

# McAuliffe International School

## Assessment Policy

*Steering Committee: Kurt Dennis, Principal; Stephanie Gronholz, MYP Coordinator; Shannon Wood Rothenberg, mathematics subject lead and former parent; Rachel Shea, Data and Assessment Coordinator*

*Past Members: Mark Koester, parent and mathematics teacher educator; Sara Severance, sciences subject lead*

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### **Philosophical Underpinnings**

Assessment is the process by which learners show what they know. A school must consider the development that occurs in early adolescence in order to define the way it uses assessment. Therefore, McAuliffe International School emphasizes the MYP Approaches to Learning skills that promote collaboration, self-assessment, choice, and general awareness of ability and engagement. The “growth mindset” resulting from this emphasis pairs well with the philosophy that true assessment allows learners multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of a standard. Instead of thinking they have failed, students should hear the message that they haven’t succeeded *yet* but have an opportunity to try again and improve their performance using peer and teacher feedback.

Effort and achievement have a correlative relationship. Students must own their learning in order to produce work that can be assessed accurately. Furthermore, we believe students should demonstrate their learning for authentic audiences. Taking action as a result of their inquiry, students should be able to publicly display and celebrate the results of their efforts.

Formative assessment is a crucial part of McAuliffe’s assessment philosophy. When the feedback on such assessments is timely and specific, formative assessments inform future teaching and learning experiences and should always be oriented toward the summative task. Whereas formative assessment is the practice, summative assessment is the game. Summative assessment should require students to transfer learned knowledge, skills and concepts to new situations. Success on summative assessments is the expectation for all learners.

### **Common Practices for Internal Assessment**

Because the Middle Years Programme requires valid, reliable, and relevant assessments, teachers make data-driven choices and use their expertise as educators to design their own assessments. Through the MYP unit planning process, teachers create end-of-unit summative assessment tasks. These tasks

- give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the objectives learned in the unit.
- explore the unit’s statement of inquiry.

- align with the command terms found in the MYP objectives, as well as in other pertinent content standards.
- vary in form so that the year captures a balance of assessment methods.
- are planned so that each objective strand is addressed twice throughout the course of the year.
- provide the opportunity for metacognition whenever possible.

In each subject area at each level, a clear, student-friendly rubric or grading scale accompanies the assessment task. Each objective that the assessment measures is assessed against the appropriate criteria. Before grading these assessments, teachers convene during collaborative planning time (or during a full day of collaboration) to standardize their scoring and define what each level “looks like” in order to generate valid and reliable data on student performance.

Teachers use the data from formative assessments, summative assessments, and benchmark tests (see below) in weekly data team meetings. Teachers identify strengths and areas for improvement, plus instructional strategies that will close the gaps in learning identified through the process. The goal is that each student receives the differentiated approach he or she needs in order to reach the highest level of achievement according to the assessment criteria.

### ***Reporting on Academic Progress***

Reporting should represent a full view what a student knows and can do. Performance on varied assessment tasks over time allow teachers to make a “best-fit” judgment against the criteria to report on a student’s mastery. In addition to the quantitative number that fits the MYP (0-8) scale, a report should provide qualitative feedback that elaborates on what a student knows and can do. It is important for all stakeholders - teachers, students, parents, and administrator - to have access to the reporting tool.

McAuliffe uses a standards-based recording and reporting system and will help Year 3 (8th grade) students transition to a traditional (A-F) reporting system by showing them a possible conversion. (For example, if a student demonstrates work at the 6th level of achievement according to MYP criteria, she may have earned a B+ on that assignment in a high school, depending on that school’s grading practices.)

Denver Public School’s recording and reporting tool, Infinite Campus, exempted McAuliffe from the district’s 1-4 scale starting in November 2015. Gradebooks should show 0-8 scores for all assignments. An N/A indicates that the standards was not taught, or that students have not shown sufficient evidence for the teacher to assess.

While every subject area uses unique rubrics with clear descriptions of achievement at each level, general descriptors can be found in the table below:

| Description   | MYP Score | Comparable District Score |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| Exceptional   | 8         | 4                         |
| Distinguished   | 7         |                           |
| Strong  | 6         | 3                         |
| Competent   | 5         |                           |
| Approaching   | 4         | 2                         |
| Partial   | 3         |                           |
| Limited   | 2         | 1                         |
| Minimal   | 1         |                           |
| The student does not meet any of the requirements in the standard | 0         | Incomplete                |

**The following information may help parents/guardians understand our grading scale:**

- **If your student is demonstrating “Competent Command” or “Strong Command,” on assessments, then he or she is meeting the grade-level standards covered throughout the unit.**
- **If your student is demonstrating “Approaching Command,” this means they are very close to where they need to be. Your student will probably be able to reach a “Competent Command” level without much extra support outside of class. Perhaps a bit more practice outside of class, as well as a bit more effort, participation, and question-asking during class, will enable them to reach the competent command or strong command level.**
- **If your student is demonstrating below an “Approaching Command,” that is, below a “4,” then he or she may need extra support outside of school. If you have questions about how to support your student at home, please email the teacher for suggestions.**
- **To reach an “Exceptional” or “Distinguished” command level, your student must meet expectations that are above grade-level. These command levels are truly exceptional, and should be celebrated as such. If your student does not bring home an “Exceptional” or “Distinguished” command level on an assessment, this is not something that should cause worry. It just means your child has not demonstrated thinking and understanding that is truly above the high standards that are set for each assignment.**
- **Each student has a section in their binders with returned work that you can check with more detailed feedback on your students’ work.**

### **Parent/Guardian Access**

Parents and guardians have access to Parent Portal which allows them to see assignments teachers have entered into Infinite Campus. Throughout the school year, McAuliffe teachers will report, at a minimum, every summative assessment, as well as formative assessments that have been an integral part of the unit. When appropriate, teachers will post tasks that relate to student effort/Approaches to Learning. After the end of each trimester, parents and guardians receive an Infinite Campus-generated report card which will include marks for academic standards, and at least 1 comment. Finally, at the end of every school year, teachers report cumulative marks for academic standards and a single end-of-year proficiency rating for academic achievement in their subject.

### **External Assessment**

In addition to the MYP objectives for each subject area, McAuliffe holds students to other local, state, and national standards.

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics and Language and literature
- Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) for Individuals and societies, Language acquisition, Arts, and Physical and Health Education
- Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) for Sciences

The Colorado Measurement of Academic Success (CMAS) annually assesses literacy and math skills. The state has joined the Program of Assessment for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) to create examinations that combine evidence-based selected response questions, technology-enhanced questions, and prose constructed response performance-based tasks. The CMAS will assess social studies skills in 7th grade and science skills in 8th grade.

At the district level, students take a world languages pre- and post-test. McAuliffe has received waivers for the English language arts, math, social studies and science district assessments because our teacher-developed curricula does not align with the district's prescribed scope and sequence. McAuliffe's ELA interim exams assess students three times a year against the curriculum that has been taught in language and literature. A rigorous math interim has been developed to align with our curriculum, and it will be administered four times over the course of the year in order to measure growth. Science and individuals and societies assessments have been developed to measure mastery of the unit's content and skills.

### **Policy Maintenance**

- ❖ The assessment policy steering committee, or substitute representatives, will review the language policy at the beginning of each academic year. Significant changes in philosophy, practice, or external requirements will require that the committee revise the policy.
- ❖ The MYP coordinator will communicate changes to the Instructional Leadership Team.
- ❖ The most recent assessment policy will always be available to the school community on McAuliffe's public website.