



# Birchwood Elementary School Assessment Policy

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### 1. Birchwood Mission Statement

At Birchwood Elementary School we strive to develop knowledgeable, skilled, compassionate, principled, and action-oriented young people. We want Birchwood students to become internationally-minded individuals who help create a better world.

To that end, we commit ourselves to:

- Honor diversity and individuality in a safe learning environment
- Build a community where students, families, and staff collaborate with each other to help students realize their academic, creative, social, and physical potential
- Act with integrity and honesty
- Take on new challenges, learn to be resourceful and resilient, and use these skills to become lifelong learners
- Become caring, compassionate, and respectful people who have a global understanding of the world
- Make balanced and healthy choices in our lives to achieve well-being for ourselves and other
- Develop teamwork skills and share our learning with others



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## 2. School Assessment Philosophy

At Birchwood, we believe that assessment is a process that involves the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. The primary reason we assess is to inform practice. Through varied assessments, we aim to identify what students know, understand, can do and feel at different stages throughout the learning process. Teachers design assessments that take into account the diverse ways that our students learn and express their understandings. We recognize the importance of assessing both the process and product of inquiry and we aim to integrate and support both. Students and teachers are both actively engaged in assessing students' progress. Reflection and students' self-assessments play an important role.

## 3. Purpose of Assessment

*"Continuous assessment provides insights into students' understanding, knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is also a means of exploring the learning styles and individual differences of the students in order to differentiate instruction."*

*(Making the PYP Happen, 2007)*

We believe the purpose of assessment is to:

- Provide feedback on the learning process
- Monitor and track student growth, between points in time
- Facilitate and encourage self-reflection
- Measure effectiveness of instruction
- Reflect student learning strategies and styles
- Inform curriculum development and program evaluation
- Encourage student engagement and motivation
- Inform lesson planning for whole group, small group and individual instruction
- Offer opportunities for families to support and celebrate student learning



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## 4. Assessment Practices

### A. What is assessed?

The PYP curriculum model incorporates five essential elements of learning:

- understanding of concepts
- acquisition of knowledge
- mastery of skills
- development of positive attitudes
- initiation of responsible action

This curriculum model encompasses and enriches Common Core State Standards, as well as other district learning standards. Student progress is assessed in each of these elements across all content areas. Assessment of specific knowledge and skills within literacy and mathematics is assessed both in and outside the units of inquiry. Formative and summative, state and district assessments are used to evaluate student performance in each of these core content areas.

### B. Who is involved in assessment?

*“Students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing the students’ progress as part of the development of their wider critical-thinking and self-assessment skills. Teachers should also be concerned with evaluating the efficacy of the program.”*

*IB-PYP Assessment Handbook, pp1-2*

Teachers are responsible for initiating and implementing assessment activities that are embedded throughout the transdisciplinary program of inquiry, as well as in areas of single subject skills-based instruction. Students are actively involved in self assessing, reflecting on their progress and engaging in personal goal setting as it relates to their learning, development of attitudes and attributes and/or initiated actions. The school community, including specialists (Title reading, counsellor, special education, etc.) and the building administrator, are involved in analysis of assessment results for program evaluation. We use an MTSS (Multi Tiered System of Support) model where a team comes together three times throughout the year to analyze at a Student Growth Collaboration (SGC) meeting. Both teachers and students are actively engaged in assessing progress.



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### C. When does assessment occur?

Assessment occurs throughout the learning process. We believe the most effective assessments are those generated from and occurring within the ongoing teaching activities that take place in the context of everyday teaching and learning.

At Birchwood, we used a balanced assessment system that includes both summative and formative assessment. Additionally, teachers and students frequently engage in pre-assessments to determine prior knowledge. Our understanding of these assessment forms is consistent with that of the IB:

*“Summative assessment: aimed at determining a student’s achievement level, generally at the end of a course of study or unit of work, and*

*Formative assessment: aimed at identifying the learning needs of students and forming part of the learning process itself.”*

*(IB- Towards a Continuum of International Education, 2008)*

### D. How do we assess?

At Birchwood, we utilize a wide range of assessment strategies and tools.

- a) **Observation:** Students are observed regularly as a whole group, in small groups and as individual learners. Observation includes observing student behaviors, strategies students use, student oral responses, student written responses and student approximations. Recording tools include rubrics, checklists, anecdotal records and continuums.
- b) **Performance Assessments:** Students are assessed using tasks that have identified criteria. Students will demonstrate problem solving strategies that are authentic and significant. Students may approach the problem in a variety of ways and demonstrate application of multiple learning strategies. Students may share the understandings in different ways, including audio, video, visual, written forms. Recording tools include rubrics, exemplars, anecdotal records and continuums.
- c) **Process-Focused Assessments:** Students are observed regularly, with teachers making notes of behaviors, skills, approaches to learning, etc. Multiple assessments are synthesized to create a more accurate picture of the strategies students consistently use. Recording tools include rubrics, checklists, inventories and narrative descriptions (including logs).



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- d) **Selected Responses:** Students are assessed on a single occasion to assess performance of identified learning targets, including tests and quizzes. Recording tools include checklists and continuums.
- e) **Open-ended Tasks:** Students are assessed using a prompt or a stimulus for a task. Their responses are original and may include writing as well as visual representations of their thinking. Recording tools include rubrics, exemplars, anecdotal records and continuums.
- f) **Self-Assessments:** Students will look at their individual and/or group work and assess using specific criteria in the form of rubrics or checklists that reflect grade level standards and expectations. Students will reflect on what they did well and what they need to work on in the form of goals. Recording tools include checklists, rubrics, and exemplars.

### E. How do we report and celebrate information about assessment?

Reporting student progress includes feedback based on evaluation of information gained from both formal and informal assessment in a variety of areas, including the units of inquiry. We believe that effective reporting should involve parents, students and teachers as partners. We will strive to make the informative we report clear, understandable to all parties, comprehensive, honest, fair and credible.

The following are methods of reporting information about assessment currently used at Birchwood.

#### Conferences

- **Teacher-student(s):** Teachers meet individually and in small groups to provide feedback to students. This type of conference occurs frequently in order to support and encourage the student's learning and teaching plan.
- **Teacher-parent:** Teachers and parents initiate meetings together throughout the year, as needed, to discuss progress.
- **Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences** - Progress conferences may occur at any time throughout the year, but are formally scheduled once a year for all students. They aim to provide an opportunity for review of student progress over time and may include assessment results that are both formative and summative. These conferences may be organized as meetings between parent-teacher or parent-student-teacher. Implementation of student led conferences, in which students take responsibility for sharing their learning with parents, is something we want to consider in the future.



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## Written Report

- **Report Card**- Individual report cards are issued twice per year. These provide parents with information about student progress in a variety of areas, including the units of inquiry. In the future, we hope to include student self-reflection on the IB Learner Profile as part of the report card.
- **Progress Report** – students receiving Title 1 reading support will receive a written progress report that outlines strengths and goals.

## F. What is the Role of Reflection?

Self-assessment and reflection are integral and highly valued elements of the PYP and at our school. Common understandings at Birchwood surrounding self-assessment and reflection include the beliefs that:

- All students should be engaged in ongoing opportunities for self-evaluation/reflection
- Self-evaluation and reflection should occur both in and outside the Program of Inquiry
- The skills for self-evaluation and reflection must be modeled and developed over time
- It is appropriate to differentiate self-evaluation and reflective processes based on developmental levels and understanding of children

We strive to engage all students in self-reflection throughout the unit of inquiry. This can be formal or informal and may include activities such as journaling, exit tickets, verbal self-reflection, checklists, rubrics, whole group and small group reflection.

## 5. Assessment Policy Review Process

The Assessment Policy as a working document that will require review and revision as development and implementation of the PYP progresses at Birchwood. To formalize the timeline and process for review and revision the following will be adopted:

- We will review the Birchwood Assessment Policy annually in the spring of each school year. We will determine whether our Assessment Policy accurately reflects current practice. If it does not reflect current practice, we will determine whether we need to alter our practices or the policy and make the necessary changes.
- Subsequent revisions will be completed for implementation by August of each following school year
- Review of the Assessment Policy will be a collaborative process, involving all stakeholders (grade level teachers, specialist teachers, support staff, parent/community, IB Coordinator, administration)
- We will reach a consensus to support and implement all aspects of the Assessment Policy at the time of the review



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### 6. Next Steps

As Birchwood continues to reflect and change, we have identified three areas of growth that we hope to focus on in the coming years. These areas will be reviewed during the Assessment Policy Review each year (see above).

- a) **Student-centered conferences** – we want to explore how to make our conferences more student centered and have students taking more ownership over their learning
- b) **Growth in the Learner Profile** – we hope to develop a system for gathering and tracking information about each student's growth in their understanding and embodiment of the Learner Profile. This will likely include a common self-reflecting tool that moves with the student from grade to grade.
- c) **Portfolios/other** – we hope to find an effective and efficient method to show evidence of student progress and achievement. This may include a portfolio (electronic or paper), or another means.