LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

MEMO TO: Elementary and Secondary School Administrators
Teaching Staff

c. Senior Administration
ETFO

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SUBJECT: **Diagnostic Assessment in Support of Student Learning**

DATE: 2024 October 09

The purpose of diagnostic assessment is to inform instructional practices in support of student learning and achievement.

As outlined in *Growing Success*, "diagnostic assessment occurs before instruction begins so teachers can determine students' readiness to learn new knowledge and skills, as well as obtain information about their interests and learning preferences". (2010, p. 31)

The information gained through diagnostic assessments "is used by teachers and students to determine what students already know and can do with respect to the knowledge and skills identified in the overall and specific expectations, so teachers can plan instruction and assessment that are differentiated and personalized and work with students to set appropriate learning goals" (*Growing Success,* 2010, p. 31). Student achievement results gained from diagnostic assessments are not used for marks and/or evaluation purposes as the students have yet to be formally taught the content. The results gained from any assessments are to be used to design instruction which is responsive to student learning needs. Ultimately, the use of diagnostic and formative assessments saves time for educators as it narrows their programming focus to students' specific needs.

Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 155: *Diagnostic Assessment in Support of Student Learning*, issued on January 7, 2013, outlines how diagnostic assessment tools are to be used by teachers to inform teaching and learning to support student achievement. The information in this memorandum aligns with *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools: First Edition, Covering Grades 1 to 12 (2010), Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools, The Kindergarten Addendum (2016) and TVDSB Reporting Student Achievement Procedure #5015a.*

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We build each student's tomorrow, every day.

"Growing Success requires teachers to conduct diagnostic and formative assessment as essential steps of assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning. Specifically, teachers need to:
- plan assessment concurrently and integrate it seamlessly with instruction;
- share learning goals and success criteria with students at the outset of learning to ensure that students and teachers have a common and shared understanding of these goals and criteria as learning progresses;
- 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;
- use assessment to inform instruction, guide next steps, and help students monitor their progress towards achieving their learning goals;
- analyze and interpret evidence of learning;
- give and receive specific and timely descriptive feedback about student learning; and
- help students to develop skills of peer and self-assessment." (p. 28-29)

Use of Diagnostic Assessments

Teachers will ensure that:
- the tools are administered judiciously so that they support the identification of student learning needs, track progress, and supplement instruction;
- the tools are administered judiciously so that they produce the type of data and information required to effectively inform classroom instruction;
- 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
- the information is used to guide students in focusing their learning efforts, setting and monitoring goals, and determining next steps in learning *(PPM 155).*

Teachers will use their professional judgement regarding diagnostic assessment to determine:
- the diagnostic assessment tools from the Board's approved diagnostic list that are applicable;
- which student(s) will be assessed (individual student, small group, or whole class);
- the frequency of use of the diagnostic assessment tools; and
- the appropriate timing of the use of the diagnostic assessment tools *(PPM No. 155).*

Teachers must utilize diagnostic assessment during the school year, selecting tools from the Board's approved list (PPM No. 155). At any point in time, teachers must be able to articulate a student's level of achievement based on data-informed evidence. Teachers should be prepared to share/discuss/demonstrate evidence of the diagnostic assessments they have administered when requested by the Principal.

Administrators are encouraged to engage in collaborative and purposeful conversations with school staff to review any diagnostic assessments that have been completed in order to assist in determining the most appropriate instructional practices, establish annual goals for students, or make evidence-based resource allocation decisions. For example, this data may be used to determine classroom guided reading groupings and personalized support which is needed.

Large Scale Assessments

This memorandum applies to the use of formal diagnostic assessment tools. It does not apply to:

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- ***Special Education Assessments***, which include professional assessments to identify students with special education needs, assessments to determine appropriate special education programs and/or services that may be required for a student and/or to support decisions related to such programs and services.

- ***Initial Assessment for Multilingual Learners***, which includes an oral, reading, writing and math assessment. The purpose of the Initial Assessment is to place students on the Steps to English Proficiency (STEP) continuum and provide course recommendations for secondary students.

- ***Large-Scale Assessments***, such as EQAO, other Ministry-approved national or international assessments, and other assessments required by the Ministry.

Procedures

This memo provides direction to Principals, Vice-Principals, and teaching staff regarding consistent practice with the effective use of diagnostic assessments. In addition to diagnostic assessments determined by teachers **to inform** their instructional practices **in support** of student learning, teachers will continue to use the Board's approved assessment tools.

TVDSB-approved diagnostic assessment tools (January 2024):

Assessment	Recommended Grade Level(s)
Choice of Literacy Assessments:	
Phonological Awareness Assessment	Early Years and Primary
TVDSB Letter Name and Letter Sound Assessment	Early Years and Grade 1
High Frequency Words Assessment (HFW)	Early Years and Primary
Primary Spelling Inventory (PSI)	Primary
Elementary Spelling Inventory (ESI)	Junior and Intermediate
Upper Elementary Spelling Inventory (USI)	Intermediate
Décode	Primary French Immersion
Escalire	Primary, Junior, Intermediate French Immersion
TVDSB-Created Assessments for Each Elementary Grade and Secondary Course (Grade 9, Grade 10, Grade 11, Grade 12, OLC)	Primary, Junior, Intermediate, Senior
Choices of Math Assessments:	
TVDSB-Created Assessments Scope and Sequence (1-8) Grade 3 and 6 Check-ins Secondary Skill Builders	Grades 1 - 12
Professional Resources and Instruction for Mathematics Education (PRIME)	K – 8, Numbers and Operations

Please note that diagnostic assessments for reading fluency and comprehension are currently under review and will be included when they are available.
Assessment tools are available in schools, on our Literacy and Numeracy SharePoint Sites, or the EQAO website.

This memo will be published with updates, as needed.

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