

Battle River School Division Update

Administrative Procedure 360 - Student Assessment

Two years ago, a committee of 18—composed of thirteen BRSD teachers/administrators, two Division Office members and three trustees—researched, debated and drafted a new Administrative Procedure on student assessment. In Fall 2009, the first draft was forwarded to the 23 Vice Principals who further analyzed, debated, revised and finalized it.

Based on the recommendations developed in this two-stage process, the Superintendent approved Administrative Procedure 360 – Student Assessment – for implementation in September 2010. The Vice Principals Project continues to focus on support for implementation.

An Administrative Procedure is approved by the Superintendent of a school division. It outlines the ways a school division's employees operate in specific situations. Administrative Procedure 360 is written for teachers and leaders; it outlines the expectations for assessing (measuring) learning in BRSD classrooms.

Administrative Procedure 360 - Student Assessment - stems from the **BRSD's beliefs and goals** as well as **legislation** (*School Act* and *Guide to Education*) and **educational research** on assessment and grading.

Administrative Procedure 360 is built on **BRSD's 7 Beliefs**:

- *Our fundamental purpose is to promote student learning, growth and understanding.*
- *When a student is in the greatest need, we will provide the greatest support.*
- *All staff need to be committed and dedicated to their own continuous learning.*
- *Passion and skill are central to being an influential and successful educator.*
- *Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect in a safe and caring environment.*
- *Character education is an essential component of a child's development.*
- *Optimal learning occurs when it is engaging, meaningful and active.*

The Administrative Procedure is also tightly connected to three of **BRSD's Goals**:

1. *All students will achieve standards by participating in learning experiences that are outcome-centered, inquiry-based and collaborative.*
2. *All students will have access to rich, descriptive feedback about their learning that enhances their ability to be successful.*
3. *All students will possess a strong connection to their school as a safe and caring place that is focused on their individualized success.*

Classroom assessment involves collecting high quality evidence of learning, calculating it accurately, and reporting it clearly. Learning requires clear targets, plenty of practice and helpful feedback.

Administrative Procedure 360 (Student Assessment) aligns with educational research and BRSD's vision of enhancing student success for all students. The **key ideas** in this Administrative Procedure include:

1. **Teachers create learning targets so students know where they are going.** In Alberta, the learning targets are the Learner Outcomes listed in the Alberta Programs of Studies.
2. **Students need clear feedback about how they are doing in relation to the learning targets.** This comes in the form of verbal and written feedback, class discussions, feedback on assignments and formative assessments. Report cards give a summary several times a year about how each student is doing in relation to the learning targets.
3. **Students need helpful advice and strategies or order to hit the expected learning targets.** This learning advice is given in conversations, as verbal or written feedback on assignments, and in communication to parents (e.g. report cards).

Teachers have a legal responsibility to teach and assess the Learner Outcomes from the Alberta Program of Studies. Measuring learning is a significant responsibility; it is also complex work.

Teachers determine how learning and assessment unfold in the classroom. On a daily basis, teachers:

- Design classroom learning (plan)
- Share clear learning targets with students
- Collect evidence of learning - ***What do students know? What are students able to do?***
- Separate evidence that is connected to learner outcomes from evidence related to learning behaviours (e.g. attitude, participation, work ethic, etc.)
- Adjust their instruction based on the evidence of learning – *What needs more time and support? What is well understood?*
- Record and calculate the evidence (using gradebook software and professional judgment)
- Report learning to students and parents (in conversations, feedback and formal reports)
- Adapt and modify learning programs for students with identified special learning needs

Throughout all the stages of the learning and assessment process, teachers coach students with specific feedback to help them improve.

Listing these steps on paper makes the work of assessment seem straightforward. Rather, classroom assessment is complex and full of nuanced decision-making.

Teachers' professional judgment is a vital ingredient in effective classroom assessment.

Parents, students and educators share a common goal of preparing students to successfully take on the challenges and realities of learning, life and work. Students, educators and families work together to ensure timely completion of assigned work so there is evidence on which to base a student's grade.

Evidence of learning can include things like assignments, projects and tests. There are times when individual students do not complete assigned work. The question of what to do with late or incomplete work connects to three related issues.

Firstly, there is an issue of whether the student understands the concepts being taught and how to do the assigned work. A lack of understanding can cause a student to avoid attempting or completing work. BRSD's belief statement says, "When a student is in the greatest need, we will provide the greatest support." When there are gaps in understanding, students need assistance.

Secondly, teachers are professionally responsible to accurately measure and report on each student's level of understanding. Grades must accurately reflect what each student knows and can do in relation to the Alberta Programs of Study. It distorts the accuracy of a grade to blend learning behaviours (such as handing in work late or neatness) with the measurement of student understanding. Assigning a zero for missing or incomplete evidence also distorts accuracy because a zero indicates that a student knows nothing about the concept being assessed. This would rarely, if ever, be the case. Accuracy of measurement is a professional responsibility.

We all realize that solid learning behaviours influence achievement. In BRSD, we are committed to communicating about students' achievement and related learning behaviours. The Administrative Procedure follows the findings of grading research. In BRSD, learning behaviours are reported *separately* from the student's level of understanding. Grades contain clear information about the level of understanding. Information about learning behaviors is communicated separately (e.g. in formative evidence, telephone calls, emails, Characteristics of Successful Learning, report card comments, etc.).

Separating achievement from learning behaviours reveals a fuller, clearer picture of student progress.

Thirdly, there are times that work is not completed because of poor time management, initiative, or organizational skills. Issues related to the character trait of responsibility surface in people of all ages. When students do not take responsibility for completing work, they learn responsibility by being expected—and required—to complete the work. Late or incomplete work signals that a student needs additional support from family and school to manage time, meet expectations, and stay organized. Being required to complete missed work develops responsibility *and* provides evidence on which to base the measurement of the student's level of understanding.

For all of these related reasons, Admin Procedure 360 states that schools will "establish consistent, student success-driven processes to support and ensure completion of student work, and to develop and implement alternatives to zeros" (Section 1.2.i).

In BRSD, "our fundamental purpose is to promote student learning, growth and understanding." Effective assessment advances the vision of *Every Student, Every Day, A Success*.