



Assessment Policy



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement	2
Curriculum & learning	3
What is assessed at FirstSteps	4
Purpose of assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is assessed?• When and how do we assess<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Differential assessment○ Formative assessment○ Summative assessment	5
Assessment strategies	9
Assessment tools	10
PYP exhibition	12
Reporting	12
Glossary	13

2007

We don't Teach
We Educate

I. MISSION STATEMENT OF FIRSTSTEPS SCHOOL

FirstSteps School aims to move forward with the already adopted motto "We don't Teach – We EDUCATE" and the Mission "INDIA FOR WORLD"

- I** Inculcate universal brotherhood and values
- N** Nurture innocence, uniqueness and creativity
- D** Develop concern for environment in particular and the Planet Earth in general
- I** Imbibe entrepreneurial skills & international mindedness
- A** Acquire habit of inquiry

- F** Foster international education system
- O** Open mind for the development of intellect, self-esteem, self-confidence and critical learning
- R** Respect one-self and others

- W** Welcome the change and develop it with a positive attitude and vision
- O** Organise self-discipline
- R** Right environment to develop inquisitiveness for learning and to dissipate learning beyond the classroom
- L** Learners for life time and leaders of tomorrow
- D** Develop the virtue of understanding others' perspective

**We don't Teach
We Educate**

PHILOSOPHY

I. CURRICULUM AND LEARNING

The students differ in the strengths of learning preferences and styles therefore Differential learning is fundamental in our current educational practices. Differential education modifies teaching strategies, materials and pace according to the significant differences in the students interests, learning styles, abilities and previous experiences. The differential teaching strategies involve the following learning styles.

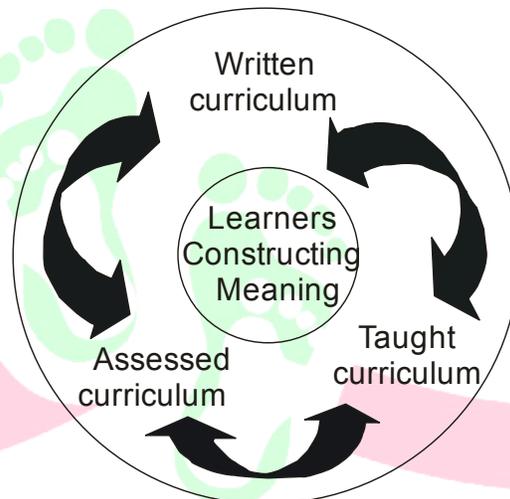
- Visual (Spatial) – prefer using images and spatial understanding
- Aural (Auditory-musical) – prefer using sound and music
- Verbal (Linguistic) – prefers using words, both in speech and written
- Physical (Kinesthetic) – prefers using their bodies, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical (Mathematical) – prefer using logic and reasoning systems
- Social (Interpersonal) – prefer to learn in groups or with other people
- Solitary (Interpersonal) – prefer to work alone and use self study

One of the most important things to remember when differentiating for learning is that the primary goal of these profiles is to find out about how students learn best, not to label them.

The elements that defines curriculum at FirstSteps School are:

- The written curriculum or “What do we want to learn?”
The learning outcomes, concepts, skills, attitudes and actions we have identified in the school’s written curriculum.
- The taught curriculum or “How best will we learn?”
The teaching and learning strategies that best support the types of learning identified in the written curriculum.
- The learned curriculum or “How will we know what we have learned?”

This can be seen in the following diagram:



II. WHAT IS ASSESSMENT AT FIRSTSTEPS

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning, it is central to the PYP goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding students through the five essential elements of learning : the acquisition of knowledge, the understanding of concepts, the mastering of skills, the development of attitudes and the decision to take action.

The assessment component in the school's curriculum is subdivided into five related areas:

- **Planning-** how we plan to incorporate assessment into our long range curriculum overview plans, unit plans and daily teaching
- **Assessing-** how we discover what children have learned
- **Recording-** how we record this evidence of learning
- **Evaluation-** how we judge the evidence of learning based on assessment data
- **Reporting-** how we communicate assessment and evaluation information to students, parents, teachers and external organizations.

We don't Teach
We Educate

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

The main purposes of assessment are to promote student learning, to provide information about student learning and to contribute to the efficacy of the programme in order to evaluate and improve the overall curriculum and curriculum delivery.

1. Student learning is promoted through:

- Assessing the student's prior knowledge and experience brought to the topic or task;
- Planning the teaching and learning in order to meet individual or group needs;
- Building a profile of student understanding by providing evidence concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the individual student;
- Engaging students in their reflection on their learning and in the assessment of their work and the work of others;
- Providing positive motivation and reinforcement for students who strive to reach their personal best;
- Providing future targets and realistic goals as well as to amend teaching methods;
- Providing reports for parents and students outlining progress and performance in relation to learning outcomes.

2. Information about student learning is obtained from:

- Examples of student work or performance or action;
- Statistics based on explicit benchmarks and/or rubrics;
- External assessment results;
- Formative and summative assessments to show the process as well as the product.

3. The educational programme is evaluated by:

- Assessing student performance in relation to the general and specific learning outcomes of the programme;
- Assessing group performance in relation to other classes or groups both internally and externally;
- Informing others, including students, colleagues and parents;
- Monitoring student progress;
- Holding schools and teachers accountable for student achievement;

- Informing and influencing curriculum and instructional practices;
- Assisting in comparing our students against local and international benchmarks;
- Providing evidence of teaching effectiveness and methodology in meeting the needs of the individual student;
- Promoting higher standards for the pupils and improving student performance;
- Supporting continuity and progression throughout the school.

WHAT IS ASSESSED?

We assess student performance and progress based upon clear and explicit criteria in subject domains identified by the school. We also collect evidence about other essential elements of the programme especially in relation to the transdisciplinary skills and/or the integration of particular skills. The curriculum we teach and the tools we use to assess student performance and understanding emphasize important principles of international education as prescribed by the International Baccalaureate Organization. These principles include the development of inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

Throughout the school, feedback is provided on the attributes of the IB Learner Profile. This profile serves to increase the student's awareness of and sensitivity to the experiences of others beyond the local or national community.

WHEN AND HOW DO WE ASSESS?

As we are concerned with assessing a wide range of learning outcomes and expectations, it is obvious that we need a range of assessment strategies that are consistent with current thinking on assessment. Assessment should be both formative and summative and viewed as authentic, essential, rich, engaging and feasible, allowing the student to become part of the evaluative process.

In the earliest stages of curriculum planning, good assessment practice requires the teacher to build assessment from the start and link assessment tasks to the central idea of the unit under study or the curriculum learning outcome. The quality of any assessment depends first and foremost on the clarity and appropriateness of the purpose. With these outcomes, central ideas and assessment tasks in mind, activities and resources can then be selected.

Differential Assessment – putting it into practice:

- Formative Assessment
- Summative Assessment

Formative Assessment –

Using formative assessment is fundamental in differentiated learning, it allows facilitators to assess students need for differentiation. Assessment for learning has four important characteristics:

- Informal
- Focused on learning
- High response
- Fosters metacognition

It is a continuous assessment usually to be taken at the end of each line of inquiry. These assessments are diagnostic and provide continuous feedback to teachers and students enabling them to achieve their potential. It aims at identifying the learning needs of student, forming a part of the learning process itself.

The steps for effective formative assessment planning are:

- Determine the purpose: Why do need to collect the information? To step up groups, planning activities or determining times for assessment.
- Establish of focus: You can focus on learner outcomes or sequential learning.
- Choose and use a strategy: Make sure the strategy chosen aligns with purpose of collecting the information. The teacher should pick strategies that the students will enjoy. Determine when the information is needed. Decide how much time can be used to carry it out. Decide how students could demonstrate understanding.
- Record the results: the teacher doesn't necessarily have to write down the results, however she must recognize when she receives a result in order to use it to design differentiation, track student progress or improve future instruction.
- Interpret results and take action: The teacher should take a look at the original purpose for the assessment and decide how the result can affect the teaching for the better.

A variety of tools are used for conducting these assessments such as worksheets, quizzes, field trip, projects, assignment, group discussion, symposium, poster making, model making, debates, role plays etc. The variety of tools used give chance to the facilitator to take into account various skills involved such as writing, aural, reading, comprehension, mental mathematics, musical, kinesthetic, communication etc

For each Unit of Inquiry minimum of four to five tasks are taken including a task based on standalone subjects. These tasks are conducted in the class and are not assigned for home.

Summative Assessment

These are used to provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgment about student competence or programme effectiveness. The process of collecting and interpreting information to judge the student's achievement against predetermined criteria for the purpose of grading and reporting.

Some key points to ensure proper differentiate assessment are:

- Be realistic
- Create opportunities for students to experience a variety of ways to demonstrate their learning.
- Consider what types and variety of assessment tools and strategies are best suited to the learning outcomes being addressed.
- Ensure students can deal with the choices that they are offered.
- Address both strengths and challenges.

This would be conducted at the completion of each unit of inquiry, wherein students will be given a transdisciplinary summative task in order to assess how much they have perceived from the topic, how has previous learning changed, what connections are students able to make between new and old learning and what are the attributes of the learner profile that has developed over the length of the inquiry.

In addition to this task, summative assessments are also taken in standalone subjects in order to evaluate the individualistic performance.



ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

It is essential that the assessment strategies below are not used in isolation but are seen as a range of approaches and therefore provide a balanced view of the whole child.

Observations- All students are observed often and regularly, with the teacher taking a focus from a wide angle, for example, from focusing on the whole class to focusing on one student or activity, or, focusing observations as a non-participant to observing from within as a participant.

Open-ended tasks- These are situations in which students are presented with a stimulus and asked to communicate an original response. The answer may be a brief written answer, a drawing, a chart, a diagram or a calculation.

Performance task (product) assessments- These are goal-directed tasks with established criteria that are authentic challenges and problems. There are numerous approaches to the challenges/problems that require the use of many skills and there is rarely only one correct response. Audio, video and narrative records, as well as rubrics, are often useful for this kind of assessment.

Portfolios- There are collections of student work that are designed to demonstrate growth, higher order thinking skills, creativity, reflection and successes.

Process focused assessments- The student's skills and processes (transdisciplinary/integrated skills, attitudes and actions) are observed often and regularly and the observations are recorded by:

- Noting both typical and non-typical behaviours
- Collecting multiple observations to enhance reliability
- Synthesizing evidence from different contexts to increase validity

Teachers use a system of note taking and record keeping that is age appropriate and minimizes writing and recording time. Teachers use tools such as checklists, inventories and narrative descriptions to record observations of their students.

Selected responses- These are single occasion, one-dimensional exercises. Tests and quizzes are the most familiar examples of this form of assessment.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The previously identified assessment strategies are put into practice and recorded throughout the school by using the following assessment tools:

Anecdotal records- Anecdotal records are brief written notes based on student observations. These records will be systematically compiled and organized to increase their objectivity and validity.

Benchmarks/exemplars- These are samples of student work that serve as concrete standards against which other samples are judged. Benchmarks/Exemplars are used in conjunction with rubrics and continuums.

Checklists- These are lists of information, data, attributes or elements that should be present. A marking scheme is a type of checklist.

Continuums- There are visual representations of developmental stages of learning. They show a progression of achievement or identify where a student is in a process.

Rubrics- Rubrics are established sets of criteria used for scoring or rating student tests, portfolios or performances. The descriptors tell the student and the assessor (who may be another student or parent, as well as the teacher) what characteristics or signs to look for in the work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale. Rubrics are presented at the beginning of the task to be assessed so that students know what a range of achievement looks like and what is expected from the start. Students as well as teachers may develop rubrics. Research suggests that rubrics use an even numbered scale rating and it is suggested that a four scaled rating be utilized.

Students benefit from rubrics in the following ways.

Rubrics provide students with:

- Clear performances targets
- Descriptions of elements of quality
- Knowledge of how their work will be evaluated
- A criteria for evaluating and improving work

Teachers benefit from rubrics, as they provide:

- Specific criteria for evaluating student performance and product

- A “tool” for increasing consistency
- Clear targets for instruction

Other tools currently in use at FirstSteps School include:

- Oral reports/presentations
- Peer and self-reflections and evaluations
- Written tests

These assessment tools can provide holistic and/or analytical scores.

The following diagram outlines the tools most likely to be used with the assessment strategies identified earlier.

Tool →	Rubrics	Benchmarks/ Exemplars	Checklists	Anecdotal records	Continuums	Standardized tests
Strategy ↓						
Observation	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Performance	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Process- focused Assessments			✓	✓	✓	
Selected Responses		✓	✓		✓	✓
Open-ended Tasks	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Portfolios	✓		✓	✓	✓	

We also believe that assessment should be:

- Honest, accurate, fair and reliable;
- Modified to suit different learning needs and styles;
- User-friendly for both teachers and students;
- Cumulative, consistent and valid;
- Clear, concise and as culturally neutral as possible;
- Significant, engaging, relevant and challenging;
- Positive and encourage growth;
- Able to cover a broad spectrum of understanding, knowledge and skills;
- Linked to/suited to the task undertaken;
- Regularly and accurately reported to students and parents.

THE PYP EXHIBITION

The PYP exhibition is an extended collaborative inquiry which is undertaken by students in Grade 5. Within the Lower School, the PYP exhibition is a required summative assessment. The exhibition provides the culminating experiences of the learner's engagement with the PYP. It unites the students, teachers and parents in an activity that captures the essence of the PYP: transdisciplinary inquiry conducted in a spirit of personal and shared responsibility. It is a celebration which synthesizes the programme and shares it with the whole school community. The exhibition marks the student's passage to the middle school from the lower school.

REPORTING

Reporting is an integral part of any assessment or observation. It is a communication tool, which provides feedback on the effectiveness of teaching learning process.

Reporting at FirstSteps is in the form of Performance Profile of a student, which is generated through a continuous and comprehensive report.

This report is based on daily observations, anecdotal records, formative assessments, summative assessment and other assessment tools and strategies. This report is periodically shared with students, parents and other facilitators with an aim to the discern strengths and areas of development in teaching-learning strategies, ensuring students progress.



GLOSSARY

Assessment is gathering and analysing of information about student performance and programme effectiveness. It identifies what students know, understand, can do and feel at different stages in the learning process.

Analytical scores are separate scores for different aspects of the work. They yield more information than holistic scores and are often used for diagnostic purposes or when students need specific feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.

Authentic Assessment can be defined as “a valid assessment system that provides information about the particular tasks on which students succeed or need reinforcement, but more important, it also presents tasks that are worthwhile, significant and meaningful”. Authentic assessment includes a variety of procedures such as observations, journals, oral explanations, rubrics and portfolios.

Evaluation is the process of making a judgment about student progress based on sufficient assessment information.

Formative assessment is interwoven with the daily learning and helps teachers and students find out what they already know in order to plan the next stage of learning. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked; neither can function effectively or purposefully without the other.

Criteria referenced assessment- Students learning and performance are measured against clear criteria through the use of assessment tasks. This means that student work is measured against clearly defined levels of achievement.

Holistic scores are single scores based on the overall impression of a sample of work, rated against established criteria.

Reporting is a means of giving feedback from assessment. It is communication to students, parents and others about student’s progress based on assessment and evaluation information.

Strategy is the type of approach used to collect data about and to uncover or expose levels of understanding.

Summative Assessment takes place at the end of the teaching and learning process and gives the children opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned. Summative assessments may include any of, and any combination of, the following acquisition of data, synthesis of information, application of knowledge and processes.

Task is a specific activity the student completes to demonstrate understanding. It is what the child is doing.

Tool is the instrument used to collect the data.

