

MMSD ASSESSMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to provide stakeholders involved with educational assessment within the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) a consistent foundation upon which to base their practice.

KEY DEFINITIONS

In this policy, three concepts should be kept in mind and clearly defined:

Assessment The process of gathering information that reflects levels of student achievement.

Evaluation The process of judging achievements (results of assessments) to see if they match desired standards.

Grading The process of transforming assessment information into a symbol that communicates the results of an evaluation.

PHILOSOPHY

The development, selection, administration, and use of assessments in this district shall be guided by the following beliefs about assessment:

- Assessment measures what is valued in student learning.
- Assessment practice is driven by the belief that every person has a continuous capacity to learn.
- Sound assessment is essential to high-quality instruction. It should inform instruction, result in improved teaching and learning, and, therefore, be integrated with instruction.
- All assessment users must have the desire, opportunity, and resources needed to develop, select, and use sound, instructionally relevant assessment.
- All assessments used in this district will meet five standards of quality. They will:
 - (1) arise from and reflect a clear and specific target group;
 - (2) serve a clearly articulated purpose;
 - (3) rely on a proper assessment method;
 - (4) sample the target group appropriately; and

(5) to the extent possible, control for extraneous factors that can cause the mis-measurement of achievement.

- A variety of assessment methods are necessary, acceptable, and encouraged in measuring student achievement in relation to the district's learning standards.
- Evidence from assessment activities should yield valid inferences about students' learning, appropriately representing the standards students are expected to achieve.
- Whenever possible, assessments should be designed to serve multiple purposes and coordinated across levels of decision making to promote efficient, cost-effective assessment and consistency in communication.

FOCUS OF ASSESSMENT

The focus of assessment in the district will be student attainment or mastery of those core skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to satisfy the learning standards in each content area.

PURPOSE

Generally, the purpose of assessment is to provide valid information for making educational decisions. The primary decisions are those made by the student and teacher regarding the student's learning progress. However, many other types of decisions are made based on assessment results extending beyond the classroom as well. Assessments must be appropriately designed to meet these additional purposes. Other purposes of student assessment include:

- Modifying instructional strategies and curriculum;
- Communicating student achievement to parents and students;
- Documenting the need for exceptional education programming;
- Reporting district-wide student achievement results to the Board of Education and the public;
- Contributing to program evaluations;
- Informing policymaking.

STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE

1. Educational Standards - Alignment of learning activities, teaching strategies and assessment practices with the district's standards is essential for effective education. Learning, teaching and assessment are enhanced when linked to standards. Assessment processes should reflect the subject area content and curriculum, and involve the performance of abilities representing the educational standards.

2. Openness - Assessment purposes, procedures and results should be widely communicated in ways that are understandable and useful to students, parents, and the community. All aspects of the assessment process will be open to review and scrutiny.

All assessments will reveal in advance the criteria by which student performance is judged. Criteria in grading will be clear, appropriate, published, consistently applied, and understood by those affected. Students should be shown examples of exemplary work that can be used as a model for their own work.

3. Equity and Diversity - Assessment must be non-discriminatory and should support every student's opportunity to learn. Assessment systems and all their parts, including standards, tasks, procedures, and uses, must be fair to all students and non-discriminatory. Assessments must respect cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds and allow for diversity in learning styles and abilities. Equitable opportunities for limited English proficient students must be provided.

4. Variety of Methods - An assessment strategy using multiple methods is essential in order to measure with confidence student learning across the district's learning standards. A body of evidence, many measures taken across time, is required to adequately sample student achievement on the standards. Assessment design should reflect the developmental needs and learning styles of students.

5. Repeated Opportunities - Abilities become integral to students when they have repeated opportunities to experience, practice, demonstrate, and assess their competency in varied contexts and levels. Assessments should be designed to provide students with multiple opportunities to improve the quality of their work before it becomes "final."

6. Authentic Experiences - Assessments should require performances that are related to those required in actual or anticipated situations and should require students to engage in the thoughtful application of knowledge and skills to real issues and problems.

7. Student Involvement - Student growth is enhanced when they are given both an explicit statement of standards they must meet and a way of seeing what they have learned. Assessment must include ample opportunities for students to monitor their learning through self-assessment.

8. Continuous Improvement - Assessment should not be a series of discrete milestones but part of a continuous, coherent learning process directed toward achieving standards. Assessment is most effective when it yields frequent, on-going feedback as part of a continuous process of improving student performance, teacher instruction, the curriculum, and the assessment system.

9. Reporting Assessment Results - The purpose of an assessment determines the

appropriate use of its results. In keeping with the primary purpose of enhancing student learning, the emphasis for reporting assessment results should be on identifying and reporting educational progress and growth, rather than comparisons of individuals or schools. Assessment information should not be used for judgmental or political purposes if such use would likely cause harm to students or to the effectiveness of teachers or schools. Methods of communicating student growth will vary depending on audience and purpose. Regardless of purpose and method, all assessment results should be clear and understandable.

10. *Process* - The right to appeal important educational decisions made on the basis of assessment results must be established and communicated to all affected persons. Assessment findings and due process information must be presented to such persons in the first language of parents/guardians.