

# A Parent's Guide to Classroom [K-12] Assessment



Tips and research on how to  
support your child's learning

# A Parent's\* Guide to Classroom Assessment

## Communication is Key!

Education is shared between the home and the school. Good communication is important as we work together to support student learning. If you have questions about an activity or assignment, we encourage you to talk to your child's teacher.

\*"Parent" also refers to guardian, caregiver and other family members who can help children learn

## WHAT IS CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT?

When you think about classroom assessment, letter grades and report cards may come to mind. This is only one part of classroom assessment. There are three different parts:

FORMATIVE  
ASSESSMENT

EVALUATION

REPORTING

**This resource is intended to help you understand what each part means, and the impact these have on your child's learning.**



# FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

## WHAT IS IT?

Teachers use **formative assessment** in their classrooms every day. Formative assessment includes sharing goals and criteria with students, and giving them feedback while they are working towards those goals. The purpose is to help students understand how to improve.

## WHAT DOES FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT LOOK LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM?

Think of the teacher's role as similar to a coach. Coaches need to be very clear about what they want players to do to be successful. Players need time to practice new skills, and feedback to help them improve.

In the classroom, students also need time to practice new skills and need to know:

- what to do (using goals and criteria)
- how to improve (using feedback)
- where to improve (using self-assessment)

Components of Formative Assessment	What it means	What it can look like in the classroom				
<b>GOALS</b>	What students are going to learn	<i>Write a paragraph that explains why the Roman Empire fell.</i>				
<b>CRITERIA</b>	What must be included in an assignment	<i>Be sure to include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a clear topic sentence</li> <li>• three key reasons you believe are the most important</li> <li>• transitions between ideas</li> </ul>				
<b>FEEDBACK</b>	Information about how to improve; can be written or oral	<b>Criteria</b> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>a clear topic sentence</td> <td>your purpose is clear / your purpose is not clear</td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a clear topic sentence	your purpose is clear / your purpose is not clear
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<b>SELF ASSESSMENT</b>	Students reflect on the quality of their work and revise based on feedback and criteria	<i>One question I have . . .</i> <i>I need more help with . . .</i> <i>One thing I could change . . .</i>				

## AT HOME:

- To be successful, children must know what they are supposed to do, written in language they can understand. Ask your child to explain the criteria for the assignment. If neither of you understand it, have a conversation with the teacher.
- Look at the criteria for the assignment with your child. Has your child carefully completed all the criteria? Be sure they understand what they are being asked to do.
- When your child asks for feedback, be specific. Tell him what he did well and what could be improved in relation to the criteria.
- Have your child read his work to you, or read your child's work aloud to him. What did he notice? Did he leave out any important ideas?



### Research Says

- Formative assessment is one of the most powerful ways to help students learn.
- Clear goals and criteria are important for student success.
- Students are more motivated when they are involved in creating criteria.

# EVALUATION

## WHAT IS IT?

Teachers **evaluate**, or measure student learning, many times throughout the year. The purpose is to see what students know, understand and can do in relation to educational goals. This provides teachers and students with an idea of how the student is doing in relation to provincial goals.

## WHAT DOES CLASSROOM EVALUATION LOOK LIKE?

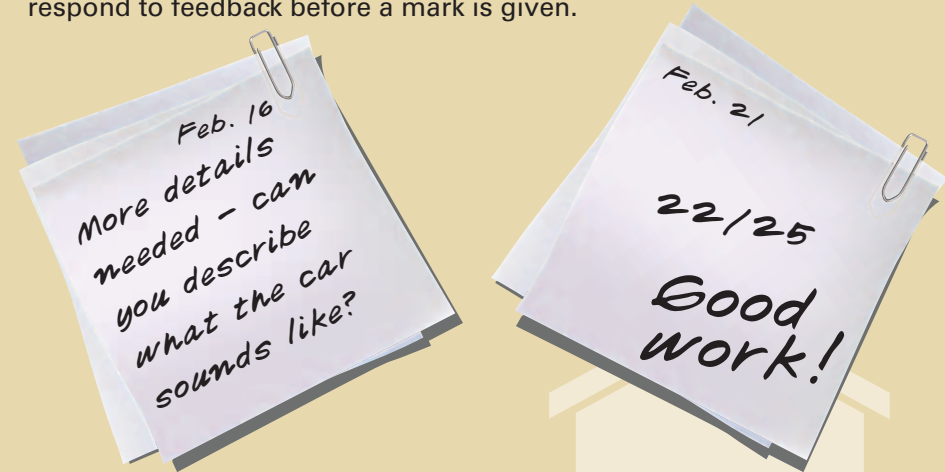
Every subject has a curriculum with a wide range of skills and knowledge that must be taught. Once students have received feedback and practiced these skills, teachers evaluate their progress. They assign a mark or a grade to a number of different tasks. These may include tests, projects, presentations and a variety of other ways to show learning.



## WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION?

How often student work is evaluated and how often teachers use formative assessment in their classrooms is directly linked to student progress. While it is necessary for teachers to evaluate student work and assign marks, research tells us that placing a number or letter grade on everything a student does can negatively impact motivation and learning. Giving fewer marks and more feedback can lead to improved student achievement.

Learning how to use feedback takes time and practice. As a result, students may receive fewer marks throughout the term. This is a reflection of having more opportunities to practice skills and respond to feedback before a mark is given.



## AT HOME:

- If your child does not understand why she received the mark, have a conversation with the teacher.

### Research Says



- Placing a number or letter grade on everything a student does can negatively impact progress.
- Giving fewer marks and more feedback can lead to improved student achievement.

# REPORTING

## WHAT IS IT?

The purpose of reporting is to communicate student achievement to parents. Letter grades provide a snapshot of what students know, understand and can do. They are based on achievement only. Factors such as late assignments and behavior are important and should be communicated through conversations and comments on the report card.

## WHAT DOES REPORTING LOOK LIKE TO PARENTS?

Students in kindergarten to grade three receive written comments about their progress. In grades four through twelve, letter grades are added. All students, from kindergarten to grade 12, receive comments and symbols, Good(G), Satisfactory(S), and Needs Improvement (N), about their work habits.



Aya has  
earned 65% in  
Social Studies 10

## AT HOME:

- Sit down with your child and take a positive approach regardless of the grades.
- Find out what she is most proud of.
- Ask what she feels she could improve on.
- If your child does not understand why she received the grade, have a conversation with the teacher.

Raj is  
fully meeting  
expectations in  
language arts

(B)

When your child struggles, avoid giving them the “right” answer. Encourage them to explore different ways to solve the problem. This helps your child become a more independent learner.



# Resources

## Websites

Surrey School District  
[www.surreyschools.ca/parentservices](http://www.surreyschools.ca/parentservices)

British Columbia Ministry of Education  
K-12 Curriculum  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp)

British Columbia Ministry of Education  
Parents  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/parents](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/parents)

## Research

*Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment.*

by Paul Black & Dylan Wiliam (1998) King's College, London.  
[weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/files/blackbox-1.pdf](http://weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/files/blackbox-1.pdf)

*Knowing Your Learning Target*

by Connie Moss, Susan Brookhart & Beverly Long  
Educational Leadership March 2011

[www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar11/vol68/num06/Knowing-Your-Learning-Target.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar11/vol68/num06/Knowing-Your-Learning-Target.aspx)

**This document is available online at:**

**[www.surreyschools.ca/parentservices](http://www.surreyschools.ca/parentservices)**

**Go to Parent Info Brochures, Classroom Learning**





surrey **teachers'** association



Surrey Schools

LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING