



Clinton Elementary School

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Dear Clinton & Glenwood Communities,

As we move forward in the new school year, we prepare for assessment and reporting of student progress. This year reporting will look different than in the past. We are moving away from letter grades to a sliding proficiency scale. This has been around for a few years now and we are sharing that as many of the other schools in the district have moved to this type of assessment, we are as well.

We are moving to this type of reporting, because it fosters continuous growth. Letter grades give you a snapshot of learning in-time, students believe that they have finished or completed learning something, when they really have not. In fact, an A is an arbitrary grade given to someone who is proficient. They believe they have mastered a concept when in reality they have not, they have only proficiently met the standard at a certain level (curriculum standard) but not beyond. Therefore, moving to a sliding standards-based scale with rubrics, show areas that require attention even with an A and models the values of lifelong learning which is what we want every student to strive for!

Assessment is a big part of learning and we stress that it is a *process of acquiring skills through strategies* to help children understand, make connections and think thoughtfully. Assessment is done in a variety of ways to give children opportunities to demonstrate their learning and reflect on ways to improve on past learning. The assessment process gives educators and parents a snapshot of the child's progress in learning over a given period of time. This snapshot helps us focus on strengths, as well as support areas that require further attention; the goal of education is to move the child forward on the continuum of the education curriculum, so that they can see growth over time in various aspects of their own learning.

Assessment & Learning with Communicating Student Learning

Rubrics – Are a tool that helps create a standard by which learning is compared to. It is the Curriculum and Learning objectives plus Criteria that teachers use to see if a child is demonstrating their learning against the standard (*we do not compare children against children – this is an industrial practice that no longer existed in the era of curriculum and learning standards*). There are many examples of rubrics on the ministry website <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/bc-performance-standards/reading>, as well, teachers will create rubrics with student input about the curriculum required to be covered and make them visible with criteria, so the student understands (learning intentions) up front what they will be working on over a period of time.]

Recently an educational paper by Dylan Williams called "Inside the Black Box" shared some very enlightening information about what good successful learning looked like. It broke down learning into three specific categories. They were – Assessment For Learning (quiz) Assessment AS Learning (student ownership) and Formative Assessment.

Assessment for Learning

- **Learning** Intentions (Curriculum)
- **Criteria** (Student /Teacher collaborations)
- **Descriptive feedback** (teacher facilitated)
- **Questions** (inquiry & engagement to Learning intentions)
- **Self & Peer Assessment** (assessment of & as Learning + feedback)
- **Ownership** (engagement & assessment of Learning intentions)

Examples of each are - the Quiz or **Assessment FOR learning**, showed minimal growth in learning and retention. While the **Assessment OF learning** had the largest impact at about 35% *plus/minus 3% standard deviation* & Assessment AS Learning shows about a 35% increase in learning.

Professional Judgement – Teachers use their professional Judgement and expertise with all of the above concepts and processes to allow teachers the background information to make sound educational evaluations of the learning that is happening for each child in relationship to the standards. Teachers use a variety of projects, worksheets, quizzes and written assignments to gather a holistic view of a student's understanding and ability in a curricular areas and concepts. This assessment done by a teacher is not as simple as 100 questions and gathering a letter grade from a total correct from that assessment. The mark comes from a variety of assessments that together meet a standard, that standard is then set as minimally meeting to fully meeting which is then converted to a letter grade. What is more powerful is when we (student / teacher / parent) meet to discuss strengths and areas that require attention, where children are involved and becoming more responsible for their own learning and growth (assessment as learning).

Letter Grades are a snapshot in learning "marks and grading functions are over emphasised, while the giving of useful feedback and learning intentions are under emphasised" (Williams – Inside the Black Box). Letter grades are an evaluative rating that we have given to student to be a snapshot of learning. This, however, was arbitrarily given to meet expectations for high school. In fact, nowhere in "**The School Act**" does it state that students are to be given letter grades in grades 4-9. Letter grades are only required for graduation requirements of grades 11 & 12. Once again we would like to reiterate that using the language of meeting expectation and not yet meeting expectations in a conferencing setting is far better than a letter grade which does not break down the all of the content, curriculum and processes of the learning that has happened over a particular time frame.

Post-Secondary Applications – most post-secondary institutions are looking at other aspects of high school other than marks, volunteer hours, and references. These other **markers** are far better indicators to success than just the letter grade. Therefore, you will be seeing more diverse applications to post-secondary institutions of all kinds looking at references and detailed comments about learning, as opposed to a (snapshot) mark that only give s you a piece of information about that child's learning.

Stay tuned. There will be more to come over the next few weeks around this topic.

Sincerely,

Claudio Bortolussi, Dawn Ashton
Principal & Vice Principal Clinton & Glenwood Elementary Schools