

Battle River School Division  
**Changing Assessment Methods Focus on Helping Students to Succeed**

The goal of education is to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.

As the world changes, the way we educate children must also change. In Battle River School Division, and across the Province of Alberta, schools are adapting the ways in which they help students learn and also the ways in which they measure learning.

Based on the findings of worldwide brain research on learning and motivation, schools have been working for several years now to put “*Assessment for Learning*” into practice in all classrooms.

**Assessment *for Learning* is based on these beliefs:**

- Students are more successful when they know beforehand what they are expected to learn.
- Sharing examples of work helps students understand what success looks like.
- Students need the kind of feedback (from self, teacher, peers, parents) that helps them move forward. “Good feedback causes thinking,” [not just an emotional reaction] says assessment research expert Dylan Wiliam.
- Students are more successful (and motivated) when they have choices in how they will show or share what they’ve learned.
- When evidence of learning is collected in more than one way, understanding can be more accurately measured. Ways of collecting evidence of learning include: watching/observing students doing a task; listening to students explain their understanding; assessing products created by students, etc.).
- When students reflect on how their learning is going, they take ownership of choices and their next steps.
- Numerical feedback such as percentages and raw scores offers limited information about *how* to improve or move forward. Descriptive feedback can be oral or written. It describes what’s been done well, what to keep working on, and gives advice about how to improve.
- When students coach themselves and each other, they deepen their understanding.
- Evidence of learning should be used to help both students and teachers plan the next steps in learning.

***Here are some of the things you may notice in your child or children's school experience:***

- **Learner Outcomes** will be explained. This means students will be informed, in student-friendly language, of the learning goals and how they will show what they've learned. Students and teachers work together to review the evidence of how well a student is achieving the Learner Outcomes. Together they figure out what's working, what's not, and what the next steps will be.
- **Formative assessments** will be done. Think of these as '*practices*' – opportunities for students to improve their skills, just like they do in dance, public speaking, cadets, or sports. Learners of all ages and in all situations need **coaching** towards deeper understanding and higher skill levels. This is the basis of **Assessment for Learning**.
- **Summative assessments** will also be done. These might include assignments, presentations, projects or tests. These assessments will be in line with the Alberta curriculum and will count toward the student's grade. Think of these as being like '*game day*.' The coaching that occurred before the summative assessment should help the student be successful on 'game day.' Summative assessment is also known as **Assessment of Learning**.

A teacher's professional judgment is a very important aspect of measuring learning. Teachers design learning experiences and lessons to help students perform and progress in relation to the Learner Outcomes. They also design ways to measure students' learning, using their observations of student understanding, their conversations with students and the assessment of products like assignments, projects and tests.

***Information about changes to report cards***

As students learn new concepts, teachers measure the progress to increased levels of skill and understanding. When students bring home report cards, you'll notice that it looks different than in previous years. This change to report cards is a result of an update in the BRSD Administrative Procedure on Student Assessment.

The new report card separates a student's achievement from other aspects of learning.

You will find three key sections on the new report cards:

1. **Level of Achievement** for each course
2. Information on the "**Characteristics of Successful Learning**" (these are learning behaviours separated from the student's achievement)
3. **Descriptive feedback** (comments) from the teacher that will reveal strengths, areas to work on, and specific advice/strategies about how to improve.

In **Grades 1 to 12**, you will see an overall level of achievement for each course or subject.

In **Kindergarten (ECS)**, you will see an overall level of achievement for each of the following 7 areas of child development:

- Early Literacy
- Early Numeracy
- Citizenship and Identity
- Environment and Community Awareness
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Physical Skills and Well-Being
- Creative Expression

### Characteristics of Successful Learning

This section of the report card focuses on how often a student is demonstrating specific characteristics that connect to learner success. The specific characteristics will be chosen by schools. Examples of Characteristics of Successful Learning include: work habits, independence, cooperation, participation in learning, respect for others, etc.

In all schools and grade levels, *Characteristics of Successful Learning* will be reported on a 3-level scale:

<b>1</b>	The student <b>occasionally</b> demonstrates this characteristic
<b>2</b>	The student <b>usually</b> demonstrates this characteristic
<b>3</b>	The student <b>consistently</b> demonstrates this characteristic

### Levels of Achievement

In **Kindergarten (ECS)**, the 3 levels will be Beginning, Developing and Achieving. ECS teachers may also use the level Not Yet Assessed.

LEVEL (ECS)	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>	<i>Think of it as a progression from...</i>
<b>Beginning BEG</b>	Skill / learner outcome is emerging with direct support. Evidence indicates a <b>beginning</b> level of understanding.	<i>Getting started</i>
<b>Developing DEV</b>	Skill / learner outcome is emerging with minimal support. Evidence indicates a <b>basic</b> level of understanding.	<i>Starting to get it</i>
<b>Achieving ACH</b>	Demonstrates skill / learner outcome independently and consistently. Evidence indicates a <b>solid</b> level of understanding.	<i>Got it</i>
<b>Not Yet Assessed NYA</b>	Skill / learner outcome has not yet been introduced and/or assessed.	

In **Grades 1 to 6**, the 4 levels will be Beginning, Developing, Achieving and Excelling.

In **Grades 7 to 9**, schools have the option to report in levels or percentages in 2010-11 and 2011-12.

In September 2012, Grades 7 to 9 in all BRSD schools will be reported in 4 levels.

<b>LEVEL</b> <i>Grade 1-9</i>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<i>Think of it as a progression from...</i>
<b>Beginning</b> <b>BEG</b>	At this level, the evidence of learning shows a student has beginning understanding of the learner outcomes. Evidence shows there is not yet full understanding or ability to apply the concepts being taught. The evidence does not yet meet the standards for grade level.	<i>Getting started</i>
<b>Developing</b> <b>DEV</b>	At this level, the evidence of learning shows a student has a basic, developing understanding of the learner outcomes. Evidence shows the student is not yet demonstrating a complete ability to apply the concepts being taught. The evidence meets the acceptable standard for grade level.	<i>Starting to get it</i>
<b>Achieving</b> <b>ACH</b>	At this level, the evidence of learning indicates a solid understanding of the learner outcomes. Evidence is accurate and well thought out. The evidence capably demonstrates the acceptable standard for grade level.	<i>Got it</i>
<b>Excelling</b> <b>EXC</b>	At this level, the evidence of learning indicates a convincing, in-depth understanding of the learner outcomes. Evidence is perceptive and indicates an ability to apply the learning in varied situations. The evidence skillfully demonstrates the acceptable standard for grade level.	<i>Really got it!</i>
<b>Missing Evidence</b> <b>MEV</b>	This statement indicates that there is not enough evidence or the evidence is too incomplete for assessment to take place.	

### Senior High

In **Grades 10 to 12**, schools are required by Alberta Education to report final course marks as a percentage. Senior high schools have the option to pilot a variation of the 4-level system, with additional + and – levels for Developing, Achieving and Excelling. Pilot schools will report both levels and percentages. When full implementation reaches senior high, student grades will be reported as both level and percentage.

The levels—Beginning, Developing, Achieving, Excelling—mean the same thing throughout the grade levels. The concepts in the curriculum become more complex as students advance in their learning.