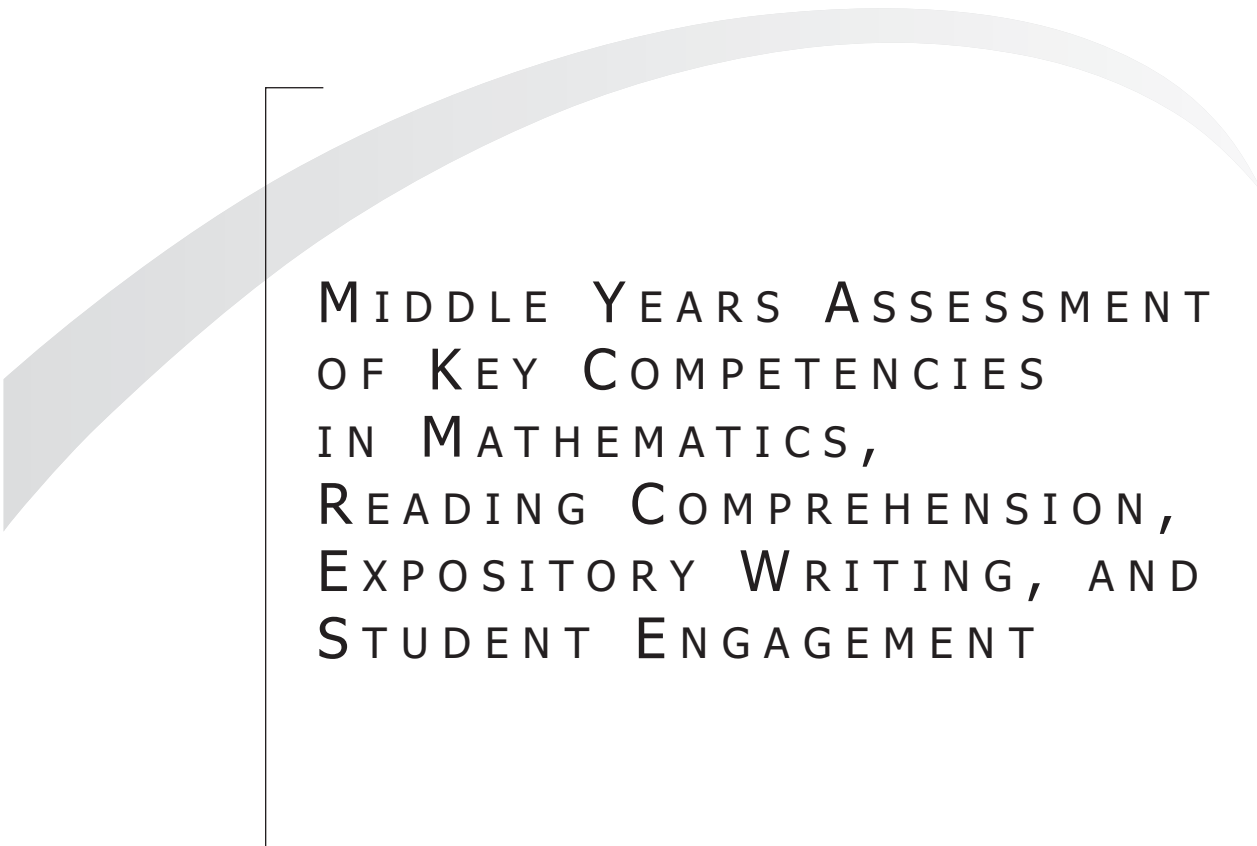


**Middle Years Assessment
of Key Competencies
in Mathematics,
Reading Comprehension,
Expository Writing, and
Student Engagement**



MIDDLE YEARS ASSESSMENT
OF KEY COMPETENCIES
IN MATHEMATICS,
READING COMPREHENSION,
EXPOSITORY WRITING, AND
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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RATIONALE

Assessment of student performance is vital to guide the teaching-learning process. Research shows that both the quality and level of academic achievement and student engagement can be increased through formative assessment (assessment *for* and *as* learning¹).

In classrooms where formative assessment refers to frequent, interactive assessments of student progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately, the gains in student achievement are quite considerable (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]; Black and Wiliam; Allal and Lopez, Wiggins).

This assessment *for* learning done by the teacher fosters an internal assessment *as* learning on the part of the student. To become independent learners, students need to participate in the assessment process. From the start, students need to construct for themselves an idea of what is to be learned. The teacher needs to explain the learning outcomes in terms that students understand, and to have them participate in

- setting criteria that define success
- giving and obtaining feedback
- planning the next steps to reach the learning outcomes

Depending on student needs, the teacher shows students how to carefully review and refine their work. Gradually, students learn to assess themselves and their peers fairly and realistically, being neither too harsh, nor too lax about the quality of the work.

Going beyond self-assessment, students must make the necessary adjustments to their work, and use the feedback gained from self-assessment, and from their peers and teacher. Students must be actively engaged in the teaching-learning process.

There is also a need to summarize information on the achievement of students (summative assessment or assessment *of* learning²) at certain points in time, to inform students, teachers, parents, and the broader educational community. This type of information can be used to adjust the teaching-learning process, and support the ongoing dialogue with parents.

¹ Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind, Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning, Assessment of Learning*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006.

² Idem

The 2005 OECD study reports that parents who were given the opportunity to become familiar with alternate forms of reporting of their children's progress, such as through more extensive use of narratives and rubrics, found this helpful and informative, and gave them more guidance in how they might help their children with school work.

Summative information also provides feedback to the school or system so that appropriate supports for further learning are provided and serves to communicate achievement to stakeholders.

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the policy is to enhance student learning and engagement through classroom-based assessment processes that build student awareness and confidence in learning. Formative assessment practices (assessment *for* and *as* learning) have great potential to improve learning. These practices engage students in setting learning goals and the criteria for success and involve them in self-assessment and communicating about their progress.

The second purpose is to gather summative information about the levels of achievement in key areas that Middle Years students have attained by the end of January. These key areas are based on what most Manitobans regard as vital for all students – a reasonable level of reading, writing, number skills, as well as a reasonable level of student engagement. This Middle Years Assessment initiative complements the Grade 3 Assessment and the Grade 12 Standards Tests in providing a provincial picture of student achievement.

There are two distinct audiences for the summative information. One is the learning team consisting of the teacher, student, and parents. By collecting the information in January, it can be used to plan the specific next steps in the student's learning and support the ongoing dialogue with parents. The second audience is the school, school division and Department, which can use the information to look for trends and make decisions about the provision of resources that further support and enhance student learning.

PILOT AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Department has worked closely with the field in the development and piloting of the Middle Years Assessment Policy. From January to April 2005, advisory committees composed of educators and department staff met several times to review the Middle Years Assessment Policy and to develop the competencies in mathematics, reading and writing (in English and in French), and student engagement.

In May 2005, the Department recruited 75 schools from 20 school divisions to implement the policy on a pilot basis during the 2005–2006 school year to assist with the continued development of procedures and support materials. Department staff worked closely with pilot schools and teachers over the course of the assessment. As well, the Department met twice with major stakeholder groups to discuss and review the policy. The current policy and procedures reflect information and feedback gathered from the various sources.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy applies to all students in Grade 7 and Grade 8 in provincially funded schools. Non-funded and band-operated schools are invited to participate, and will have access to materials and training for this purpose. The Department will provide schools with a brochure for parents with information about this policy. The competencies and the grades to which they apply are provided in the tables below.

English Program		
Key Competency	Mid-Grade 7	Mid-Grade 8
Number Sense	✓	
Application of Number Skills	✓	
Student Engagement	✓	
Reading Comprehension		✓
Writing of Expository Texts		✓

Français Program		
Key Competency	Mid-Grade 7	Mid-Grade 8
<i>Sens des nombres</i>	✓	
<i>Habilités mathématiques</i>	✓	
<i>Engagement de l'élève</i>	✓	
<i>Compréhension en Lecture</i>		✓
<i>Écriture de textes informatifs</i>		✓
Reading Comprehension (in English)		Optional
Writing of Expository Texts (in English)		Optional

French Immersion Program		
Key Competency	Mid-Grade 7	Mid-Grade 8
<i>Sens des nombres</i>	✓	
<i>Habiletés mathématiques</i>	✓	
<i>Engagement de l'élève</i>	✓	
<i>Compréhension en Lecture</i>		✓
<i>Écriture de textes informatifs</i>		✓
Reading Comprehension (in English)		✓
Writing of Expository Texts (in English)		✓

ASSESSING STUDENTS

Formative Assessment

Throughout the year, it is important to incorporate formative (assessment *for* and *as* learning) practices in the daily life of the classroom. Together, teachers and students use assessment to set goals and the criteria for success, to plan and adjust the teaching-learning process, to provide descriptive feedback, and to observe and communicate progress.

To become independent learners, students need to be involved in the assessment process. This might begin with the teacher modeling strategies and providing specific descriptive feedback. The teacher might show students how to carefully review and refine their work as needed. Gradually, students learn to assess themselves and make the necessary adjustments to their work.

As part of this Middle Years Assessment Policy, students will gauge their own performance relative to the same criteria used by teachers. This is intended to engage students in their own learning and lead to discussions among students, parents, and teachers regarding learning and progress.

Summative Assessment

In the last two weeks of January³, teachers prepare student reports showing each student's level of attainment on each of the identified key competencies. This assessment is based on the most recent, stable evidence of student achievement gathered as part of the normal teaching-learning process, and is made relative to mid-year criteria provided by the Department which are based on curricular, grade-level learning outcomes.

The Department will provide assessment criteria supported by rubrics, continua, and student examples, so that reported performance results are as reliable⁴ and as valid⁵ as possible.

The assessment of student performance for this policy is not restricted to language arts and mathematics teachers, and may include input from teacher teams, especially for student engagement.

³ French immersion schools with a late immersion program can assess Grade 7 students in *Mathématiques* in the first two weeks of March.

⁴ Reliability refers to the degree to which reported results are dependable in the sense that they would be the same if carried out by a different teacher, and/or using different strategies.

⁵ Validity refers to the appropriateness of interpretations made of reported results such as students' performance levels. In the context of this policy, it will be crucial that assessment strategies (e.g., tools and strategies, performance descriptors, criteria) accurately reflect the identified key competencies and evaluation guidelines.

In rare instances it will not be possible to assess some students and report results to parents or to the Department as required by this policy due to exceptional circumstances. For example, the student might have arrived in the province in January with no performance information available. Such a student may be exempted from the reporting process provided the parents are informed, they give consent, and the school makes a request that includes the details of the circumstances to the Department by the end of January. The format request letter must include

- school name
- student name and MET number
- description of the exceptional circumstances
- statement that the parent approves of the exemption
- school contact person with title, telephone number, and signature

The request may be mailed or sent by fax to

English Program:

Coordinator, Assessment Unit
Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch
71-1567 Dublin Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3E 3J5
Fax: 204-948-2442

Français or French Immersion Program:

Directrice, Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section évaluation)
Bureau de l'éducation française
309-1181 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3G 0T3
Fax: 204-948-3234

Once the exemption from reporting is granted by the Department, no reporting to the parents is required. For reporting to the Department, no further action is required. The exemption is indicated in the data and no performance levels for any of the competencies are reported.

For students who are not performing at any of the three levels presented in the reporting forms, please see the third paragraph under the section entitled *Reporting Results* (on the following page) for further information.

REPORTING RESULTS

Schools report each student's performance in two ways – to students and parents, distributed in a timely manner, and to the Department by the end of February⁶. Schools and school divisions are to include an analysis of their results in a report to the community, along with appropriate contextual background information. To facilitate data reporting, the Department will provide summary reports of divisional and provincial results for all competencies, by school program each school year.

Schools use the reporting forms provided by the Department to communicate results to parents. These reports are to be signed by principals and copies are to be kept in students' cumulative files. Performance levels, supported by samples of student work provided in support documents, are used for reporting mid-grade results. Schools will also use the reporting form for student engagement provided by the Department.

If a student's late-January performance level is below the lowest level described in the reporting form or the student is not working towards the curricular outcomes related to a given competency, then no performance levels should be indicated in the report to parents but an explanation should be made in the comment section. For reporting data to the Department, an option will be provided for each competency to indicate that the student is performing below the lowest performance level described in the reporting form for the competency. The same applies to the competency Student Engagement when the behaviours identified in the reporting form are not appropriate for the student.

Schools or school divisions wishing to incorporate reporting for this policy into other reporting procedures rather than using the provincial reporting templates must first obtain authorization from Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Schools will report individual student results to the Department by the end of February. Information about this reporting process will be sent to all schools near the beginning of each school year.

The Department will publicly report results at the provincial and program levels by June of the school year, as well as address specific areas of interest and research. No departmental public reporting will permit the identification of a student, class, school, or school division.

The Department will make the data available to external research groups for educational research purposes, as appropriate.

⁶ French immersion schools with a late immersion program can report the Grade 7 *Mathématiques* results to the Department by the end of March.

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