Good Shepherd Lutheran School

Assessment Policy

Introduction

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. It is central to both Good Shepherd Lutheran School and the Primary Years Program (PYP) goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding students through the five essential elements of learning: the acquisition of knowledge; the understanding of concepts; the mastering of skills; the development of attitudes and the decision to take action. The prime objective of assessment at Good Shepherd is to provide feedback on the learning process.

Purpose of Policy

Assessment provides feedback on the learning process and involves the gathering and analysis of information about student performance, which is then used to inform future learning, teaching and development. It identifies what students know, understand, can do, and feel at different stages in the learning process. It is recognised that teachers need to be mindful of the particular learning outcomes on which they intend to report, prior to selecting or designing the method of assessment. They need to employ techniques for assessing students' work that take into account the diverse, complicated and sophisticated ways that individual students use to understand an experience

All those involved in assessment (staff, students, parents and administrators) should have a clear understanding of the purpose for assessment, what is being assessed, the criteria for success, and the method by which the assessment is made. The results of these assessments should be shared with the school community in order to establish goals, implement strategies, adjust programmes and monitor the development of trends.

Good Shepherd Lutheran School recognises the importance of assessing the process of learning as well as the product(s), and aims to integrate and support both, to this end, the teacher needs to consider if:

- The nature of students' inquiry develops over time—if they are asking questions of more depth, that are likely to enhance their learning substantially
- Students are becoming aware that real problems require solutions based on the integration of knowledge that spans and connects many areas
- Students are demonstrating mastery of skills
- Students are accumulating a comprehensive knowledge base and can apply their understanding to further their inquiries successfully
- Students are demonstrating both independence and an ability to work collaboratively

The assessment component in Good Shepherd Lutheran School's curriculum can itself be subdivided into three closely related areas:

- **Assessing**—how we discover what the students know and have learned
- **Recording**—how we choose to collect and analyse data
- **Reporting**—how we choose to communicate information

Assessment Practice

Student learning is promoted through planning and refining the teaching and learning process to meet individual or group needs. Assessing the students' prior knowledge and experience as well as monitoring their achievement during the teaching period will enable teachers to plan and refine their teaching accordingly. Teachers should bear in mind that a well-designed learning experience will provide data on students' knowledge, skills and conceptual understanding, and is consequently a vehicle for summative or formative assessment.

Summative assessment aims to give teachers and students a clear insight into students' understanding. Summative assessment is the culmination of the teaching and learning process, and gives the students opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned. It can assess several elements simultaneously: it informs and improves student learning and the teaching process; it measures understanding of the central idea, and prompts students towards action.

Formative assessment provides information that is used in order to plan the next stage in learning. It is interwoven with learning, and helps teachers and students to find out what the students already know and can do. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked and function purposefully together. Formative assessment aims to promote learning by giving regular and frequent feedback. This helps learners to improve knowledge and understanding, to foster enthusiasm for learning, to engage in thoughtful reflection, to develop the capacity for self-assessment, and to recognise the criteria for success. There is evidence that increased use of formative assessment particularly helps those students who are low achievers to make significant improvements in their understanding.

Assessment in the classroom will include:
- using representative examples of students' work or performance to provide information about student learning
- collecting evidence of students' understanding and thinking
- documenting learning processes of groups and individuals
- engaging students in reflecting on their learning
- students assessing work produced by themselves and by others
- developing clear rubrics
- identifying exemplar student work
- keeping records of test/task results

After any assessment is complete, it is important to ask further questions such as the following.
- Have the tasks provided ample information to allow a judgment to be made about whether the purposes or objectives have been met?
- What does the students' performance reveal about their level of understanding?
- Have any unexpected results occurred?
- What changes should be made in the assessment procedure?
- How should the teaching and learning process be modified as a result of the assessment?

Effective Assessments

The following criteria for effective assessments are applicable to both formative and summative assessment.

Effective assessments allow students to:
- share their learning and understanding with others
- demonstrate a range of knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills
- use a variety of learning styles, multiple intelligences and abilities to express their understanding
- know and understand in advance the criteria for producing a quality product or performance
- participate in reflection, self- and peer-assessment
- base their learning on real-life experiences that can lead to further inquiries
- express different points of view and interpretations
- analyse their learning and understand what needs to be improved

Effective assessments allow teachers to:
- inform every stage of the teaching and learning process
- plan in response to student and teacher inquiries
- develop criteria for producing a quality product or performance
- gather evidence from which sound conclusions can be drawn
- provide evidence that can be effectively reported and understood by the whole school community
- collaboratively review and reflect on student performance and progress
- take into account a variety of learning styles, multiple intelligences and abilities including different cultural contexts
- use scoring that is both **analytical** (separate scores for different aspects of the work) and **holistic** (single scores)

Effective assessments allow parents to:
- see evidence of student learning and development
- develop an understanding of the student's progress
- provide opportunities to support and celebrate student learning

Strategies and Tools

Assessment strategies and tools form the basis of a comprehensive approach to assessment at Good Shepherd Lutheran School. The strategies are the methods/approaches that teachers use when gathering information about a student's learning. Teacher's record this information using a variety of tools, which are the instruments used to collect data.

Good Shepherd Lutheran School encourages a variety of strategies and tools to be used to cater for all learning styles and differentiation. These are to be best practice as listed in the table below

Assessment strategies and tools					
Assessment tools Assessment strategies	Rubrics	Exemplars	Checklists	Anecdotal records	Continuums
Observations	✓		✓	✓	✓
Performance assessments	✓	✓		✓	✓
Process-focused assessments	✓		✓	✓	✓
Selected responses		✓	✓		✓
Open-ended tasks	✓	✓		✓	✓

Strategies

The strategies below have been identified as central to the assessment process at Good Shepherd Lutheran School. They cover a broad range of approaches, from the more subjective and intuitive to the more objective and scientific. It is essential that they be seen as a package since they have been selected in order to provide a range of approaches and therefore to provide a balanced view of the student.

Assessment Strategies	
Observations	All students are observed often and regularly, with the teacher taking a focus varying from wide angle (for example, focusing on the whole class) to close up (for example, focusing on one student or one activity), and from non-participant (observing from without) to participant (observing from within).
Performance assessments	The assessment of goal-directed tasks with established criteria. They provide authentic and significant challenges and problems. In these tasks, there are numerous approaches to the problem and rarely only one correct response. They are usually multimodal and require the use of many skills. Audio, video and narrative records are often useful for this kind of assessment.
Process-focused assessments	Students are observed often and regularly, and the observations are recorded by noting the typical as well as non-typical behaviours, collecting multiple observations to enhance reliability, and synthesizing evidence from different contexts to increase validity. A system of note taking and record keeping is created that minimizes writing and recording time. Checklists, inventories and narrative descriptions (such as learning logs) are common methods of collecting observations.
Selected responses	Single occasion, one-dimensional exercises. Tests and quizzes are the most familiar examples of this form of assessment.
Open-ended tasks	Situations in which students are presented with a stimulus and asked to communicate an original response. The answer might be a brief written answer, a drawing, a diagram or a solution. The work, with the assessment criteria attached, could be included in a portfolio.

Tools

The assessment strategies may be put into practice using the assessment tools below.

Assessment Tools	
Rubrics	An established set of criteria for rating students in all areas. The descriptors tell the assessor what characteristics or signs to look for in students' work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale. Rubrics can be developed by students as well as by teachers.
Exemplars	Samples of students' work that serve as concrete standards against which other samples are judged. Generally there is one benchmark for each achievement level in a scoring rubric. Each school is encouraged to set benchmarks that are appropriate and usable within their particular school context.
Checklists	These are lists of information, data, attributes or elements that should be present. A mark scheme is a type of checklist.
Anecdotal records	Anecdotal records are brief written notes based on observations of students. "Learning stories" are focused, extended observations that can be analysed later. These records need to be systematically compiled and organized.
Continuums	These are visual representations of developmental stages of learning. They show a progression of achievement or identify where a student is in a process.

These assessment tools may be used in conjunction with other forms of assessment, such as standardised tests, in order to assess both student performance and the efficiency of our programme.

While Good Shepherd Lutheran School understands and appreciates the IBO's position on standardised tests, there are national requirements to undertake such tests. The school has also carefully considered the following;
• Relevance of the test to the cohort of students within the school
• Relationship between what is being tested and the school's programme
• Impact of testing on teaching and learning
• Usability of the data produced, to utilise them as a strategy for modification purposes that help guide future planning to meet individual student needs.

Documentation

The documentation of the evidence of student learning is an assessment strategy relevant to all students throughout Good Shepherd Lutheran School. Teachers use a range of methods to document student learning as a means of assessing student understanding. This may include, but is not limited to, videos, audio, photographs and graphic representations.

Teachers may also use written records of student conversations, comments, explanations and hypotheses as well as annotated pieces of student work that may form part of a student's portfolio.

Portfolios

Good Shepherd employs the use of portfolios as a record of students' involvement in learning, which is designed to demonstrate success, growth, higher-order thinking, creativity, assessment strategies and reflection. The school views a portfolio as a celebration of an active mind at work as it provides a picture of each student's progress and development over a period of time. It enables students to reflect with teachers, parents and peers in order to identify their strengths and growth as well as areas for improvement, and then to set individual goals and establish teaching and learning plans.

Evidence of learning in a portfolio should be from a range of experiences and curriculum areas. The portfolio is used to show the development of knowledge, conceptual understanding, transdisciplinary skills, attitudes and the attributes of the learner profile over a period of time. It may also be used to document student action. Portfolio entries should document both the process of learning and the product.

Good Shepherd teaching staff in conjunction with the PYP coordinator is to develop an essential agreement annually on the portfolio use within the school. The portfolio is to be read in conjunction with the report card to reflect the importance of the learner profile and so that the school community also attaches importance to them, such that it influences the valued practices and cultural norms within the school. This is also an example of the process being more important than the product, and of the student's role in the process being strengthened and made clear.

Reporting

Reporting on assessment is about communicating what students know, understand and can do. It describes the progress of the students' learning, identifies areas for growth, and contributes to the efficacy of the programme.

The following points outline the key reporting requirements for student report cards as they appear in the Act and Regulations. Approved modifications or alternative arrangements are discussed in the next section.

- Reports are to be in plain English
- Reports are to be timely and provided to parents at least twice per academic year
- Reports are to specify a framework for relative and comparative reporting of a child's progress and achievement against the performance of the child's peer group
- Reports are to be confidential and deal with the child's academic and non-academic learning
- Reports are to be followed by an opportunity for the child and the parents, guardians or other persons to meet with the child's teachers to discuss all aspects of the report
- Reports must include for subjects studied an assessment against achievement levels or bands defined by the school or school authority that must be labeled as A – E (or equivalent) and be clearly defined against specific learning standards
- Comparative information must be presented in a way that does not interfere with the privacy of an individual
- Reports for students with special needs will demonstrate specific goals achieved taken directly from their individual Negotiated Learning Plan
- The peer group is defined as all children at the school who are undertaking the same year level as the child in a year

Conferences

Teacher–Parent(s)

These conferences are held in term 1 and are optional in term 3, they are designed to give the parents information about the student's progress development and needs, and about the school's programme. Teachers should take this opportunity to gather background information, to answer the parents' questions, to address their concerns, and to help define their role in the learning process. The parents should take the opportunity to provide the teacher with the cultural context of the student's learning.

Student Led Conferences

Student-led conferences involve the student and the parent. The students are responsible for leading the conference, and also take responsibility for their learning by sharing the process with their parents. They enable parents to gain an insight into their child's learning and provide an opportunity for discussion and reflection between parent and child. Student Led Conferences are designed so that students have an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding through a variety of different learning situations.

References/Related Policies

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Assessment
The Australian Curriculum
Immanuel Primary School Assessment Policy
Waikerie Lutheran School Assessment Policy
Lutheran Education Australia: A Framework for Lutheran Schools
Association of Independent School's South Australia

This policy was last ratified by GSLS school council August 2015