**Downtown Magnets High School**

**IB Assessment Policy**

**Introduction / Philosophy**

The primary purpose of assessment1 and evaluation2 at Downtown Magnets High School (DMHS) is to support and improve student learning. As all students have different learning styles, experiences and abilities, so the assessment and evaluation of their learning must be fair to all students, be varied in nature and allow students to demonstrate the full range of their learning.

Assessment, learning and teaching are intertwined and interdependent and should be focused on the habits of mind, critical thinking skills, 21st century skills, knowledge and attitudes that will provide for success within the IB diploma program, in college, and beyond. In addition, learning and assessment at DMHS is criterion-referenced3; aimed towards criteria that are explicitly stated by the school and integrated from IB course rubrics and mark bands and district standards.

DMHS attempts to implement best practices as they apply to assessment across the school as a whole, across the IB diploma program and within each discipline. The key areas of focus are outlined below.

**Reasons for Assessment and Evaluation**

DMHS assesses students for a variety of reasons:

* To provide feedback to students on their own learning
* To provide feedback to students about how they are performing against the criteria outlined by the State standards and IBO
* To provide feedback to teachers about knowledge, understanding and / or skill development
* To provide a grade4 for reporting understanding and progress to parents
* To provide information for college admission and placement in college courses
* To provide motivation for learning
* To provide a quality assurance mechanism (both for internal and external reasons)
* To prepare students mentally for assessments by the IBO, colleges and other organizations

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1**Assessment** is the process of gathering information from a variety of sources to gauge student progress against curriculum expectations, to provide feedback to guide future instruction and learning.

2**Evaluation** is the process of judging the quality of student work against explicitly identified criteria and assigning a value (a mark, or grade), to represent the level of achievement attained.

3**Criterion-referenced assessment** occurs when candidates are measured against defined (and objective) criteria provided at the beginning of the learning period by the IB and the teacher, as opposed to **Norm-referenced assessment** which is not measured against defined criteria and is relative to the student body undertaking the assessment. Norm-referenced assessment is effectively a way of comparing students against each other.

4**Grades** are standardized measurements of knowledge, skills and understanding and are assigned to both formative and summative assessments.

**Key Areas of Focus**

* IB Subject area teachers plan their courses with the IB Diploma Program outcomes, assessment criteria and final exams in mind. Each teacher communicates to students in advance through the course syllabus and in notes to students before each topic.
* Assessment reflects learning and is a process involving diagnostic assessment7 at the beginning of each learning cycle, formative assessment throughout and summative assessment at the end.
* Students are provided with examples / models of each level of achievement against the criteria to assist them in understanding how to achieve excellence.
* IB teachers collaboratively create and publish a timeline for internal and external IB requirements to help students plan ahead and manage their workload.
* Students are involved in the assessment process by learning how to self-asses their own work, assess their peers and set goals for improvement, and then by completing self and peer assessments during formative assessment.
* Assessment and evaluation practices are fair and equitable to all students, including ESL students, whose mastery of language should not necessarily affect the evaluation of, for example their ability to think critically.
* Determination of grades for formal reporting purposes primarily reflect student performance on summative tasks and reflect their most consistent level of achievement with an eye to their most recent levels of achievement at the time of reporting
* Communication about assessment is regular and clear. Informal reporting of student achievement occurs throughout the academic year; formal reporting of student achievement occurs at regular intervals.

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**5Formative Assessment** is the process of gathering information, by a variety of means, during the learning process, to identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that students have at that moment in time and that they should be developing. It provides constructive and specific feedback to teachers and students on the nature of students’ strengths and weaknesses aimed to improve learning. This evidence is not intended as a measure of each student’s achievement and should not be used for determining a grade except in circumstances when there is insufficient evidence from summative assessments.

**6Summative assessment** occurs throughout a course and is designed to allow students to demonstrate achievement towards the course expectations. It forms the primary basis for establishing the report card levels of achievement. Summative assessment provides information about student achievement, an accountability mechanism to evaluate teachers and schools, and a driving force for reform of curriculum.

**7Diagnostic assessment** is the process of gathering evidence of students’ knowledge, skills and understanding prior to instruction and is used to guide future teaching and tailoring programs to a particular student, or group of students. It is not used to evaluate student achievement.

**Formative assessment**

Formative assessment represents the process of gathering, analyzing, interpreting and using evidence to improve student learning. It is integrated into the curriculum and woven into the daily learning to improve student learning. It provides teachers and students with information about how learning is progressing and helps teachers plan the next stage of learning.

Formative assessments occur continuously and include structured and spur-of-the-moment observations that are recorded and filed; formal and informal interviews; collections of work samples; use of extended projects, performances, and exhibitions; performance exams; various forms of short-answer testing, etc… This evidence of learning can be kept in grade books, files or portfolios, which in turn can be used by students and teachers to reflect on, summarize, and evaluate student progress.

Students are involved in the formative assessment of their own learning and that of their peers through feedback forms and formal and informal conferences and discussions. Peer assessment requires a very safe and collaborative learning environment and should only be attempted sparingly and after a period of training and discussion with the class.

Formative assessment involves providing students with descriptive feedback as they learn. Descriptive feedback provides students with an understanding of what they are doing well, links to classroom learning, and gives specific input on how to reach the next step in the learning progression. Teachers will provide students frequent and descriptive feedback on formative tasks that aims to improve performance. The feedback given should provide incentives for improvement and should be positive in tone, providing encouragement, positive feedback as well as constructive critique.

In criterion-referenced formative assessment good communication of the assessment expectations (i.e. the knowledge, understanding and skills required of the students) is key. Assessment and evaluation practices and expectations are discussed with students at the beginning of instruction and are included either in the course syllabus at the beginning of the year or in documents distributed to students well in advance of any assessment or evaluation. In addition, rubrics and exemplars are made available and discussed to illustrate different levels of achievement against stated criteria in advance of submission dates. If appropriate, students are involved in the development and wording of criteria, checklists, rubrics and scoring guides.

**Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment occurs at the end of a learning cycle when students are given the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned by applying their knowledge in new and authentic contexts. Summative assessments are a means to gauge, at a particular point in time, student learning relative to the pre-defined criteria communicated to students prior to and during formative assessment. Although the information gleaned from this type of assessment is important, it can only help in evaluating certain aspects of the learning process.

Summative Assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know. Summative assessment is generally used as part of the grading process. Examples of summative assessments include, but are not limited to, chapter tests, semester exams, final draft lab reports and research papers.

Summative assessment tasks occur at the end of a grading period (five weeks) and after much formative assessment. During a grading period the summative assessments focus on a given set of knowledge and skills. For example, in an English class, a grading period might concentrate on analysis of poetry, effective essay construction, and how to contribute effectively to class discussions. Formative assessments might include short analyses of various poems, feedback on dialog skills on a weekly basis and feedback on many sections of an essay. Summative assessment might include a Socratic seminar late in the grading period, an oral commentary on an unseen poem, and the final draft of the essay as well as a final exam encompassing all if the skills learned during that trimester.

The timing, type, scope and format of each summative task should be clearly communicated to the students ahead of time, and rubrics, examples and practice assessments should be distributed and discussed.

Self-assessment of summative tasks is often more difficult to implement due to the timing of the assessments but should be included if possible and applicable.

Portfolios can sometimes be used as a summative assessment to demonstrate learning against a particular criteria, for example improvement in the ability to analyze data could be demonstrated with a series of lab conclusions and data-based questions rather than in one final lab report.

**Assessment Practices**

Downtown Magnets High School teachers use a wide variety of formative5 and summative6 methods of assessment. The type of assessment chosen are related to learning outcomes and governed by decisions about its purpose, validity and relevance. A range of types of assessment reduces the element of disadvantage suffered by any particular student. Types of assessment to choose from include, but are not limited to:

Class discussions and/or Socratic seminars: Data and / or document based questions: Essays: Experimental investigations: Fieldwork: Group and individual oral presentations: Group cooperation and team work: Group critiques: Historical investigations: Individual oral commentaries: Investigation workbooks: Multimedia presentations: Multiple-choice style quizzes and tests: Portfolios: Problem solving teams: Projects: Reflection logs: Research papers: Response journals: Short and extended responses

**IB Internal, External and School-based Assessments**

The IB Diploma Program employs two types of summative assessment to determine the student’s final IB grades: internal and external assessments. Subject teachers use the IB Subject Guides, rubrics and Subject Reports to understand how to succeed at these tasks. As well, IB students receive significant instruction and practice throughout their courses in order to effectively prepare for these challenging tasks.

The IB Internal Assessments (IA) provide students with opportunities to show mastery of skills outside of final examinations and reflect the student’s summative achievement rather than an average of formative marks. The principle aim of conducting internal assessment is to evaluate student achievement against those outcomes that do not lend themselves to external written exams. These IA components are marked by the IB teacher before they are moderated by an external moderator. Examples of Internal Assessments are science course practical work, language oral interviews, and historical investigations. IB final exams are the major component of external assessment utilized in the IB as a great deal of reliability is provided by standardized examination external marking, other work such as the Extended Essay, English Written Assignment, TOK Essay and the Collaborative Film are also externally assessed by IB examiners.

In addition to the IB internal and external assessments, IB at DMHS teachers utilize school-based student assessments that are essential for student success and contribute to the students’ report card marks. These marks are based on unit and cumulative tests using past IB exam questions, practice exams, and in class and homework assignments modeled on IB assessments, etc. These school-based assignments may be evaluated on a 1 – 7 score based on IB grading criteria and mark bands. However, the report card grade each student earns in a particular IB course is not tied directly to the marks earned on the formal IB assessments, but is reflective of work completed in preparation for these summative assessments. The methods as outlined below support our school-based assessment practices.

The IB Diploma Program at DMHS subsumes these school-based interventions to nurture student responsibility regarding submission of major assignments and unit test and to provide information to parents in order to help maximize student achievement.

* IB teachers will clearly outline all assigned work to students in class and due dates noted.
* Absenteeism shall not exempt students from missed assessments or tests. Upon return to school, arrangements shall be made to address the missed assessment. The form and timing of the assessment will be determined by the teacher. In extreme circumstances, an alternate assessment or exemptions may be granted in consultation with parents, teachers, and administration.
* Late submission of a major assessment the teacher shall implement the following interventions:
  + Conference with the student to determine the reason for not meeting the deadline and determine a new due date when the assignment or alternate assessment can be submitted;
  + If the second due date is not met by the student, the teacher shall make contact with the parents;
  + If after contact with the parents, the major assessment is not submitted, then the teacher will use professional judgment to determine the appropriate response. Assigning a zero for work not submitted may occur in the absence of other evidence of learning.
* Final assessments shall be graded as follows: any student passing a comprehensive final exam shall receive the mark achieved on the final exam if the mark is higher than the combined exam and term mark in that course.
* Final grades shall be determined by considering all evidence of learning, as averaging shall not be used as a sole indicator of a student’s level of attainment of the course outcomes. For example, outliers may be omitted if there is clear evidence of student growth relative to the course outcomes.
* Homework is a significant tool that contributes to the student’s successful mastery of topics taught in class, achievement of course outcomes and grades. It is highly recommended that IB students spend some time each night working one each of their IB subjects. A good rule of thumb is for IB Diploma students to expect up to 15 hours of homework per week. The amount of time will vary depending on course workloads at different times in the year and the nature of the homework tasks.

In addition to the overall achievement grade the following evaluations are determined to help communicate a student’s development in Approaches to Learning skills prescribed by the IB. Such transferable skills are needed to operate successfully in society.

* *Communication Skills* with self, peers, parents and teachers
* *Self Management Skills*, including organization, time-management, work ethic
* *Research Skills*, including all parts of the design cycle
* *Social Skills*, including team contribution, compromise, suspension of judgment
* *Cognitive Skills,* demonstrating effort to analyze, apply and create understanding

These are graded on the following 1 through 3 Scale:

1 – **Beginning:** The student requires significant support

2 – **Developing:** The student requires minimal support

3 – **Meeting:** The student is independently performing

**Reporting IB Grades**

IB course evaluation and student achievement is communicated throughout the academic year via a variety of methods. In August, IB course curriculum outcomes and assessment practices are communicated through course descriptions provided to the students. In September, a curriculum evening is held to inform parents about course outcomes and assessment practices. Parent-teacher interview sessions are held once a year. The presence of a parent at these sessions is an opportunity for parents to conference with individual IB teachers to discuss their student’s progress. As needed, teachers consult with parents on an individual basis via email phone or face-to-face meetings.

IB course grades, based on school-based assessments, are reported to students and their parents on an ongoing basis through the use of password protected online accounts on Schoology. Progress Reports are distributed to students and parents monthly. These report cards provide IB students with a provincial grade. Marks in IB courses are reported using the International Baccalaureate 1 – 7 marking scale as described below. The 1 – 7 marks are based on the IB standardized criteria on levels of achievement in each course.

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| **IB Grading Scale** | | |
| **Subjects are marked according to the following performance** | **The TOK course and Extended Essay are grads according to the following scale** | **DMHS Provincial Grade Adjustments for IB Courses** |
| 7 – Excellent Performance  6 – Very good Performance  5 – Good Performance  4 – Satisfactory Performance  3 – Mediocre Performance  2 – Poor Performance  1 – Very Poor Performance | A – Excellent  B – Good  C – Satisfactory  D – Mediocre  E – Elementary  N – No Grade | 7: 95 – 100  6: 85 – 94  5: 75 – 84  4: 60 – 74  3: 50 – 59  2: 30 – 49  1: 0 – 29 |

The final IB scores, received in July after graduation, are based on the IB internal and external assessments, not on school-based assessments. Students are notified of their final IB marks when they access a secure IB website.

**This policy is reviewed and revised yearly and it can be found on our website via the IB tab on Downtown Magnets High School website.**