Assessment Policy
Helen Keller Elementary School
Authorized IB World School

This policy will be reviewed and revised annually by HKE staff

What do we assess?

Assessing Students

Helen Keller Elementary will assess all students in order to identify what they know, understand, and can do at different stages in the learning process. Student performance is assessed in accordance with the PYP standards and practices and the Common Core State Standard acquisition.

Assessing Practices

Teachers will strive to employ diverse techniques to develop student critical-thinking and understand the ways students learn. Through our School Improvement planning process, Helen Keller Elementary will continually analyze and reflect on the instructional and assessment practices used by all teachers in order to improve those practices.

Assessing the Primary Years Program

Assessment of the Primary Years Program will be used to continually improve the overall program and its effect on creating global citizens. Program assessment will inform Helen Keller Elementary staff about the use and growth of inquiry processes, the development of student practice of the learner profile, attitudes, and action, and the overall growth and development of the whole children in our charge.

Why do we assess?

Assessment Philosophy

Assessment determines what students know, understand and can do. Assessment drives instruction, defines progress and allows us to make decisions about learning opportunities, interventions and successes.

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to provide, identify and collect supportive data that reflects students' knowledge, understanding and skills at different stages in the learning process.

1) promote student learning: Effective assessment will provide students with a clear picture of their strengths and where further growth is needed. It develops student responsibility for their learning by providing a sense of purpose and opportunities for them to identify and understand their learning style and progress.

2) direct teaching practices: Effective assessment will show teachers what their students know, understand, and can do. With evidence of students prior knowledge, skills, talents, interests and learning styles, teachers can prepare appropriate lessons and meet the individual needs of their students. Assessing students will provide evidence of student growth, depth of understanding, ability to apply information and make connections, as well as areas that need more instruction and practice. Analysis of data collected from effective assessments allow teachers to make appropriate changes in instruction at the classroom and program level, (inquiry-based enhancements to curriculum such as independent study, projects, diversions of study).

3) report student growth: Effective assessment provides evidence of students' level of mastery over content, skills, and thought processes (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, metacognition, etc.). This allows teachers to determine student growth in all areas and communicate this information to students, parents and appropriate school personnel.

4) develop an effective program: Effective assessment provides evidence of the successful implementation of the Primary Years Program. Conducting self-evaluations, as provided by the International Baccalaureate organization, surveys to all stakeholders, and self-assessments of each of the program components allows the staff to make school wide changes to improve the delivery of the program.

Principles of Assessment

Effective assessment should include consistent practices that are valid, measurable, and varied to accommodate different learning styles. A combination of pre-assessment, formative, and summative assessments will guide and evaluate instruction. Adherence to testing standards will ensure balanced results.

Effective assessment should:
- be varied
- be based on what the child has studied
- be directly related to learning outcomes
- be built into learning activities
- be a learning experience in itself
- be continuous throughout the learning process
- be student-friendly
- be as simple as its purposes will allow
- be teacher-friendly
- be planned at the start of the unit but flexible to make adjustments
- allow for a variety of intelligences or ways of learning (cultural context)

Effective assessment should allow teachers to:
- understand students needs and strengths
- adjust lesson plans to meet student needs
- meet the needs of all students
- assess concepts, skills and knowledge
- self-assess their instructional practices
- use a variety of teaching strategies
- plan learning opportunities in response to student and teacher inquiries
- develop criteria for producing a quality product or performance
- produce evidence that can be reported and understood by the whole school community
- collaboratively review and reflect on student performance and progress
- use scoring that is both analytical and holistic where appropriate
- have criteria that are known and understood by students in advance

- offer feedback to parents on their child's performance

Effective assessment should allow parents to:
- see evidence of student learning and development
- develop an understanding of the student's progress
- provide opportunities to support and celebrate student learning

Effective assessment should allow students to:
- participate actively in the planning and creation of assessments
- understand the purpose of an activity
- feel encouraged by their success
- demonstrate what they have learned and reflect on what needs to be improved
- demonstrate creativity when appropriate
- demonstrate critical thinking skills
- share their learning and understandings
- demonstrate a range of knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills
- use a variety of learning styles, multiple intelligences and abilities to express their understanding
- know and understand in advance the criteria for producing a quality product or performance
- participate in reflection
- express different points of view and interpretations (if they can back up their thinking)
- synthesize and apply their learning in addition to recalling facts
- be encouraged to be responsible for their learning
- self-assess their learning and effort
- participate in peer assessment

How do we assess?
Assessment Practices

1) Before Instruction:
- Review of students previous records including CA60's, Literacy Folders and Student Portfolios to determine individual learning needs of students. Students identified as needing interventions are discussed at RTI meetings to determine further needed assessment and/or instructional changes.
- Pre-assessment is done at the beginning of instructional units and/or lessons to determine what students already know, understand, and can do.

2) During Instruction:
- Formative assessments are used daily, throughout instruction to determine whether or not students are learning and/or how instruction needs to be adjusted.
- Peer and self-assessments may be used to inform students of their progress during instruction.

3) After Instruction:
- Summative assessment is used at the end of instruction to measure exactly what students learned.
- Student reflections, including portfolio artifact reflections are used by students to assess their growth and learning.

4) On-Going:
- Parent consultations and input may be obtained and used throughout the planning, teaching, assessing process.
- Response to Intervention process is used throughout the school year including universal screenings three times and year and monitored interventions provided at three levels as deemed appropriate.

Assessments Strategies & Tools

The following assessment strategies and tools will be used by Helen Keller staff to answer the question, "How will we know what students have learned?" These strategies and tools can be used to assess a wide range of student characteristics allowing teachers to get a whole picture of each student.

Observations (watch student behavior): This ongoing strategy occurs in all school environments at any level of teacher focus; from one-on-one of a particular skill, characteristic or concept, to a general assessment of the whole group. Appropriate tools to use with this strategy are anecdotal notes and checklists.

Open-Ended Assessments (assess student responses): Students are presented with a task and asked to communicate an original response. This assessment strategy would likely be used to assess the depth of thinking and understanding about a large topic or concept. Student responses might be a brief written answer, a drawing, a diagram or a solution. Appropriate tools to use with this strategy are criteria checklists, rubrics, or continuums.

Product or Performance Assessments (assess student products): Students are presented with an authentic, real-world task that requires them to use a repertoire of knowledge and skills to accomplish an open-ended problem. An established criteria is used to score student knowledge and skills as demonstrated by their finished product or final performance. There is rarely a correct response to this assessment strategy. Appropriate tools to use with this strategy are criteria checklists, rubrics, or continuums.

Process and Skill Assessments (assess student performance): Students are observed in the practice of a particular thought process or skill (transdisciplinary skills, attitudes, higher order thinking skills, learner profile attributes). Observations are recorded using assessment tools such as checklists, rubrics, or continuums.

Selected Response Assessments (assess student answers): Students are expected to demonstrate specific knowledge at that moment in time. This

form of assessment generally requires students to provide correct responses to a given topic. Typical tools for this assessment strategy tests or quizzes.

Long-Term Growth Assessments (assess student growth):   Student work is collected over a period of time to demonstrate growth in knowledge and skills. A portfolio is a typical tool to use with this strategy.

Self-Assessment (assess student reflection): Students, teachers, and the school at large will reflect on growth and areas that need improvement. Assessment strategies will be conducted using well researched and appropriate assessment tools.

How do we document and report student results?

1) MiStar: As teachers assess student work and assignments, data is entered into an electronic grade book with specific subject areas. This documentation is used to report student progress on the district report card distributed to parents four times each school year (November, January, March, June).

2) Literacy Folders: District required student assessments in reading and writing are collected and kept in each student's Literacy Folder. This documentation may be shared with parents during conferences. Literacy Folders are passed on from year to year and report a cumulative literacy record to each new teacher each school year.

3) Response to Intervention (RTI): All students are given universal screenings in Math, Reading and Writing three times each school year. Scores from these are entered into AIMSWeb where reports are generated for teacher analysis. These reports are shared with the RTI team for the purposes of providing interventions for high-risk students. AIMSWeb reports and intervention plans may be shared with parents during conferences.

4) Units of Inquiry: At the end of each unit of inquiry, teachers document each student's demonstrated understanding of the unit central idea, unit concepts, unit skills, unit learner profile attributes and attitudes and any student-initiated action that resulted from that unit on a PYP Unit Assessment report card. Teachers share this report card with students and students share it with their parents.

5) Digital Portfolios (SeeSaw): Student portfolios document student analysis of their own growth.

6) Conferences: Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled at or near the end of the first marking period to discuss each student's progress with their parents. Any and all collected data and work samples may be shared with parents at this time. Further parent/teacher conferences may be scheduled as deemed appropriate by the parent and teacher involved.

7) Exhibition: 5th grade students present their collaborative inquiry projects at an Exhibition each spring. At this community-wide event, parents, siblings, and other interested community members learn about each inquiry group's learning process, findings from their research questions, and the action taken as a result of their learning.

When do we assess?

Assessment at Helen Keller Elementary takes places continually throughout the school year. Teachers will use the Required Assessment Schedule to plan for an administer state, district and PYP assessments.