Ministry of Education

Ontario

The Ontario Curriculum
Unit Planner

Assessment Companion

Teacher Companion

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Assessment Companion

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Introduction

The Assessment Companion is intended to assist teachers designing instructional units using the Ontario *Curriculum Unit Planner*. It is part of the *Planner's* Teacher Companions database, which includes the following components:

- Teaching/Learning Strategies
- Assessment Companion
- ESL/ELD Companion
- Special Education Companion
- Explanatory Notes

The Teacher Companions database was compiled by Ontario educators and field-tested for use in Ontario schools. It is intended to help the collaborative and reflective practitioner plan, develop, implement, and evaluate curriculum units that:

- meet the needs of all students in the classroom;
- provide a balance in the range of learning experiences;
- recognize the interrelated phases involved in the learning process;
- provide consistent terminology to support effective teaching and learning;
- incorporate effective instructional strategies and assessment strategies;
- support the implementation of the Ontario curriculum.

While every effort has been made to provide appropriate information for educators, the database is not intended to be a definitive treatment of the topics it includes. Its contents should be read as suggestions, not prescriptions. To help educators who find themselves in a variety of circumstances, the database includes references to supports and applications that may not be available to all practitioners.

You can use the database in the following ways:

1. Browse individual records by clicking on the Companion icon (i.e., the overlapping pages icon) found on most *Planner* screens.
2. Click on the field and use the right scroll bar to see more text. Individual records are created using field boxes that may be larger than they first appear.
3. Use the "Find" feature to search for key words/phrases according to specific criteria.
4. Copy/Paste specific sections of a Companion record into the appropriate text box (e.g., "Teaching/Learning"), making any additional notes.
5. Use the Bookmark feature to attach individual records as a resource for your unit.
6. Attach teaching/learning strategies, assessment strategies, recording devices, and bookmarked resources by clicking on the "+" in relevant fields in the subtasks.
7. Since the database contains fixed records which cannot be altered except by copying and pasting their text into another area (e.g., Scrapbook, Teaching/Learning text box, Subtask Notes), create blackline masters of additional strategies and attach them as resources in specific and subsequent units.
8. Print a whole Companion or individual record using the Print icon.
9. Visit the *Planner* website at www.ocup.org to download new versions of the Companions.

Policy Relating to the Assessment of Student Achievement in Ontario Schools

This section comprises a selection of excerpts from Ministry of Education policy documents that pertain to the assessment, evaluation, and reporting of student achievement in elementary and/or secondary schools in Ontario. Elementary and secondary teachers may focus on the information that pertains to their particular situation. Excerpts are taken from the following documents, which should be consulted for more complete information.

- *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999*
- *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: Program Planning and Assessment, 2000*
- *Guide to the Provincial Report Card, Grades 1–8, 1998*
- *Guide to the Provincial Report Card, Grades 9–12, 1999*
- elementary exemplar documents in the various subjects (see *Elementary Curriculum*)
- secondary exemplar documents in the various subjects (see *Secondary Curriculum*)
- *Cooperative Education and Other Forms of Experiential Learning, 2000*
- *Choices Into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999*

Program Planning and Assessment

The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: Program Planning and Assessment, 2000 provides essential information on aspects of policy relating to program planning and the assessment, evaluation, and reporting of student achievement that pertain to all disciplines in the Ontario curriculum. It is designed as a companion piece to the curriculum policy documents for the individual disciplines, which identify the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire in their secondary school courses. This document provides teachers and others interested in secondary education in Ontario with a summary and discussion of relevant policies set out in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999.*

Important Features of the New Curriculum

The new Ontario curriculum establishes high, internationally competitive standards of education for secondary school students across the province. The curriculum has been designed with the goal of ensuring that graduates from Ontario secondary schools are well prepared to lead satisfying and productive lives as both citizens and individuals, and to compete successfully in a global economy and a rapidly changing world.

For every course offered at the secondary level, the new curriculum outlines clear and detailed *curriculum expectations* – that is, the particular knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each course. In addition, for every discipline, it provides detailed descriptions of *achievement levels*, which will assist

teachers in their assessment and evaluation of students' work and will promote consistency in these practices in schools across Ontario.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting
A well-designed system of assessment, evaluation, and reporting based on clearly stated curriculum expectations and achievement criteria allows teachers to focus on high standards of achievement for all students and promotes consistency in these practices across Ontario.

Assessment and Evaluation of Student Achievement

The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning. Information gathered through assessment helps teachers to determine students' strengths and weaknesses in their achievement of the curriculum expectations in each course. This information also serves to guide teachers in adapting curriculum and instructional approaches to students' needs and in assessing the overall effectiveness of programs and classroom practices.

Assessment is the process of gathering information from a variety of sources (including assignments, demonstrations, projects, performances, and tests) that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations in a course. As part of assessment, teachers provide students with descriptive feedback that guides their efforts towards improvement. Evaluation refers to the process of judging the quality of student work on the basis of established criteria, and assigning a value to represent that quality. In Grades 1–6, this value is represented as a letter grade. In Grades 7–12, this value is represented as a percentage grade.

Assessment and evaluation will be based on the provincial curriculum expectations and the achievement levels outlined in the program planning and assessment document and in the curriculum policy document for each discipline.

In order to ensure that assessment and evaluation are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of student learning, teachers must use assessment and evaluation strategies that:

- address both what students learn and how well they learn;
- are based both on the categories of knowledge and skills and on the achievement level descriptions given in the achievement chart that appears in the curriculum policy document for each discipline;
- are varied in nature, administered over a period of time, and designed to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning;
- are appropriate for the learning activities used, the purposes of instruction, and the needs and experiences of the students;
- are fair to all students;
- accommodate the needs of exceptional students, consistent with the strategies outlined in their Individual Education Plan;
- accommodate the needs of students who are learning the language of instruction;

- ensure that each student is given clear directions for improvement;
- promote students' ability to assess their own learning and to set specific goals;
- include the use of samples of students' work that provide evidence of their achievement;
- are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the course and at other appropriate points throughout the course.

The Achievement Chart

The achievement chart for each discipline is included in the curriculum policy document for that discipline. The chart provides a reference point for all assessment practice and a framework within which to assess and evaluate student achievement.

Each chart is organized into four broad categories of knowledge and skills: Knowledge/ Understanding, Thinking/Inquiry, Communication, and Application/Making Connections. (The names of the categories differ slightly from one discipline to another, reflecting differences in the nature of the disciplines.) The achievement chart also describes the levels of achievement of the curriculum expectations within each category. The descriptions associated with each level serve as a guide for gathering assessment information and enable teachers to make consistent judgements about the quality of student work and to provide clear and specific feedback to students and parents.

The achievement chart provides a standard province-wide method for teachers to use in assessing and evaluating their students' achievement. A variety of materials is being made available to assist teachers in improving their assessment methods and strategies and, hence, their assessment of student achievement.

The ministry is providing the following materials to school boards for distribution to teachers:

- a standard provincial report card, with an accompanying guide
- instructional planning materials
- exemplars
- assessment videos
- curriculum and assessment training materials
- an electronic curriculum planner

The following table provides a summary description of achievement in each percentage grade range and corresponding level of achievement:

Percentage Grade Range	Achievement Level	Summary Description
80–100%	Level 4	A very high to outstanding level of achievement. Achievement is *above* the provincial standard.
70–79%	Level 3	A high level of achievement. Achievement is *at* the provincial standard.
60–69%	Level 2	A moderate level of achievement. Achievement is *below, but approaching*, the provincial standard.
50–59%	Level 1	A passable level of achievement. Achievement is *below* the provincial standard.
Below 50%		Insufficient achievement of curriculum expectations.

Level 3 (70–79%) is the provincial standard. Teachers and parents can be confident that students who are achieving at level 3 are well prepared for work in the next grade or the next course.

It should be noted that an evaluation of achievement in the 80–100% range (level 4) does not suggest that the student is achieving expectations beyond those specified for the course, but rather that he or she demonstrates a very high to outstanding level of achievement of the specified expectations, and a greater command of the requisite knowledge and skills than a student achieving in the 70–79% range (level 3). A student whose achievement is below 50% at the end of the course will not obtain a credit for the course.

Reporting Student Achievement

Student achievement must be communicated formally to students and parents by means of the Provincial Report Card. *(See the section "Reporting in Grades 1–8" and "Reporting in Grades 9–12" below for specific details regarding the elementary and secondary report cards.)* The report card focuses on two distinct but related aspects of student achievement: the achievement of curriculum expectations and the development of learning skills. To more clearly reflect these two aspects of student achievement, the report card contains separate sections for reporting on achievement of the curriculum expectations and for reporting on demonstrated skills required for effective learning.

The report card also includes teachers' comments on the student's strengths, areas in which improvement is needed, and ways in which improvement might be achieved. Separate sections are provided for recording attendance and lateness in each course.

Reporting on Demonstrated Learning Skills

The separate evaluation and reporting of the learning skills on the report card reflects their critical role in students' achievement of the curriculum expectations. To the extent possible, the evaluation of learning skills, apart from any that may be included as part of

a curriculum expectation in a course, should not be considered in the determination of percentage grades.

Assessment and Evaluation of Programs

Assessment and evaluation of student achievement provide teachers with an opportunity to think critically about their methods of instruction and the overall effectiveness of their program. Teachers and principals should systematically review course content, instructional strategies, and assessment procedures and make the program changes needed to improve their students' achievement.

Analysis of the results of board- and province-wide assessments, as well as of national and international testing, provides additional information on student achievement and program effectiveness, complementing the program assessments conducted by teachers and principals. Where areas for improvement are identified through such analysis, schools and boards should work with parents and other representatives from the community to address these areas in their school and board action plans.

Reporting Student Achievement in Grades 1–8

The Provincial Report Card, Grades 1–8

The Provincial Report Card for Grades 1 to 8 ensures that all students attending publicly funded elementary schools in Ontario receive a standard report card based on the Ontario curriculum expectations. The report card provides clear, detailed, straightforward information to parents about how their child is achieving and progressing in school in relation to provincial curriculum expectations and standards. It is designed to involve students in assessing their own progress and setting goals, and to provide parents with the information they need to identify how they can support their child's learning at home.

The *Guide to the Provincial Report Card, Grades 1–8, 1998* provides information that will help teachers complete the report card and use it for reporting to parents. It also provides information to parents that will help them understand the reporting process.

Context for Reporting

The Provincial Report Card is only one among several means used by teachers for reporting student achievement to parents and students. Communication about student achievement should be continuous throughout the year and should include, in addition to the report card, such things as parent-student-teacher conferences, portfolios of student work, interviews, phone calls, informal reports, and so on.

Communication about student achievement should be designed to provide detailed information that will encourage students to set goals for learning, help teachers to establish plans for teaching, and assist parents in supporting learning at home.

Separate Reporting of Subject Achievement and Learning Skills

The Provincial Report Card focuses on two distinct aspects of student achievement: (1) achievement of curriculum expectations, and (2) development of learning skills. Accordingly, the report card has sections for reporting on the student's achievement of the curriculum expectations in each subject in the curriculum, and a separate section for reporting on the student's development of the learning skills required for effective learning. The learning skills identified on the report card can be demonstrated by the student in all subjects and in other behaviour at school.

By separating these two aspects of achievement, the report card allows teachers to provide more specific information to parents and thus to identify clearly the student's strengths and weaknesses, and the next steps to be taken.

Sample Learning Skills Descriptions

The following nine learning skills appear on the Provincial Report Card for Grades 1 to 6 and Grades 7 and 8. Under each learning skill are listed some examples of behaviour that would constitute evidence of this skill. These lists are not exhaustive. They are designed to assist teachers but certainly not to limit or confine their observations. Teachers need not use the lists if they have other relevant observations to report.

Independent work

- attends regularly and is punctual
- works well without supervision
- completes tasks and assignments on time and with care
- accepts responsibility for own behaviour
- follows routines and instructions without supervision
- identifies and pursues learning goals and tasks independently
- responds and participates in a variety of learning activities
- selects learning materials, resources, and activities independently
- persists with tasks
- follows schedules and uses planners to organize time effectively
- adheres to established time lines
- explores, selects, and uses a variety of learning strategies

Initiative

- welcomes new tasks and seeks new opportunities for learning
- responds to challenges
- seeks challenges and takes risks
- is interested in and curious about objects and events
- observes, questions, and explores
- seeks additional and new information from library books, CD-ROMs, and other resources

- identifies problems to solve and conducts experiments
- approaches new learning situations with confidence
- demonstrates a positive attitude towards learning
- generates questions for further inquiry
- investigates and obtains information independently
- develops original ideas and innovative procedures
- attempts a variety of learning activities
- seeks assistance when necessary
- participates in co-curricular activities

Homework completion (work habits)
- follows directions and completes homework on time and with care
- puts forth a consistent effort
- shows attention to detail
- demonstrates interest in and enthusiasm for homework assignments
- organizes materials and equipment for effective use
- begins work promptly
- follows directions and completes tasks
- chooses and uses materials and equipment correctly, safely, and creatively
- uses time efficiently
- perseveres with complex projects that require sustained effort
- attends to the task at hand
- demonstrates flexibility and adaptability

Use of information
- effectively interprets and synthesizes information
- integrates learning from various subjects/areas of learning
- gathers information effectively, using a variety of techniques and sources
- shows regard for accuracy in analysing and evaluating information
- recognizes when assignments and projects would benefit from additional information and identifies the type of information needed
- identifies and uses a variety of facilities, equipment, supplies, evidence, research, expert opinions, and discussion to gather information and solve problems
- considers all information and alternatives before reaching a conclusion
- demonstrates creativity in assessing information and ideas and draws relevant conclusions
- organizes information logically and creatively and manages it effectively
- selects appropriate research procedures and uses them effectively
- asks questions to clarify meaning and ensure understanding
- uses information-retrieval technology effectively

Cooperation with others
- takes turns
- listens to, acknowledges, and considers differing opinions

- willingly works with others
- follows classroom and school procedures
- assumes responsibilities in groups, the classroom, and the school
- helps others
- volunteers
- considers both the immediate and long-term effects of his or her actions on others
- respects the rights, property, and opinions of others
- shares resources, materials, and equipment with others
- shares in cleaning duties after an activity
- works and plays cooperatively with others
- establishes positive relationships with peers and adults
- responds and is sensitive to the needs and welfare of others

Conflict resolution
- resolves conflicts when they occur
- resolves conflicts independently
- resolves conflicts in socially acceptable ways
- negotiates to solve problems and resolve conflicts
- mediates differences of opinion
- listens to understand conflicts before acting or offering a resolution
- assists others to resolve conflicts appropriately
- seeks positive solutions to conflicts
- uses a variety of strategies to resolve conflicts appropriately
- helps the group to identify and use strategies for conflict resolution

Class participation
- participates in class and group activities
- willingly works with new groups
- accepts various roles within the class and group, including leadership roles
- accepts a share of the work to be done
- contributes to cooperative problem solving
- helps to complete class and group activities or projects
- works towards the goals of the class and group
- helps to motivate others and encourages others to participate
- communicates well with class and group members
- helps the class and group to work together
- contributes information and ideas to the class and group
- questions the ideas of the group to seek clarification or agreement
- shows respect for the ideas of others in the class and group
- supports ideas and observations of the group with facts and details
- listens to others without interrupting
- paraphrases points of view to help understanding
- recognizes contributions of group members through encouragement, support, or praise

- seeks consensus before making decisions
- shares responsibility for carrying out decisions
- shares responsibility for difficulties encountered during an activity

Problem solving
- solves problems independently
- uses analysis to clarify problems
- devises a plan to solve the problem
- carries out the plan
- records the process and the results
- checks the solutions/results
- evaluates the plan, solution, or result
- devises alternative solutions or ways of solving a problem
- makes connections between different problems and solutions
- applies successful strategies to new problems
- chooses appropriate materials and equipment to solve problems
- develops original ideas and creative approaches to solve problems
- applies logic in solving problems

Goal setting to improve work (with assistance, with peers, independently)
- identifies appropriate criteria for assessing work
- uses identified criteria to assess work
- assesses own work
- identifies goals
- identifies specific steps or actions needed to reach goals or to improve
- evaluates own success in reaching goals
- identifies strengths and areas for improvement in own work
- perseveres to achieve goals
- revises goals or steps and strategies when necessary
- identifies and pursues goals independently
- accepts comments on performance from others
- uses others' comments to improve work and monitor learning

Reporting Student Achievement in Grades 9–12

The Provincial Report Card, Grades 9–12

The Provincial Report Card, Grades 9-12, ensures that all students attending publicly funded secondary schools in Ontario receive a standard report card based on the Ontario curriculum. The report card provides clear and detailed information to each student and his or her parents about how well the student is achieving the provincial curriculum expectations. It also provides opportunities for students to assess their progress and reflect on the goals they have set in their annual education plans. In addition, the report card provides opportunities for parents to comment on students' achievement and to

identify ways in which they can support their learning at home. At the end of each semester or school year, the report card also provides a summary of credits achieved and graduation requirements completed.

See the *Guide to the Provincial Report Card, Grades 9–12, 1999* for further information to complete the report card and use it for reporting to parents.

The report card provides a record of the student's achievement of the curriculum expectations in every course, at particular points in the school year or semester, in the form of a percentage grade. The percentage grade represents the quality of the student's overall achievement of the expectations for the course and reflects the corresponding level of achievement as described in the achievement chart for the discipline.

A final grade is recorded for every course, and a credit is granted and recorded for every course in which the student's grade is 50% or higher. The final grade for each course in Grades 9–12 will be determined as follows:

- Seventy per cent of the grade will be based on evaluations conducted throughout the course. This portion of the grade should reflect the student's most consistent level of achievement throughout the course, although special consideration should be given to more recent evidence of achievement.
- Thirty per cent of the grade will be based on a final evaluation in the form of an examination, performance, essay, and/or other method of evaluation suitable to the course content and administered towards the end of the course.

In all of their courses, students must be provided with numerous and varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their achievement of the curriculum expectations, across all four categories of knowledge and skills.

Context for Reporting

The Provincial Report Card is only one of several means by which teachers report student achievement to parents and students. Communication about student achievement should be continual throughout the year and should include, in addition to the report card, such things as parent-teacher or parent-student-teacher conferences, interviews, phone calls, informal reports, and portfolios of student work. Teachers should provide detailed information that will encourage students to set goals for learning and help parents support learning at home. Information provided by parents and students will, in turn, help teachers plan teaching approaches.

Separate Reporting of Achievement of Curriculum Expectations and Learning Skills

The Provincial Report Card focuses on two distinct, but related, aspects of student achievement: (1) the achievement of curriculum expectations, and (2) the development of learning skills. Accordingly, the report card has separate sections for reporting on the student's achievement of the curriculum expectations and for reporting on the student's

demonstration of skills required for effective learning. By separating these two aspects of achievement, the report card allows teachers to provide more specific information to parents and students and to identify more clearly the student's strengths and areas in which improvement is needed.

Learning Skills

Learning skills are grouped under the following five headings on the Provincial Report Card, Grades 9–12: Works Independently, Teamwork, Organization, Work Habits/Homework, and Initiative. For each of these five categories of learning skills, a checklist of sample behaviours is provided. The checklists are designed to assist, but not to limit or confine, teachers in their observations.

Works Independently
The student:
- accomplishes tasks independently
- accepts responsibility for completing tasks
- follows instructions
- regularly completes assignments on time and with care
- demonstrates self-direction in learning
- independently selects, evaluates, and uses appropriate learning materials, resources, and activities
- demonstrates persistence in bringing tasks to completion
- uses time effectively
- uses prior knowledge and experience to solve problems and make decisions
- reflects on learning experiences

Teamwork
The student:
- works willingly and cooperatively with others
- shares resources, materials, and equipment with others
- responds and is sensitive to the needs and welfare of others
- solves problems collaboratively
- accepts various roles, including leadership roles
- takes responsibility for his or her own share of the work to be done
- works to help achieve the goals of the group or the class
- helps to motivate others, encouraging them to participate
- contributes information and ideas to solve problems and make decisions
- questions the ideas of the group to seek clarification, test thinking, or reach agreement
- shows respect for the ideas and opinions of others in the group or class
- listens attentively, without interrupting
- in discussions, paraphrases points of view and asks questions to clarify meaning and promote understanding
- recognizes the contribution of group members by means of encouragement, support, or praise

- seeks consensus and negotiates agreement before making decisions

Organization
The student:
- organizes work when faced with a number of tasks
- devises and follows a coherent plan to complete a task
- follows specific steps to reach goals or to make improvements
- revises steps and strategies when necessary to achieve a goal
- manages and uses time effectively and creatively
- demonstrates ability to organize and manage information
- follows an effective process for inquiry and research
- uses appropriate information technologies to organize information and tasks

Work Habits/Homework
The student:
- completes homework on time and with care
- puts forth consistent effort
- follows directions
- shows attention to detail
- uses materials and equipment effectively
- begins work promptly and uses time effectively
- perseveres with complex projects that require sustained effort
- applies effective study practices

Initiative
The student:
- seeks out new opportunities for learning
- responds to challenges and takes risks
- demonstrates interest and curiosity about concepts, objects, events, and resources
- seeks necessary and additional information in print, electronic, and media resources
- identifies problems to solve, conducts investigations, and generates questions for further inquiry
- requires little prompting to complete a task, displaying self-motivation and self-direction
- approaches new learning situations with confidence and a positive attitude
- develops original ideas and devises innovative procedures
- attempts a variety of learning activities
- seeks assistance when needed
- uses information technologies in creative ways to improve learning for self or others

Exemplars

The exemplar documents, which provide samples of student work at each of the four levels of achievement, are one of the resources provided by the Ministry of Education to assist teachers in their assessment of student achievement. (For elementary exemplars,

see *Elementary Curriculum*, and for secondary exemplars, see *Secondary Curriculum*.) The following information is taken from the Grade 9 exemplar documents.

The exemplar documents were developed to:

- show the characteristics of student work at each of the four levels of achievement;
- promote greater consistency in the assessment of student work across the province;
- provide an approach to improving student learning by demonstrating the use of clear criteria applied to student work in response to a clearly defined assessment task;
- show the connections between what students are expected to learn (the curriculum expectations) and how their work can be assessed using the levels of achievement described in the curriculum policy document for the subject.

Teachers, parents, and students should examine the student samples in the exemplar documents and consider them along with the information in the Teacher's Notes and Comments/Next Steps sections. They are encouraged to examine the samples in order to develop an understanding of the characteristics of work at each level of achievement and the ways in which the levels of achievement reflect a progression in the quality of knowledge and skills demonstrated by the student.

The samples in the exemplar documents represent examples of student achievement obtained using only one method of assessment, called performance assessment. Teachers will also make use of a variety of other assessment methods and strategies in evaluating student achievement in a course over a term or school year.

The Tasks

The performance tasks were based directly on curriculum expectations selected from courses in the relevant curriculum policy documents. The tasks encompassed the four categories of knowledge and skills (e.g., Knowledge/Understanding, Thinking/Inquiry, Communication, and Application), requiring students to integrate their knowledge and skills in meaningful learning experiences. The tasks gave students an opportunity to demonstrate not only how well they had learned to use the required knowledge and skills in one context, but how well they could use their knowledge and skills in another context.

Teachers were required to explain the scoring criteria and descriptions of the levels of achievement (i.e., the information in the task rubric) to the students before they began the assignment.

The Rubrics

In the exemplar documents, the term *rubric* refers to a scoring scale that consists of a set of achievement criteria and descriptions of the levels of achievement for a particular task. The scale is used to assess students' work; this assessment is intended to help students improve their performance level. The rubric identifies key criteria by which students' work is to be assessed, and it provides descriptions that indicate the degree to which the

key criteria have been met. The teacher uses the descriptions of the different levels of achievement given in the rubric to assess student achievement on a particular task.

The rubric for a specific performance task is intended to provide teachers and students with an overview of the expected final product with regard to the knowledge and skills being assessed as a whole.

The achievement chart in each curriculum policy document provides a standard province-wide tool for teachers to use in assessing and evaluating their students' achievement over a period of time. While the chart is broad in scope and general in nature, it provides a reference point for all assessment practice and a framework within which to assess and evaluate student achievement. The descriptions associated with each level of achievement serve as a guide for gathering and tracking assessment information, enabling teachers to make consistent judgements about the quality of student work while providing clear and specific feedback to students and parents.

For the purposes of the exemplar project, a single rubric was developed for a specific performance task. This task-specific rubric was developed in relation to the achievement chart in the curriculum policy document.

The differences between the achievement chart and the task-specific rubric may be summarized as follows:

- The achievement chart contains broad descriptions of achievement. Teachers use it to assess student achievement over time, making a summative evaluation that is based on the total body of evidence gathered through using a variety of assessment methods and strategies.
- The rubric contains criteria and descriptions of achievement that relate to a specific task. The rubric uses some terms that are similar to those in the achievement chart but focuses on aspects of the specific task. Teachers use the rubric to assess student achievement on a single task.

The rubric contains the following components:

- an identification (by number) of the expectations on which student achievement in the task was assessed
- the four categories of knowledge and skills
- the relevant criteria for evaluating performance of the task
- descriptions of student performance at the four levels of achievement (level 3 on the achievement chart is considered to be the provincial standard)

As stated earlier, the focus of performance assessment using a rubric is to improve students' learning. In order to improve their work, students need to be provided with useful feedback. Students find that feedback on the strengths of their achievement and on areas in need of improvement is more helpful when the specific category of knowledge or skills is identified and specific suggestions are provided than when they receive only an overall mark or general comments. Student achievement should be considered in relation to the criteria for assessment stated in the rubric for each category, and feedback should

be provided for each category. Through the use of a rubric, students' strengths and weaknesses are identified and this information can then be used as a basis for planning the next steps for learning. In the exemplar documents, the Teacher's Notes section indicates the reasons for assessing a student's performance at a specific level of achievement, and the Comments/Next Steps section indicates suggestions for improvement.

In the exemplar project, a task-specific rubric encompassing the four categories of knowledge and skills was used to provide an effective means of assessing the particular level of student performance in the performance task, to allow for consistent scoring of student performance, and to provide information to students on how to improve their work.

The rubrics for the tasks in the exemplar project are similar to the scales used by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) for the Grade 3, Grade 6, and Grade 9 provincial assessments in that both the rubrics and the EQAO scales are based on the Ontario curriculum expectations and the achievement charts. The rubrics differ from the EQAO scales in that they were developed to be used only in the context of classroom instruction to assess achievement in a particular assignment in a course.

Although rubrics were used effectively in this exemplar project to assess responses related to the performance tasks, they are only one way of assessing student achievement. Other means of assessing achievement include observational checklists, tests, marking schemes, or portfolios. Teachers may make use of rubrics to assess students' achievement on, for example, essays, reports, exhibitions, debates, conferences, interviews, oral presentations, recitals, two- and three-dimensional representations, journals or logs, and research projects.

Use of Student Samples

Teachers and Administrators
The samples of student work included in the exemplar documents will help teachers and administrators by:

- providing student samples and criteria for assessment that will enable them to help students improve their achievement;
- providing a basis for conversations among teachers, parents, and students about the criteria used for assessment and evaluation of student achievement;
- facilitating communication with parents regarding the curriculum expectations and levels of achievement for each subject or course;
- promoting fair and consistent assessment within subjects and courses.

Teachers may choose to:

- use the teaching/learning activities outlined in the performance tasks;
- use the performance tasks and rubrics in the exemplar documents in designing comparable performance tasks;

- use the samples of student work at each level as reference points when assessing student work;
- use the rubrics to clarify what is expected of the students and to discuss the criteria and standards for high-quality performance;
- review the samples of work with students and discuss how the performances reflect the levels of achievement;
- adapt the language of the rubrics to make it more "student friendly";
- develop other assessment rubrics with colleagues and students;
- help students describe their own strengths and weaknesses and plan their next steps for learning;
- share student work with colleagues for consensus marking;
- partner with other schools to design tasks and rubrics, and to select samples for other performance tasks and other subject areas.

Administrators may choose to:
- encourage and facilitate teacher collaboration regarding standards and assessment;
- provide training to ensure that teachers understand the role of the exemplars in assessment, evaluation, and reporting;
- establish an external reference point for schools in planning student programs and for school improvement;
- facilitate sessions for parents and school councils using the exemplar documents as a basis for discussion of curriculum expectations, levels of achievement, and standards;
- participate in future exemplar projects within their district school boards or with the Ministry of Education.

Parents

The performance tasks in the exemplar documents exemplify a range of meaningful and relevant learning activities related to the curriculum expectations for the particular grade or course. In addition, the exemplar documents invite the involvement and support of parents as they work with their children to improve their achievement. Parents may use the samples of student work and the rubrics as:
- resources to help them understand the levels of achievement;
- models to help monitor their children's progress from level to level;
- a basis for communication with teachers about their children's achievement;
- a source of information to help their children monitor achievement and improve their performance;
- models to illustrate the application of the levels of achievement.

Students

Students are asked to participate in performance assessments in all curriculum areas. When students are given clear expectations for learning, clear criteria for assessment, and immediate and helpful feedback, their performance improves. Students' performance improves as they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own achievement and to reflect on their own progress and "next steps".

It is anticipated that the contents of the exemplar documents will help students in the following ways:

- Students will be introduced to a model of one type of task that will be used to assess their learning, and will discover how a rubric can be used to improve their product or performance on an assessment task.
- The performance task and the exemplars will help clarify the curriculum expectations for learning.
- The rubric and the information given in the Teacher's Notes section will help clarify the assessment criteria.
- The information given under Comments/Next Steps will support the improvement of achievement by focusing attention on two or three suggestions for improvement.
- With an increased awareness of the performance tasks and rubrics, students will be more likely to communicate effectively about their achievement with their teachers and parents, and to ask relevant questions about their own progress.
- Students can use the criteria and the range of student samples to help them see the differences in the levels of achievement. By analysing and discussing these differences, students will gain an understanding of ways in which they can assess their own responses and performances in related assignments and identify the qualities needed to improve their achievement.

Cooperative Education

Cooperative Education and Other Forms of Experiential Learning, 2000 sets out policies and procedures for the implementation of cooperative education and other forms of experiential learning, including work experience and job shadowing and job twinning, in English-language secondary schools in Ontario. These planned learning experiences in the community may be part of specialized programs such as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) and other school–work transition programs.

The policies described in the cooperative education document complement the provincial policies outlined in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9–12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999;* in *Choices Into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999;* and in the secondary curriculum policy documents.

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment is the process of gathering information from a variety of sources to determine how well a student is achieving the expectations of a course. Evaluation refers to the process of judging the quality of student work based on established criteria and assigning a value to represent that quality. Assessment and evaluation of cooperative education will be based on the provincial curriculum expectations and the achievement levels outlined in the appropriate curriculum policy documents and in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: Program Planning and Assessment, 2000*.

The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning. In cooperative education, the information that is gathered through placement assessment helps teachers determine students' strengths and weaknesses in their achievement of both the curriculum expectations and the placement expectations. This information will assist teachers in continuously adapting students' personalized placement learning plans in order to provide appropriate challenges for the student.

When evaluating a student's overall achievement, the teacher should take into consideration the expectations included in the student's personalized placement learning plan, the levels of achievement described in the appropriate curriculum policy document, the student's performance on classroom assignments, and the supervisor's performance appraisals.

The learning skills that the student demonstrates in both the classroom and the placement components of the course must be assessed separately from the student's achievement of expectations and must be reported in the appropriate spaces provided in the Provincial Report Card.

Classroom Learning Assessment and Evaluation

The assignments that students complete in pre-placement orientation and as part of their "integration" activities to link their placement tasks to the curriculum expectations should be assessed and evaluated. Students should also be assessed and evaluated on the compulsory independent study projects they complete. Students' portfolios, tests, examinations, assignments, and demonstrations can be used to assess and evaluate student achievement. Opportunities for self- and peer assessment should also be provided.

Guidance and Career Education

Choices Into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999 describes the purpose and importance of Ontario's guidance and career education program, its content, and its unique approach to teaching and learning. It describes the approaches that principals and teachers are expected to take when teaching students how to develop their learning skills, interpersonal skills, and knowledge and skills in the area of career planning. It also outlines program planning strategies, accountability measures, and the roles and responsibilities of all involved – principals, teachers, students, parents, and community partners.

The policies outlined in *Choices Into Action* complement related provincial policies outlined in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9–12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999* and in the elementary and secondary school curriculum policy documents.

Assessment and Evaluation

Teachers must continually observe, assess, and evaluate students' achievement of competencies in all components of the guidance and career education program. Information from assessment will help improve student learning and identify areas for program improvement. It will help teachers and guidance counsellors determine how well their planned career exploration activities, teacher-adviser activities, and teaching and counselling programs and other components of the guidance and career education program are working, and help them make any changes required to help students achieve the program goals.

The methods for assessing and evaluating students' learning must be clearly identified and based on the program goals. These methods must be appropriate for students' ages, strengths, and needs and for the particular activities being evaluated. Guidance and career education student competencies can be assessed using interviews with students, observation of students' behaviour, checklists, and surveys, as well as student profiles, performances, work samples, journals, and academic and career portfolios. It is important that teachers have students review their learning progress and plans for improvement. Observations by parents, and other teachers, will provide a teacher, teacher-adviser, guidance counsellor, and, in some instances, a school team with information or suggestions that are useful when modifying program components or referring students to those able to provide individual assistance or short-term counselling.

It is especially important that parents be involved in discussions regarding their children's progress. Teachers, including teacher-advisers and guidance counsellors, should gather information from parents and consult with them when assessing students' adjustment to school, achievement of program goals, and plans for future education.

Reporting to Parents

For students in elementary schools, the Provincial Report Card, Grades 1–8 may be used to report student progress in achieving the goals of the guidance and career education program. Alternative ways of reporting on a student's participation in the guidance and career education program include discussions with parents that focus on reviewing students' academic and career portfolios and annual education plans (in Grades 7 and 8).

For students in secondary schools, the Provincial Report Card, Grades 9–12 will be used to record students' progress in achieving guidance and career education credit course expectations. Discussion with guidance counsellors and teacher-advisers, and consultation among teacher-advisers, students, and parents using annual education plans and academic and career portfolios are other methods of reporting to students and to parents on students' progress in the guidance and career education program.

Strategies for Assessment of Student Achievement

Classroom Presentation

Description

The classroom presentation is an assessment that requires students to verbalize their knowledge, select and present samples of finished work, and organize their thoughts in order to present a summary of learning about a topic.

Purposes

The classroom presentation may be used to:

- provide the basis for summative assessment upon the student's completion of a project or an essay;
- assess students when pencil-and-paper testing of a student's understanding or knowledge is inappropriate or difficult.

Characteristics

The classroom presentation:

- can include the use of concrete materials provide students with an opportunity to express their ideas and talents;
- may be designed as a teaching tool to further the learning of the audience.

Method

The teacher:

- with the students or alone sets the criteria for the assessment of the presentation (e.g., rubric);
- monitors student progress at selected stages during student preparation;
- provides oral or written feedback after the presentation.

Considerations

The classroom presentation:

- is a natural form of assessment for speeches, debates, and subjects such as the study of languages;
- should be designed and administered in a way that avoids giving students the opportunity to judge one another's appearance and language abilities;
- is a critical skill to be taught, practised, assessed, and evaluated

conference

Description

The conference is a formal or an informal meeting between the teacher and a student and/or parent for a variety of educational purposes.

Purposes

The conference may be used to:

- exchange information or share ideas;
- explore the student's thinking and suggest next steps;
- assess the student's level of understanding of a particular concept or procedure;
- enable the student to move ahead more successfully on a particular piece of work;
- review, clarify, and extend what the student has already completed;
- help the student to internalize criteria for good work.

Characteristics

The conference:

- requires that the discussion has a clear focus (e.g., a specific piece of work);
- is successful to the extent that all the participants share the responsibility for the meeting;
- may take place as the learner is exploring a new concept or topic, or be a goal-setting session or a report on progress;
- occurs routinely;
- can be effective for both diagnostic and formative assessment.

Method

The teacher:

- comes to the conference prepared with specific questions to be answered;
- gives individual feedback and clarifies misconceptions;
- puts the student at ease and supports student progress (e.g., in a writing conference, may give a mini-lesson);
- focuses on the process of reasoning followed by the student;
- records information (makes a conference record) during or immediately following the conference.

Considerations

The conference:

- can be part of collaborative planning and decision making;
- is assisted by prepared questions;
- can be an extremely useful formative assessment strategy for students involved in major projects or independent studies.

Essay

Description

The essay is a writing sample used to assess student understanding and/or ability to analyse and synthesize information. An essay is a pencil and paper assessment in which a student constructs a response, with supporting details or arguments, to a question, topic, or brief statement.

Purposes

The essay may be used to:

- assess the student's ability to communicate ideas in writing (e.g., in making comparisons, applying principles to new situations, organizing information, drawing inferences, being persuasive, integrating knowledge and applications, summarizing information);
- provide the student with an opportunity to communicates his or her reasoning;
- measure the student's understanding and mastery of complex information.

Characteristics

The essay:

- provides grounds for the assessment of a student's knowledge, reasoning, organization skills, and communication skills;
- directly provides evidence of the performance specified by the expectations;
- is assessed according to a scoring plan that specifies attributes for a high-quality answer (e.g., conciseness, factual knowledge, connection between argument and supporting facts) and indicates the value associated with each of the attributes.

Method

The teacher:

- uses professional judgement in developing the problem, question, or statement, and in scoring the final product.

Considerations

The essay:

- is used to assess the student's ability to communicate ideas, write proficiently, and comprehend context;
- affords the student a chance to construct his or her own answers, demonstrating creativity and/or originality;
- is less time consuming to construct compared with select response (e.g., multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank), but can require considerable time to evaluate;
- is not an effective means of assessing a student's entire domain of content knowledge, or assessing more than one or two reasoning skills at any one time.

Exhibition/Demonstration

Description

The exhibition/demonstration is a performance in which a student explains and applies a process, procedure, etc., in concrete ways to show individual achievement of specific skills and knowledge.

Purposes

The exhibition/demonstration may be used to:

- show individual achievement of specific skills and knowledge in a public setting;
- assess progress in tasks that require students to be actively engaged in an activity;
- teach knowledge to others, including peers.

Characteristics

The exhibition/demonstration:

- is either an actual situation or a simulation. The emphasis in a simulation is upon mastery of the fundamentals of the knowledge or skill;
- is accompanied by a list of performance attributes as well as the assessment criteria, which should be determined before the demonstration by the teacher or the teacher and students in consultation;
- is frequently organized in assessment "stations" (i.e., identified locations or activity centers) designed for testing a variety of skills (e.g., in basketball, the foul shot, the lay-up, dribble around pylons).

Method

The teacher:

- assesses how well a student performs an action or demonstrates a behaviour or skill.

Considerations

The exhibition/demonstration:

- may be interdisciplinary;
- may require student initiative and creativity;
- may be a competition between individual students or groups;
- may be a collaborative project that students work on over time;
- should be constructed and administered in a manner that is equivalent for all students (e.g., all candidates in a music demonstration play the same piece on the same piano).

Interview

Description
The interview is a face-to-face conversation in which all parties (teacher, student, and parent) use inquiry to share their knowledge and understanding about an issue, topic, or problem of mutual interest.

Purposes
The interview may be used to:
- clarify the teacher's or parent's approach to a issue, topic, or problem;
- explore the student's thinking;
- assess the student's level of understanding of a particular concept or procedure;
- gather information, obtain clarification, determine positions, and probe for motivations;
- help determine the student's understanding of the qualities of good work.

Characteristics
The interview:
- has a clearly stated format and purpose (e.g., informal data gathering, formal inquiry)
- can be adapted to probe any problem or any consideration;
- occurs routinely;
- usually is guided by planned questions.

Method
The teacher:
- is responsible for the initial questions that guide the conversation, as well as the flow and movement of the exchange;
- generates information during the interview that may lead to decisions, agreements, or solutions;
- allows students to take the lead in the interview when appropriate.

Considerations
The interview:
- can be time consuming, especially when the participants seek an honest and thoughtful exchange.

Learning Log

Description
The learning log is an ongoing, visible record made by a student of what he or she does or thinks while working on a particular task or assignment.

Purposes
The learning log is used to:

- show student progress and growth over time;
- provide the student with the opportunities to gather and interpret information, to ask questions, and to make connections.

Characteristics

The learning log:

- is a useful tool if students are working on a project that stretches over several days or even weeks;
- can provide a helpful focus for discussion during a conference where progress is assessed;
- provides unlimited opportunities for individualized reading and writing.

Method

The teacher*:*

- provides the guidelines for the maintenance of the learning log;
- provides regular feedback to the students.

Considerations

The learning log:

- may present a challenge for some students who have difficulty in expressing their thoughts in writing;
- provides students with opportunities for reflection about their progress towards a stated goal.

Observation

Description

Observation is a process of systematically viewing and recording student behaviour for the purpose of making programming decisions. Observation can take place anytime or in any setting, to assist the teacher in making the decisions required for effective teaching.

Purposes

Observation may be used to:

- provide systematic, ongoing information about students in relation to areas of strengths and weaknesses, preferred learning styles, unique interests, learning needs, skills, attitudes, behaviours, and performance related to expectations.

Characteristics

Observation:

- can be used every day to assess students of different ages, in various subject areas, and in different settings (working alone, in partners, in small groups, or in the whole class);
- is structured, having a clear purpose and focus;
- includes an objective and concise written record, which should be made as close to the time of the event as possible;

- is preceded by a sampling to determine an appropriate duration and frequency in a student's behaviour, skills, or work order to have a model for comparison;
- includes notes regarding the setting, the events surrounding the observation, the behaviour actually performed or demonstrated or the sequence of behaviours, and related aspects of time (time of year, length of behaviour, changes over time that indicate growth or progress);
- is often used in combination with other assessment strategies (performance tasks, oral presentations, interviews) to gain comprehensive information about student progress.

Method

The teacher:

- watches students as they respond to questions, study, and complete assigned tasks;
- listens to students as they speak and discuss with others;
- observes nonverbal forms of communication (e.g., attentiveness to lessons, signs of frustration);
- outlines the purpose of the observation by using the following questions as guidelines:
  - Who will make the observation?
  - Who or what is observed?
  - Why will the observation take place?
  - Where will the observation take place?
  - When will the observation occur?
  - How will the observation be recorded (notes, audiotape or videotape)?
- observes the students in a variety of situations/settings;
- draws inferences on the basis of the observations gathered;
- observes the student's performance, then records the observations on a recording device (checklist, rating scale, anecdotal record) that outlines the framework and criteria for observation.

Considerations

Observations:

- are guided by a checklist, a set of questions, and/or a journal to ensure focused, systematic observation;
- are often the only assessment tool used for demonstration (e.g., oral speaking, drawing, playing musical instruments, applying motor skills in the physical education program, using equipment in design and technology);
- can be collected by audiotape or videotape, so that the teacher can make a more detailed assessment of the performance after the fact;
- can limit students' ability to act naturally if audiotape or videotape is used;
- can be influenced by bias in the interpreter;
- can be considered subjective, that is, dependent for meaning on the professional judgement of the observer;
- should not interfere with the natural learning environment.

Performance Task

Description

The performance task is an assessment strategy in which students create, produce, perform, or present, in ways that engage "real world', meaningful, and substantive issues or problems, in order to demonstrate a skill or proficiency.

Purposes

The performance task may be used to:

- enable learners to demonstrate abilities, skills, attitudes, and behaviours;
- provide information about a learner's ability to organize, draw on prior knowledge and experience, improvise, choose from a range of strategies, represent learning, and make decisions to complete a task;
- provide an efficient means of assessment in instances where the skill cannot be demonstrated by means of a pencil-and-paper test;
- involve the use of complex thinking skills and the extension of knowledge, skills, and abilities;
- help students to make connections and generalizations that increase their understanding of important concepts and processes;
- test skills in the affective, cognitive, psychomotor, and perceptual domains.

Characteristics

The performance task:

- focuses on the process as well as the product;
- provides contexts that have relevance to the students and may enhance their motivation as they work on "real" tasks or exercise skills in tasks are meaningful, "real world" applications
- presents students with complex, loosely structured problems that allow for a wide range of products;
- provides the most realistic assessment of job-related competencies;
- can include tasks such as painting, speeches, musical presentations, research papers, investigations, athletic performances, projects, and exhibitions that require students to construct a unique response to a set of challenges.

Method

The teacher:

- observes a student or group of students performing a specific task;
- shares with the student the responsibility of developing and organizing the performance task, and setting the assessment criteria;
- makes assessment criteria (e.g., rubrics) available to students before the beginning of the task;
- provides models of achievement;
- provides comprehensive feedback to students about their achievement;
- assigns a level of proficiency based on the performance.

Considerations

The performance task:

- can be used for both assessment and evaluation;
- allows most learners to participate successfully to varying degrees;
- provides opportunities for students to learn individually as well as in small groups;
- provides an excellent way to assess reasoning skills;
- must be assessed according to clearly defined criteria.

Portfolios

Description

The portfolio is a purposeful collection of samples of a student's work that is selective, reflective, and collaborative. The portfolio is a visual demonstration of the range, depth, and progress of a student's achievement, capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills over time and across a variety of contexts.

Purposes

The portfolio may be used to:

- document typical student work and progress;
- provide a comprehensive view of the student's progress, efforts, and achievements;
- reflect growth and progress and also may serve different purposes during the year (e.g., exploration, development, consolidation, innovation);
- provide a focus for a student's reflection on his or her own learning;
- build a student's sense of responsibility for his or her own learning;
- build a student's confidence in her or his abilities as a learner;
- promote an ongoing process whereby students demonstrate, assess, and revise in order to improve the quality of their work.

Characteristics

The portfolio:

- provides for student involvement in the selection of portfolio materials as part of the process;
- promotes the skills of student self-assessment and goal setting;
- has a stated purpose and intended audience which are important to the entire process;
- may include entries that the student and teacher consider important representations of learning;
- can provide a focus for a conference or an interview involving the student, the teacher and parents;
- provides the opportunity for students to practice, assess, and select their own work.

Method

The teacher:

- in order to see where further instruction would be beneficial, makes regular formative assessments during the portfolio process to determine students' individual needs and their progress in achieving specified learning expectations;
- in order to help the students to improve, provides them with regular feedback regarding their performance as it relates to pre-stated criteria;
- determines or negotiates with the students the purpose for the portfolio, the criteria for selections (e.g., the number of items, the categories), and the time frame for use;
- reads the student's reflections on his or her work and comments on the student's assessment of personal learning.

Considerations

The portfolio:

- is developed collaboratively by teachers and students, who share in determining the purpose of the portfolio and developing the criteria for selecting samples for inclusion;
- if it is used for evaluative purposes, must be standardized as regards what is included;
- includes a summary of content to assure that the portfolio is complete as outlined by the guidelines and the criteria given at the start of the process (e.g., three pieces of writing, one area of difficulty in mathematics);
- is started early in the school year and should include samples that demonstrate progress over time;
- is shared with other important partners (i.e., parents, peers, teacher) through a conference which gives the student an opportunity to review the contents, his or her own reflections, and the teacher's feedback.

Question and Answer (Oral)

Description

Question and answer is a strategy whereby the teacher poses a question and the student answers it by speaking rather than by writing. Question and answer helps to determine whether students understand what is being or has been presented, or to extend thinking, generate ideas, or solve problems.

Purposes

Question and answer may be used to:

- provide a mechanism for monitoring a student's understanding while assessing student progress;
- gather information quickly about a student's learning needs.

Characteristics

Question and answer:

- helps teachers and students clarify their purpose for learning and links previous information with new understandings.

Method

The teacher:

- notes how students answer questions during instruction to know if the students understand what is being presented or are able to perform skills;
- should ensure, by tracking, that all students participate, not just those who typically respond with answers.

Considerations

Question and answer:

- is used with the consideration that some students are not comfortable or fluent in expressing themselves orally.

Quiz, Test, Examination

Description

The quiz, test, or examination is an assessment strategy that requires students to respond to prompts in order to demonstrate their knowledge (orally or in writing) or their skills (e.g., through performance). Quizzes are usually short, examinations usually longer.

Purposes

The quiz, test, or examination is used to:

- primarily assess students' acquisition of knowledge (cognitive skills).

Characteristics

The quiz, test, or examination:

- may be in the form of a comprehensive end-of-term examination, a unit test, a weekly quiz;
- may vary in length, location, formality, and scheduling;
- may be designed to include subjective or objective questions, or a combination of both;
- may be presented in any of a variety of formats: select response (multiple-choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, true-false), open-ended written response (short answer, essay, problem), or a combination of these;
- is constructed by the classroom teacher and measures student achievement of expectations specific to a particular subject or unit.

Method

The teacher:

- designs the quiz, test, or examination (number and type of question, length);

- evaluates the responses;
- reviews ways to answer specific types of questions (e.g., short answer, essay questions);
- clarifies directional words used in questions (e.g., compare, contrast, explain, justify) and gives students practice in answering such questions;
- should provide students with a detailed marking scheme that outlines precisely how the questions will be scored;
- should provide students with models of effective answers;
- should compose sample answers for all questions before giving or marking a test;
- provides sample student model answers when reviewing the answers to the quiz, test, or examination.

Considerations

The quiz, test, and examination:

- can be adapted for exceptional students and for reteaching and retesting, so that students have as many opportunities as possible for success in demonstrating their learning;
- has a basic guiding principle – there should be no surprises on a quiz, test, and examination;
- should be formulated to allow for performances at all four levels of achievement in the category of thinking/inquiry;
- is limited in that some aspects of learning may not be evident within the context of a paper-and-pencil test.

Response Journal

Description

The response journal is a student's personal record of frequently written reflective responses to material he or she is reading, viewing, listening to, or discussing. (See also "Response Journal" in Teaching/Learning Strategies: Independent Learning Strategies)

Purposes

The response journal may be used to:

- record personal reflections, observations, and interpretations.

Characteristics

The response journal:

- allows time for students to formulate well-considered responses;
- can include both factual information and the student's personal reflections;
- is provided within a non-threatening, open climate, one which encourages risk taking;
- can provide the focus for a student-teacher conference;
- is a vehicle for communication with teachers, peers, parents;
- can include visual representations (e.g., artwork, sketches);
- can be used in all subject areas.

Method

The teacher:

- writes comments in the spirit of a dialogue (by asking questions and sharing thoughts);
- respects the personal nature of a journal and the learner's desire for privacy.

Considerations

The response journal:

- gives the student a focus for the process of reflective thinking;
- may be appropriately assessed according to the criteria of depth of thought and connection with understandings and experience;
- is a record in which the student need not pay strict attention to the formal aspects of writing style or correctness.

Select Response

Description

The select response is a pencil-and-paper assessment found in quizzes, tests, and examinations, in which the student is to identify the one correct answer. The select response is a commonly used formal procedure for gathering objective evidence about student learning, specifically in memory, recall, and comprehension.

Purposes

The select response may be used to:

- test student learning of subject or content knowledge (facts, concepts, principles or generalizations, procedures);
- assess prerequisite knowledge (e.g., students communicating in a second language can be assessed on vocabulary before a conversation in that language).

Characteristics

The select response:

- can be in multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank formats;
- can be used for diagnostic, formative, or summative purposes;
- can be an accurate and efficient assessment of mastery that can be a key to student growth and development;
- can be administered to large numbers of students at the same time;
- can be scored very quickly;
- is stated in clear, simple language.

Method

The teacher:

- identifies the format (e.g., multiple-choice, true-false);
- selects the content to be covered;
- designs the questions;

- can utilize computer and optical-scanning technology to save time and effort in developing, storing, retrieving, printing, and scoring items for a select-response assessment.

Considerations

The select response:

- is always influenced as an assessment strategy by the student's ability to read and understand;
- uses formats (e.g., true-false and multiple-choice) that make it difficult to determine how the student arrived at an answer.

Self-Assessment

Description

Self-assessment is the process by which the student gathers information about and reflects on his or her own learning. Self-assessment is the student's own assessment of personal progress in knowledge, skills, processes, or attitudes. Self-assessment leads a student to a greater awareness and understanding of himself or herself as a learner.

Purposes

Self-assessment may be used to:

- assist students to take more responsibility and ownership of their learning;
- provide insights and information that enable students to make decisions about their learning and to set personal learning goals;
- focus on both the process and products of learning;
- help students critique their own work;
- help students internalize the characteristics or criteria of high-quality student work.

Characteristics

Self-assessment:

- promotes the development of metacognitive ability (the ability to reflect critically on one's own reasoning);
- may involve an introspective observation, a product assessment, or a test;
- may include attitude surveys, interest inventories, and personal journals;
- involves such questions as "How do I learn best?", "What are my areas for growth?", "Where do I need to improve?";
- is used to determine whether a student's beliefs about his or her performance correspond with the actual performance observed by the teacher.

Method

The teacher:

- guides students by helping them understand how to reflect on learning;
- provides time and opportunities for self-assessment;
- designs the questions or selects the self-assessment tool;

- can use student self-assessment to determine change or growth in the student's attitudes, understandings, and achievement.

Considerations

Self-assessment:

- is used to compare the student's and the teacher's views of expected performance and criteria for evaluation to see whether they are similar;
- develops gradually as students begin to use the process in daily activities;
- can help students at all levels of ability to witness personal growth through comparison with their own previous work.

DEVICES for Recording the Results of Student Achievement

Anecdotal Record

Description

The anecdotal record is a short narrative describing both a student behaviour and the context in which the behaviour occurred. An anecdotal record should objectively report specific and observed behaviours and may describe student performance in detail in writing. An anecdotal record provides rich portraits of an individual student's achievement and includes observations that have special significance and cannot be obtained from other classroom assessment strategies.

Purposes

Anecdotal records may be used to:

- provide ongoing written observations of student progress;
- register with objectivity significant observations that are not part of a formal assessment and that might otherwise be forgotten or remembered incorrectly;
- register observations of unanticipated performances, behaviours, incidents, or events;
- provide holistic assessment.

Characteristics

Anecdotal records:

- may appear unstructured, since they are used to document spontaneous, unexpected demonstrations and/or behaviours or statements;
- are entered on a form that specifies the learner, the date of observation, and a factual description of the event or behaviour;
- consist of information collected over time and carefully analysed in order to form the basis for accurate judgements about student achievements;
- provide a mechanism for recognizing patterns of student growth over time;
- are often used to document a student's behaviour for later reference.

Method

The teacher:

- determines which observations are to be considered significant and important;
- preplans the general format of the form and the labels to be used (e.g., name of student, date, time, setting, description);
- states in clear, concise language exactly what has been observed;
- records information while the event or behaviour is fresh in his or her mind;
- makes interpretations after multiple anecdotes are available for reflection;
- records incidents with a purpose (e.g., in terms of instructional decisions, progress related to a specific student goal);
- establishes a systematic procedure for collecting records on all students, ensuring that no individual is overlooked.

Considerations

Anecdotal records:

- are time consuming to read, write, and interpret;
- are often used in conjunction with other assessment strategies;
- are to be interpreted separately from the actual recording of the incidents;
- are the source of information over time and need to be analysed carefully so that accurate judgements can be made about students' achievements;
- are reports of unanticipated performances/behaviours that are not likely to be included on other recording devices and hence might be lost or at least recalled inaccurately;
- do not include personal or situational information or judgmental statements;
- are written separately for each individual student if more than one student is involved in the performance/behaviour.

Checklist

Description

The checklist is a list of actions, descriptions, skills, concepts, behaviours, processes, and/or attitudes that a rater (teacher) checks off as he or she observes them. A checklist includes a written list of performance criteria that are used to assess student performance through observation, or to assess written work or other product forms such as oral presentations, art and media works, and models. A checklist is a diagnostic, reusable tool that can be helpful in charting student progress.

Purposes

The checklist may be used to:

- record whether a specific skill or behaviour was "evident" or "not evident" in a given situation;
- record the presence or absence of the components of a student performance, or the sequence of steps that the performance requires, with a view to helping the students see where improvement is needed;
- diagnose an individual student's strengths and weaknesses;
- obtain information about a student's improvement over time if the same checklist is used more than once
- assist students in self and peer assessment.

Characteristics

The checklist:

- is used when the process or product can be broken into components that are judged to be present or absent, adequate or inadequate;
- is quick and useful in situations involving a large number of criteria;
- includes specific concepts, skills, processes, and/or attitudes that are expected to be exhibited and assessed;

- is usually completed by a check mark or other indicator, which is placed in the appropriate space on the checklist form to indicate that the behaviour or skill has been observed.

Method

The teacher*:*

- observes a student's performance, judges it, and determines whether it meets the criteria outlined on the checklist;
- records the occurrence of the skill, behaviour, concept, process, and/or attitude on the checklist;
- does not evaluate the quality of the work or contribution but indicates that it occurred or was completed;
- should make a sufficient number of observations about a student before applying an evaluative judgement.

Considerations

The checklist:

- allows for the collection of results in a fashion that can lack detail;
- may limit considerations for other assessment strategies when an absolute decision was made about whether the performance criteria were seen or not seen;
- can be used to structure observations of a student within a performance task;
- can be particularly useful in indicating whether a student has effectively completed a series of steps involved in a performance task or demonstration.

Rating Scale

Description

The rating scale is a simple tool for assessing the extent to which specific facts, skills, attitudes, and/or behaviours are observed in a student's work or performance. A rating scale assesses performance on a several-point range from low to high, from as few as 3 points to as many as 10 points. A rating scale is based on a set of criteria that allows the teacher to judge the quality of a performance, product, attitude, and/or behaviour along a continuum.

Purposes

The rating scale may be used to:

- provide diagnostic information about a student's performance, product, attitude, and/or behaviour in reference to prestated criteria;
- record the frequency or even the degree to which a student exhibits a characteristic;
- record the range of student achievement in relation to specific behaviours;
- describe performance along a continuum.

Characteristics

The rating scale:

- provides a scale or range of responses for each item that the teacher is assessing;

- can be analytic. Analytic rating scales are used to describe a product or performance according to multiple dimensions (e.g., in a writing task, the dimensions or aspects that might be rated are organization, mechanics, and creativity).

Method

The teacher:

- uses a scale to assess student's work;
- makes decisions about the student's work on the basis of selected aspects of the work (e.g., categories or topics) and assigns a numerical or qualitative measurement.

Considerations

The rating scale:

- is used best for a quick, overall impression of a product or performance;
- should be followed up by a more in-depth discussion or assessment.

Rubric

Description

The rubric is a scoring scale that consists of a set of achievement criteria and descriptions of levels of achievement for a particular task.

Purposes

The rubric may be used to:

- provide an effective means of assessing the particular level of student performance in the performance task;
- allow for consistent scoring of student performance;
- provide information to students on how to improve their work and achievement level;
- provide the basis of criterion-referenced assessment (i.e., an assessment where an individual's performance is compared to a specific performance standard and not to the performance of other students);
- allow for holistic and analytical scoring.

Characteristics

The rubric:

- focuses on specific expectations;
- identifies key criteria by which students' work is to be assessed;
- provides descriptions that indicate the degree to which the key criteria have been met;
- includes categories of skills and knowledge.

Method

The teacher:

- considers student achievement in relation to the criteria for assessment stated for each category;
- uses the descriptions of the different levels of achievement given in the rubric to assess student achievement on a particular task;

- uses the rubric to clarify what is expected of the students and to discuss the criteria and standards for high-quality performance;
- helps students to describe their own strengths and weaknesses and plan their next steps for learning.

Considerations

The rubric:

- is intended to provide teachers and students with an overview of the expected final product with regard to the knowledge and skills being assessed;
- differs from the achievement chart in a related curriculum policy document. The differences between the achievement chart and the task-specific rubric may be summarized as follows:
  - The achievement chart contains broad descriptions of achievement. Teachers use it to assess student achievement over time, making a summative evaluation that is based on the total body of evidence gathered through using a variety of assessment methods and strategies;
  - The rubric contains criteria and descriptions of achievement that relate to a specific task. The rubric uses some terms that are similar to those in the achievement chart but focuses on aspects of the specific task. Teachers use the rubric to assess student achievement on a single task.

Assessment Companion

A Selected Bibliography

This bibliography presents selected English-language articles, books, and other printed sources – published between 1996 and the present – regarding assessment practices and principles in schools. This list is intended to assist teachers designing instructional units using the *Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner*. While every effort has been made to provide appropriate information for educators, this list is not intended to be a definitive treatment of the topic. For additional online information, please check the Planner website www.ocup.org.

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