

Barack H. Obama Elementary School
Assessment Policy (revised 11/2021)

Mission Statement

Barack H. Obama Elementary School, a school with a recognized history of progressive education, is dedicated to providing students with a strong foundation for lifelong learning as well as the ability to and desire to make a positive contribution to the shared humanity of our world.

All students, parents, community members, and faculty work together to provide inquiry-based, transdisciplinary instructional experiences that bring our complex and challenging world to life in the classroom.

Such a focus promotes the overall academic, career, personal, and social development of learners who thereby become productive and compassionate global citizens.

Assessment beliefs

Assessment is integral to all learning and teaching. The prime objective of assessment in the PYP is providing feedback on the learning process. Assessment involves gathering and analyzing information about student performance and is designed to inform practice. It identifies what students know, understand, can do, and feel during the learning process. Students and teachers should actively engage in assessing students' progress as part of the development of critical-thinking and self-assessment skills. Overall, learning and teaching recognizes the importance of using assessment to support the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge and skills, the understanding of concepts, and the development of approaches to learning skills (*Learning and teaching*, IBO, 2018).

We believe that assessment provides information through diagnostic, formative and summative components. Assessment is ongoing, authentic, varied and purposeful. It is a collaborative process including students, families, teachers and community. Instructional and curricular decision making is driven by assessment.

Assessment purpose

Effective assessments inform and involve students, parents, teachers, and administrators, allowing:

- students to be an active part of the learning process through reflection and demonstration of their understanding.
- teachers to guide instruction and communicate progress with students and families.
- parents to see evidence of their child's learning and development, while supporting and celebrating their child's learning.
- administrators to build a sense of community within the school and communicate the school's progress.

Assessment Principles

- Assessment is key to planning, teaching, and learning.
- Assessment practices are clear to all members of the community [teachers, parents, and students].
- There is a balance between formative and summative assessment.
- There are opportunities for both peer and self-assessment.
- There are opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning.
- Before starting new learning, teachers assess students' current knowledge and experience.
- Teachers provide students with feedback for future learning.
- Reporting to parents is meaningful.

Implementation

Our teachers strive to provide opportunities for scholars to construct meaning primarily through structured inquiry. This is accomplished by emphasizing the connections between knowledge and the six transdisciplinary themes. The key concepts and approaches to learning skills are built into each unit of inquiry in order to make sure that students are given opportunities to interact with them.

Student learning is promoted through:

- Assessing prior knowledge and experiences
- Differentiating instruction to meet individual needs
- Engaging learners in reflection to determine strengths and weaknesses
- Encouraging students to set goals for themselves based on reflections
- Providing feedback for students in a timely manner
- Expanding student learning opportunities
- Building a profile of children's individual understandings
- Guiding teacher planning and presentation
- Focusing on closing the achievement gap among students

Information about student learning is provided through:

- Examples of student work, projects, performances, portfolios
- Results of pre-assessments, formative assessments, and summarize assessments
- Statistics relating to benchmarks or rubrics
- Historical data from online assessment platforms (e.g., STAR, MAAP, etc.)

Types of assessments

Informal and formal assessments, conducted through a range of tools and strategies, occur regularly to inform teaching and learning. The following types of assessment are used at the school.

Diagnostic/pre-assessment

Diagnostic assessment happens before new concepts are taught in order to uncover prior knowledge and experiences. This type of assessment helps teachers and students find out what the students already know and can do. School developed pre-assessments and district required screening tools are used.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is woven into daily learning processes in order to guide the next stage of learning. This type of assessment provides regular and frequent feedback to the teacher and the student. It also gives students an opportunity to improve their understanding and to cultivate enthusiasm for learning. Teachers use various assessment tools to keep a record of student progress.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment occurs at the end of a learning cycle in order to give students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. It also shows how effectively students understand the central idea of the unit. School-developed summative assessments and district and state required summative assessments are used.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment is ongoing and is used to develop metacognition. Students set goals and reflect on their progress in meeting those goals. Each unit of inquiry includes a self-assessment.

Assessment of the Core of the PYP

Core learning in the PYP is assessed through the units of inquiry and results are recorded collectively on the planner for each unit and individually through the IB appraisal reports.

- Assessment of the knowledge learned in each unit is done through the summative assessment. It reflects an understanding of the central idea.
- Each unit provides opportunities for different skills and concepts. Reflection on growth in these areas is recorded on the planners and self-assessments are done by the students.
- Action: Student actions that are initiated beyond the scope of the unit are recorded on the planner.

5th grade exhibition

The 5th grade exhibition is undertaken by scholars in their final year of the PYP program. The exhibition includes application of all key concepts, development and use of approaches to learning skills, and engagement in an action plan. This is also an opportunity for the students to exhibit the attributes of the learner profile which they have been developing throughout the Primary Years Programme.

State and district assessments

State and district required assessments are used for diagnostic, formative, and summative purposes throughout the learning process. These assessments are designed to measure scholars' mastery of subject area standards required by the Mississippi Department of Education. District required assessments include mid-term and benchmark assessments and universal screeners in fall, winter, and spring for all grade levels. State required assessments include annual computer-based assessments in reading/language (Grade K and Grades 3-5), math (Grades 3-5) and science (Grade 5). Additional procedures and expectations for the administration of these are necessary due to the evaluative use of and weight given to the outcomes. These procedures and expectations include:

- Notifying parents a minimum of one week prior to the administration of state or district assessment
- Establishing a schedule for state and district assessments, including a school-wide start time and/or designated time periods (i.e. STAR tests will be completed during regularly scheduled computer time) and modifications to the special subject schedule
- Limiting student movement in the building during the assessment window for the day
- Delaying outdoor recess until all the planned assessment for the day is complete
- Using "Testing - Do not disturb" signs outside classrooms engaged in these assessments to discourage unnecessary entry during the assessment session

Assessment tools and strategies

Authentic assessment of student learning is conducted through observation, performance assessment, process-focused assessment, open-ended tasks, and student reflections. Tests and quizzes are also used. Rubrics, exemplars, anecdotal records, checklists, continuums, and portfolios are used to evaluate student learning and provide feedback.

Reporting

Recognizing that the goal of student achievement involves parents, students, and teachers as partners, a variety of reporting methods are utilized to communicate progress made in the transdisciplinary units of inquiry, with regard to the essential elements of the PYP, in developing the attributes of the learner profile, and specific subjects.

Written Reports

- IB appraisal reports document student achievement within the units of inquiry and development related to the learner profile attributes. These reports are shared with parents and students quarterly.
- Progress reports document student progress with regard to the disciplinary aspects of the curriculum as well as a student's work and behavior habits. These district required reports are shared with parents and students quarterly at the midpoint of each term. district required, shared with students and parents midway through each term

- Academic report cards serve as a summative report on student disciplinary performance, as well as work and behavior habits, for each term. These district required reports are shared with parents quarterly at the end of each term.
- In addition to formal progress reports and academic reports cards, parents have continuous access to online platforms with assessment information for tracking individual student progress.

Conferences

- Parent Teacher Conferences are held in the fall semester. This conference includes student, teacher, and parent reflections and goal setting for student progress. Parents have the opportunity to complete an action plan indicating what they learned from the conference, areas in which they will support their child, and steps to take to support their student.
- Student led conferences are held during the spring semester and involve the student and a parent. The students take responsibility for their learning by leading the conference and sharing their progress. During the conference students discuss and reflect on samples of their work, share their reflections on their development of learner profile attributes, and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Assessment Policy Review

The assessment policy is reviewed every two years in the first semester of the school year. During the review period, updates to IBO programme documentation are reviewed, and all stakeholders are invited to provide feedback. The pedagogical leadership team considers all inputs and revises the policy as appropriate.

The policy is highlighted in the fall to promote continued awareness for students, parents, staff, and other community members. The assessment policy can be accessed digitally on the school website and in print in the library/media center.

Last revised - November 2021