

Speaker:

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Position: Instructional Coach, Secondary Mathematics and Quality Assurance

Title: The OCDSB Assessment and Evaluation Journey: Improving Student learning in Secondary Mathematics

Intended Audience: High School

Type of Presentation

Preferred: Long Presentation (60 minutes)

Language(s) of

Presentation: English

Description:

This vignette is a pedagogical reflection on the challenges and opportunities associated with assessment in secondary mathematics. It provides an overview of the OCDSB's journey towards an understanding of the relationship between assessment and learning, through examples drawn from secondary mathematics. Two templates, the Assessment Plan and the Student Evidence Record, will be presented. These templates support teachers' practice around planning, designing tasks, collecting evidence, and determining grades.

The Ontario Curriculum has changed a lot over the last 15 years, and many of the changes have involved assessment. Starting in 1999 with Secondary School Reform, the curriculum underwent a significant organizational and philosophical shift. Some of the key changes were:

- a focus on student learning outcomes - called expectations
- the addition of seven key mathematical processes expectations for students to learn and apply to achieve the learning outcomes
- a shift from norm referenced to criterion referenced assessment, and the introduction of the achievement chart and levels of achievement to support this practice
- significant changes to the provincial report card, which included separating behaviour and learning and reporting on key learning skills
- repositioning the role of assessment as part of instruction – part of the learning process as well as the evaluation process

The OCDSB responded to these provincial changes in several ways, including the introduction of the subject specific Mark Weighting Guidelines in 2003, with revisions in 2005. These guidelines supported teachers by mapping curriculum expectations into the new achievement chart categories: Knowledge and Understanding, Communication, Application, and Thinking. We began thinking about our courses as more than just content and we began to organize our assessment tasks and marks to reflect this change.

Each category had a “weight”, and grades were calculated using a weighted average. The math community started to focus on student thinking in mathematics and to develop rich tasks to support student learning through mathematical processes such as reflecting, connecting, and representing. We began work as a community to develop rubrics and use levels of achievement to assess mathematical communication and mathematical thinking.

The assessment landscape continued to evolve. New research about the significant role of assessment FOR and AS learning had an impact on our practice. We started talking about multiple opportunities, feedback, self-assessment and differentiation. Our traditional grading paradigm of a one-size-fits-all weighted average didn’t fit with our new ideas about equity and learning for all.

In 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education released Growing Success – Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, grades 1 through 12. This document currently provides the framework for assessment in Ontario. Significant ideas in this document relate to evidence of achievement being recorded through the balance of observations, conversations and products, as well as the application of teachers’ professional judgment to personalize the teaching, learning and assessment process.

Building upon the ideas of innovative teachers in our district, two templates were developed to replace the Mark Weighting Guidelines. The first template is the Assessment Plan. The Assessment Plan provides teachers with a planning tool to help anchor courses in the curriculum. The *curriculum*, not prescriptive mark weighting, provides the platform for alignment throughout instruction and assessment. The second template is the Student Evidence Record. This template is a tool that organizes and displays evidence of learning in a way that helps teachers to be responsive to the learning needs of individual students. Both templates are designed to increase transparency and promote engagement by students and parents in the assessment and learning process.

We will describe, through mathematics examples, how these templates work to support student learning by focusing on expectations, empowering students as learners, supporting a responsive learning environment, and honouring teachers’ professional judgment.