the unit/course
• Should be used in determination of the final grade

"

Begin to train and encourage children to be involved at an early age, and keep going.

"

(Ruth Sutton, 1995)

REFLECTION —

Do I provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their achievement of expectations?

Cooperative Group Learning

Cooperative group learning is an integral part of the process of the curriculum. Guidance has been provided for the handling of evaluation in group situations. Policy directs that participation in group work must provide evidence of individual student achievement related to the curriculum expectations. A common product in a final task is not appropriate unless a group project culminates in an individual final product or individual pieces of a final product that can provide that evidence. Each member of the group must be accountable to produce evidence of their own achievement. A group mark must not be assigned. Group work provides students with the opportunity to share, conference, mentor and work as team members to share learning. Conferencing with individual students during group activities is critical in gathering evidence and the demonstration of learning skills. Time for conferencing with students and observing the process must be included.

FAQ: Can peer and/or self assessment and group assignments be included in determining the final grade?

- Yes, evidence gathered by peers or self can be taken into consideration by the teacher for the evaluation. However, the teacher must assign the grade.
- During the term, group research and/or brainstorming may lead to the completion of an independent final product.
- Group work is a valuable assessment tool when used properly and each student is accountable and assessed individually.
- Even in the 30% of the grade, peer or self, and community member assessment and group work can be part of the evaluation process.

Peer, and/or self assessment and group assignments can provide valuable information for the individual student to use to improve his/her work prior to submitting it for grading.

- The final report card grade represents the quality of the student's overall achievement of the expectations for the course and reflects the corresponding level of achievement as described in the achievement chart for the discipline.

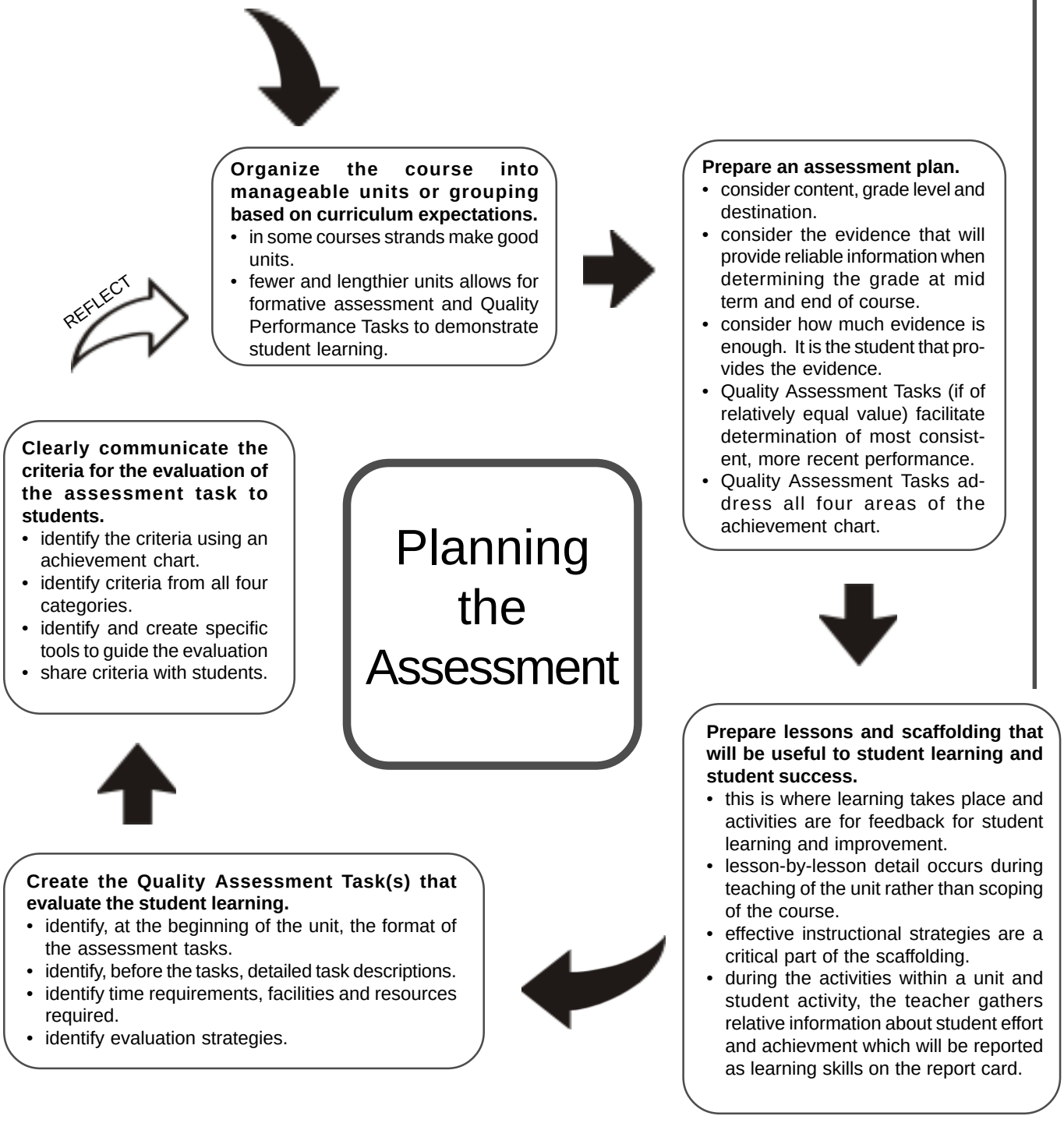
- Assessment and evaluation strategies are appropriate for the selected learning activities, the purposes of instruction, and the needs and experiences of the students.

- Assessment and evaluation strategies are varied in nature, administered over a period of time, and designed to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning.

- Students must be provided with numerous and varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their achievement of the curriculum expectations across all four categories of knowledge and skill.

- The achievement chart is meant to guide teachers determining, towards the end of a course, the student's most consistent level of achievement of the curriculum expectations as reflected in his/her course work.

g) Planning Assessment (Classroom Practice)



NOTE: Special Consideration for Secondary 70% / 30%

The final percentage grade for Grades 9-12 courses will be derived as follows:

- *Seventy percent of the grade* (70%) will be based on evaluations conducted *throughout the course*. This portion of the grade should reflect the student's most consistent level of achievement throughout the course, although special consideration should be given to the *more recent evidence of achievement*.
- *Thirty percent of the grade* (30%) will be based on a final evaluation in the form of an examination, performance, essay, and/or other method of evaluation suitable to the course content and administered *towards the end of the course.*

Planning the Final Evaluation

The final evaluation should reflect the student's learning for the entire course.
- identify the overall curriculum expectations to be evaluated
- identify core skills and concepts

The final evaluation should provide the student the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills in a variety of ways.
- identify the products and/or performances that would require studnts to demonstrate identified overall curriculum expectations
- select one or more assessment tasks
- identify accomodations/modifications that will be necessary for students

Classroom achievement must model the process and content of the final evaluation tasks.
- identify required prior knowledge/skills
- identify the teaching and learning experience that will equip students for the task

The final assessment task(s) should be communicated to students.
- identify, early in the course, the format of the final assessment task
- identify, before the task, a detailed task description
- identify time requirements, facilities and resources required

The criteria for the evaluation of the final assessment must be clearly communicated to students.
- identify the criteria using an achievement chart
- include criteria from all four categories
- identify and create specific tools to guide the evaluation
- share criteria with students

REFLECT

h) Teacher as Observer : Look, Listen, Interact

Assessment and evaluation of student achievement provide teachers with an opportunity to think critically about their methods of instruction and the overall effectiveness of their program. Observational skills are critical for good teaching, learning and assessing.

Observations are….
- the basis on which a teacher makes decisions about each student's progress and program needs;
- ongoing procedures to identify a students' strengths, interests and learning needs;
- a systemic method of monitoring student progress, growth and behaviour over time;
- an accurate record of what a teacher sees; and
- formal or informal.

Observations allow teachers to:
- view the student "in action" and assess ongoing progress;
- monitor and assess intellectual, social and emotional growth, development and progress that is not otherwise easily measured or inferred;
- observe the student in a variety of settings; and
- observe during many interactions.

Observations can take many forms. Whether they are formal or informal, they can be tracked using checklists, anecdotal records, journals, rating scales, folders or a variety of teacher designed recording devices.

Reflection —

Do I use a balanced variety of assessment methods, tools and strategies?

i) Understanding Assessment Methods, Strategies and Tools

The following section contains a sampling of assessment strategies and tools. Teachers are encouraged to modify these samples to meet their particular assessment needs. These are available in computer based format on the CODE Policy to Practice Disc and are found in Part 4B (ii) pages 9-27 and 32-45.

Terms:

Assessment Methods:
a general means or category of assessment strategies through which student learning may be assessed. (i.e. Say, Write, Do)

Assessment Strategy:
a particular process used to assess student learning and/or product used to demonstrate student learning (eg. journal)

Assessment Tool:
something that is used to initiate or guide the assessment strategy or to track, monitor or record the assessment data.

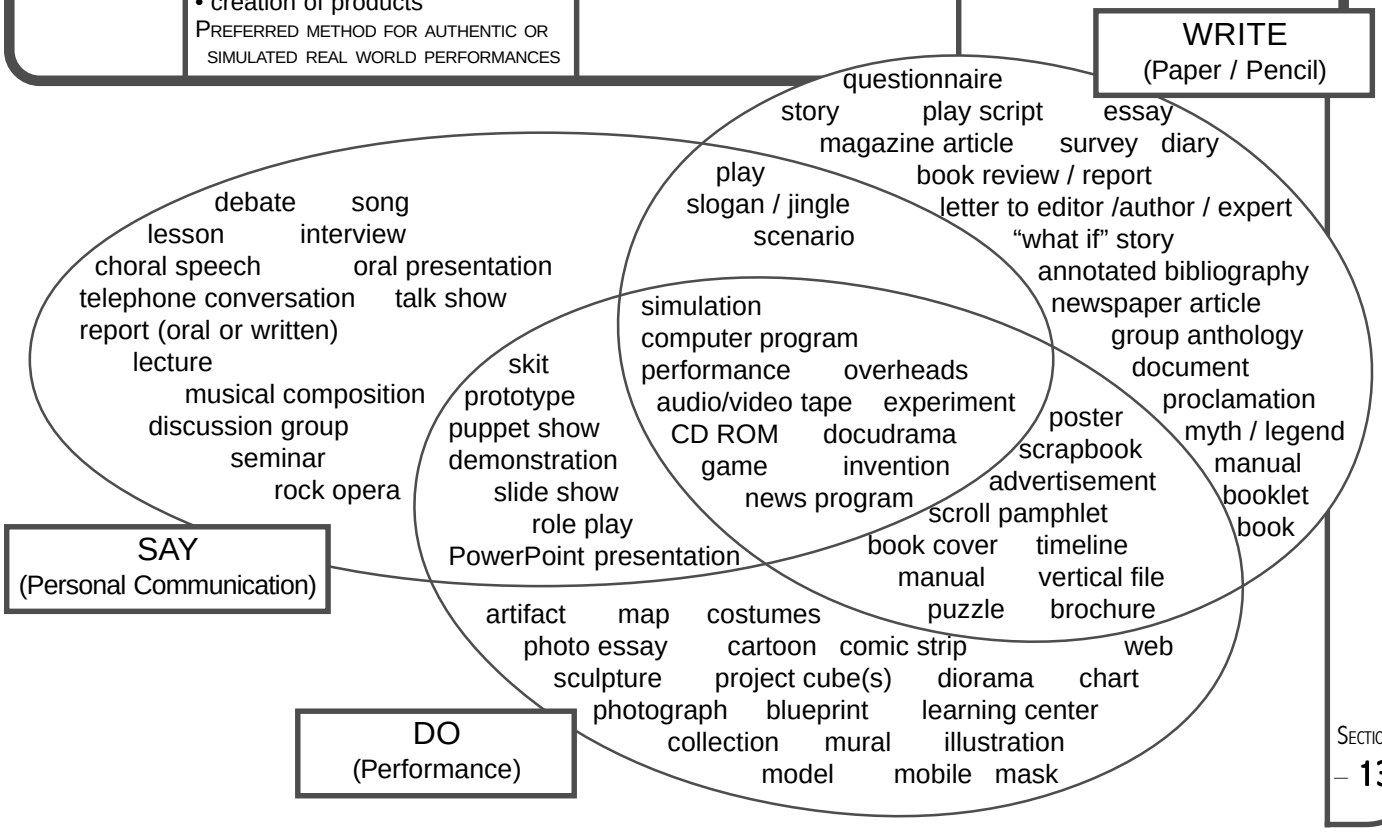
> "Using criteria that allow for a range of representation encourages students to represent what they know in a variety of ways, and gives teachers a way to fairly assess a variety of projects."
>
> (Davies, 2000)

Reflection —

Do I include observation as a valid strategy of assessment and evaluation?

Assessment Methods and Sample Strategies

Categories	DO — Performance	SAY — Personal Communication	WRITE — Paper and Pencil
Knowledge / Understanding	• open-ended questions, essays • organizers (concept maps, webs, flowcharts) and visual (tables, graphs, illustrations) • journals Perhaps not the preferred method but can determine student's understanding of relationships between concepts	• in-class question and answer • in-class discussions • student-teacher conferencing • oral "test" or "examination" Can ask probing questions and allows for evaluation of depth of understanding but may be time consuming	• quiz • test – multiple choice, true/false, matching (selection-based methods), fill in blanks, short answer, organizers (webs) and visuals (tables), examination Best choice for focussing on mastery of basics of knowledge
Thinking / Inquiry	• essays, articles, editorials, poems, research papers, lab reports • plays, dioramas, debates, stories, videotapes • oral presentations • creations of products Allows for teacher evaluation of complex critical/creative and inquiry skills	• in-class questions and answer • in-class discussions • student-teacher conferencing • oral examination Allows for more in-depth questioning; encourages students to explain their reasoning	• open-ended questions - tests • examinations • organizers (webs) and visuals (tables) Allows for assessing basic critical/creative thinking skills; allows for written description of problem solving solutions
Communication	• essays, articles, editorials, poems, research papers, lab reports • plays, dioramas, debates, stories, videotapes • oral presentations • creations of products Many of the performance tasks allow for communication in all forms – written, oral, and visual	• in-class questions and answer • in-class discussions • student-teacher conferencing Allows for expression of thought and communicating ideas verbally	• open-ended questions - tests • examinations • essays • organizers (webs) and visuals (tables) Allows for clarity of thought and expression of written form
Application / Making Connections	• essays, articles, editorials, poems, research papers, lab reports, design projects • plays, dioramas, debates, stories, videotapes, models • oral presentations • computer programs • creation of products Preferred method for authentic or simulated real world performances	• interviews, student-teacher conferencing Not the preferred method to get at 'authentic' and 'outside the school' contexts	• open-ended questions allowing for knowledge to be applied to a new situation/problem Not the preferred method to get at 'authentic' and 'outside the school' contexts



Assessment Tools:

	Rubrics	Checklists
What are they?	• A measure of student achievement following a set of clear guidelines. • Descriptions of clear performance criteria for each level. • Levels of quality used to assess student work. • Scales which use brief statements based on criteria to describe the levels of achievement of a process, product and/or performance.	• Assessment instruments that record the presence or absence of an expected concept, skill, process or attitude. • Based on criteria to be looked for and assessed in the completion of a task. • Teacher-made lists based on content, knowledge, skills or attitudes. • Student-made lists that are the initial step in the completion of a project.
How are they used?	• For all types of assessment. • For holistic and analytical scoring. • For clear communication of student performance. • To assess complex tasks.	• When a specific task or function can be predetermined. • Should focus on individual tasks rather than multiple tasks within one item. • When the process or product can be broken into components that are judged to be present or absent; adequate or inadequate.
What do they look like?	• Follow the format of the achievement chart. • Include one or more category of the achievement chart. • Use qualifiers from the achievement chart. • Clear, concise criteria. • Brief descriptors for each level of achievement.	• Checklists contain a numbered or bulleted list of key attributes of good performance to be assessed. They can contain a space for entry.
Why would you use them?	• Guides to student learning. • Used to promote reliability in assessment. • To enhance the efficient use of teacher time. • To outline criteria clearly. • To provide more informative feedback about strengths, weaknesses and next steps. • To ensure accountability for student achievement of expectations.	• Quick, and useful for large numbers of criteria. • Provide a list of key attributes of good performance that are checked as either present or absent. • To indicate if something has occurred.

Anecdotal Records	Rating Scales	Marking Schemes
• Short, written narratives which describe both student behaviour and the context in which it has occurred. • These descriptions, which should be relevant to observed behaviours, are often used to supplement data supported from other assessment strategies.	• Rating scales are based on a set of criteria, which allows the teacher to judge performance, product, attitude or behaviour along a continuum. • Assess the extent to which specific facts, skills, attitudes and/or behaviours are observed in a student's work or performance.	• A set of criteria by which student work is evaluated.
• Provide an ongoing record or written observations of individual student progress. • Provide a rich portrait of student performance because they can state in concise language what has actually occurred. • Interpret student achievement only after multiple observations over time. • Record information accurately and objectively during an event (or soon after). • Record observations related to planned and specific goals, which are considered important.	• Provide detailed diagnostic information on a student's performance, product and attitude in reference to presented criteria. • Record the frequency or even the degree to which a student exhibits a characteristic. • Describe performance along a continuum.	• To quantify student responses.
• May take a variety of forms. Record brief comments and stick into student records. Record comments on a Palm Pilot which can then be transferred directly to class computer records. • Draw gridline on an open-faced folder. Provide one vertical column for each student in the class. • Write comments on stick notes, then place them on the appropriate cell(s) on the grid. • Record comments on reverse of student's assessment record page in teacher assessment binder.	• Be analytical or holistic. • Use statements to rank, describe, or identify criteria. • Contain a numbered or bulleted list of key attributes of good performance to be assessed. • Contain a space for entry to indicate frequency or attainment on a continuum.	• Criteria linked directly to question. • Value of expected outcome.
• Useful observations which cannot easily be obtained using other assessment strategies. While these narratives are sometimes time-consuming to read, write and interpret, they can, over time, provide a rich portrait of student achievement.	• To assess a single performance. • To judge the quality of a performance.	• Selected or constructed responses.

These assessment strategies are outlined further on pages 32 to 45 in the CODE document.

j) **Exemplar Resources**

Teachers are encouraged to collect exemplars or samples of student work from their own class for specific assessment tasks.
The Ontario Curriculum Exemplars documents provide:

- samples of student work for some courses;
- samples of student work where all four categories are at the same level of performance;
- samples of the kinds of tasks for which a rubric would be used; and
- examples of how performance tasks can be used in assessments.

How could they be used?
Exemplars:

- could be used for self and peer assessment;
- provide the opportunity for students to reflect on the quality of their own work;
- provide the opportunity for students to improve their learning;
- can clarify the purpose of their learning and what is expected;
- clarify performance at the provincial standard;
- facilitate communication with parents and students; and
- promote fair and consistent assessment within subjects and courses.

What do they look like?
Exemplars:

- provide sample tasks for teachers and students as well as the curriculum expectations related to the task;
- provide sample student responses at each of the four levels of achievement;
- represent , as closely as possible, singular leveled responses, but it is fairly rare to have all four categories at the same level;
- provide teacher notes and instructions to guide the teacher through the task;
- provide student notes and instructions to guide the student through the task;
- provide follow up activities for teachers;
- provide task-specific assessment chart or rubric; and
- provide comments/next steps, which offer suggestions for improving achievement.

Reflection —
Have I considered using the performance task from the exemplar project?