



## EFFECTIVE USE OF DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

Responsibility:	<i>Superintendent, Student Achievement &amp; Well-Being</i>
Legal References:	<i>Education Act: Section 265 (1)(b,i) Duties of Principal; Education Act: Section 264 (1)(a,b,d) Duties of Teachers; Education Act: Section 286 (1)(a,b,c) Duties of Supervisory Officers; Regulation 298 s. 20 (a); s. 11(1)(a), (3)(a,k)</i>
Related References:	<i>Board Policy, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting 2010; Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010; Policy/Program Memorandum 155, WRDSB Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting Handbooks for Elementary and Secondary</i>
Revisions:	<i>March 2016</i>
Reviewed:	<i>March 2016</i>

### 1. Preamble

- 1.1. Diagnostic assessment tools are used to inform teaching and learning practices in the classroom in support of student learning and achievement. Diagnostic assessment is the term used to describe formal and informal processes to obtain precise information about students' knowledge and skills. Focused observation, analysis of student work, and the use of specific assessment tools are examples of processes used. Information from diagnostic assessment helps teachers determine where individual students are in their acquisition of knowledge and skills, so that instruction can be personalized and tailored to provide the appropriate next steps for learning.
- 1.2. There is a shared understanding across the education community that the use of diagnostic assessment tools contributes positively to student learning outcomes.
- 1.3. Effective assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices play an important role in achieving the three core priorities of the Ministry of Education: high levels of student achievement, reduced gaps in student achievement, and increased public confidence in publicly funded education.

### 2. Context

- 2.1 *Growing Success* outlines the policy that supports effective practices, and the Ministry of Education is committed to the continued implementation of this policy. The Waterloo Region District School Board has created Board Policy, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting, 2010 which serves as a foundation for all practices related to assessment, evaluation and reporting.

- 2.2 *Growing Success* requires teachers to conduct diagnostic and formative assessment as essential steps for assessment for learning and assessment as learning. Specifically, teachers need to:
- 2.2.1 Plan assessment concurrently and integrate it seamlessly with instruction;
  - 2.2.2 Share learning goals and success criteria with students at the outset of learning to ensure that teachers have a common and shared understanding of these goals and criteria as learning progresses;
  - 2.2.3 Gather information about student learning before, during, and at or near the end of a period of instruction, using a variety of assessment strategies and tools;
  - 2.2.4 Use assessment to inform instruction, guide next steps, and help students monitor their progress towards achieving their learning goals;
  - 2.2.5 Analyze and interpret evidence of learning;
  - 2.2.6 Give and receive specific and timely descriptive feedback about student learning; and
  - 2.2.7 Help students to develop skills and peer and self-assessment.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This administrative procedure applies to the use of formal diagnostic assessment tools.
- 3.2 This administrative procedure does not apply to the following types of assessment:
- 3.2.1 Special education assessments. These include educational and/or professional assessments conducted to identify students with special education needs, to determine the special education programs and/or services required by these students, and/or to support decisions related to such programs and services (e.g., Reading Records for Empower and Early Literacy Intervention (ELI) students, Woodcock-Johnson III Diagnostic Reading Battery, Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Keymath, assessments used by psychologists and speech and language pathologists)
  - 3.2.2 Large-scale assessments. These include provincial assessments conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) – the assessment of reading, writing, and mathematics in Grades 3 and 6; the assessment of mathematics in Grade 9; and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. They also include assessments conducted as part of ministry-approved national and international assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP). They may also include ministry-mandated assessments.

### **4. Use of Diagnostic Assessment Tools in Support of Student Learning**

- 4.1 Diagnostic assessment usually takes place at the start of a school year, term, semester, or teaching unit.
- 4.2 Data may be collected through a variety of means, which can include observation, student portfolios, and student self-assessment, among others. This information helps teachers plan daily classroom instruction and assessment that are differentiated and personalized, and set appropriate learning goals with their students.
- 4.3 Research confirms the importance of using various kinds of information to develop and monitor plans to improve student learning (e.g., Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement). School and board leaders are expected to use data to identify trends, strengths, and weaknesses that can inform specific actions for improvement in student achievement.

- 4.4 In addition to the fundamental principles set out in *Growing Success*, teachers, principals, and school board staff will use the following principles when selecting diagnostic assessment tools:
  - 4.4.1 All available classroom, school, and board data and information (e.g., information from day-to-day classroom assessments, data from provincial report cards, and EQAO data) should be taken into account when determining what additional data and information, if any, are needed for board improvement planning.
  - 4.4.2 School board staff reviews diagnostic assessment tools to ensure that the tools support the collection of valid and reliable evidence.
  - 4.4.3 In developing the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement, principals and school board staff must clearly communicate with teachers the purpose of the tool and how it is used.
  - 4.4.4 Duplication of effort and excessive student testing are avoided to allow for effective use of instructional time.

## 5. Criteria for Selection of Diagnostic Assessment Tools

- 5.1 In selecting diagnostic assessment tools, teachers, teacher affiliates, principals, and school board staff, in their respective roles and responsibilities, will consider whether a diagnostic assessment tool:
  - 5.1.1 Is related appropriately to the knowledge and skills identified in the curriculum expectations;
  - 5.1.2 Is designed to provide information that assists in identifying student needs and targeting improvements;
  - 5.1.3 Identifies strengths and gaps in students' knowledge and skills and provides sufficient evidence from which inferences about students' learning can be made;
  - 5.1.4 Is appropriate in content, design, and mode of delivery;
  - 5.1.5 Provides a range of targeted strategies that teachers can use to plan next steps in instruction and student learning; and
  - 5.1.6 Forms part of a balanced, comprehensive assessment system that provides detailed evidence of each student's development.

## 6. Teachers and the Use of Diagnostic Assessment Tools

- 6.1 In order to inform their instruction, teachers must use diagnostic assessment during the school year to improve understanding of student learning needs, and to inform planning of classroom instruction.
- 6.2 Teachers must select the diagnostic tool(s) from the Board's approved list.
- 6.3 In using diagnostic assessment tools, teachers will ensure that:
  - 6.3.1 The tools are administered judiciously so that they support the identification of student learning needs, track progress, and supplement instruction;
  - 6.3.2 The tools are administered judiciously so that they produce the type of data and information required to effectively inform classroom instruction;
  - 6.3.3 The tools are administered in a manner that will allow the teacher to assess students' progress and share such information with the principal upon request; and
  - 6.3.4 The information is used to guide students in focusing their learning efforts, setting and monitoring goals, and determining next steps in learning.
- 6.4 Teachers use their professional judgement to determine:
  - 6.4.1 Which assessment and/or evaluation tool(s) from the Board's list of pre-approved assessment tools is applicable;
  - 6.4.2 For which student(s) {individual, small group or whole class}; and
  - 6.4.3 The frequency and timing of the use of the diagnostic assessment tool; and

6.4.4 The appropriate timing of the use of the diagnostic assessment tools.

6.5 Following the administration of a board approved diagnostic assessment, Teachers will enter the information from that assessment into a central data warehouse. This will give teachers and administrators access to reports to monitor student learning.

## **7. Role of School Administrators**

7.1 Principals play an important role in ensuring a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on student learning. Through the use of a variety of tools to support and monitor student progress, principals will continue to provide leadership when working in collaboration with teachers to gather information about student learning in support of school and board improvement plans for student achievement.

## **8. Support for Diagnostic Assessment**

8.1 The Board shall establish and provide a list of approved diagnostic assessment tool(s) that are consistent with their board plan for improving student learning and achievement.

8.2 In consultation with teachers and principals, boards will continue to collaborate to develop a common understanding of the planning process and the need for student data and information that can inform actions taken to improve student learning.

8.3 The Board will review and update, where necessary, the list of diagnostic assessment tool(s) and will release the information via a system memo in the fall of each school year.