



## School Plan for Communicating Student Learning

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### Introduction:

The Halifax Regional School Board and Graham Creighton Jr High School believe that assessment and evaluation are essential components of teaching, learning growing and improving. Together they allow us to analyze and reflect on student learning, teacher practice, inform instruction and other programs within our school environment. Graham Creighton Jr High School is committed to matching the assessment and evaluation of students with the learning outcomes that are detailed in provincial curriculum documents so that we may provide the best possible education for our students.

At GCJH, we believe education is a partnership between teachers and students as well as parents/guardians. We firmly believe that effective communication between school and home is a critical component of that partnership. Accurate and timely information respecting course outlines, student achievement, attendance and behaviour are essential components in assisting students to be successful learners and ensuring that parents/guardians are informed and knowledgeable partners.

Our school's Plan for Communicating Student Learning will provide parents/guardians with some of the information necessary to support student learning. It will help to explain how we assess and evaluate student learning and provide some of the time frames and events for formal communication opportunities.

### Methods of Communication:

Our office hours are from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm and the main office number is **(902) 464-5164**. In order to keep lines of communication open, all teachers have their own voice-mail (calls during class time go directly to voice mail), email addresses and are encouraged to have their own classroom websites. All contact information can be found through the GCJH website: <http://grahamcreighton.ednet.ns.ca/index.html>

At GCJH, we would be happy to assist in clarifying assessment procedures and student evaluations. If at any time, the above forms of communication are inappropriate for parents/guardians, the administration will set up meetings with parents/guardians and the necessary personnel to assist with understanding their student's achievement. (This could mean bringing in an interpreter, or someone who can sign or advocate for the parents, etc.)

### Assessment:



It is a method of analyzing and describing student performance and growth based on learning outcomes that should inform teaching practices for the next steps in student learning. At GCJH, we believe that assessments are not just tests. For example, a direct observation of student skills/knowledge can be an assessment, just like a student conference can be an assessment. An interview can be an assessment. Good assessment requires feedback to those students so that they can use that information to make improvements. We call this assessment FOR learning.

Assessment focuses on learning, teaching and outcomes. It provides information to improve learning and teaching. At GCJH, we feel that assessment is an interactive process between students and teachers that informs teachers where students are in the process of learning. The information is used by teachers to make changes in the learning environment, and is shared with students to assist them in improving their learning and developing skills. Teachers at Graham Creighton Jr High School know that a good assessment program requires a variety of assessment instruments, each one designed to discover unique aspects of student learning and achievement of program objectives.

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. Teachers at GCJH ensure this by stating clear and open criteria for meeting high expectations for learning; by systematically gathering and interpreting evidence to determine how well our students meet these expectations. We use this information to help students and teachers learn from performance and shape future performances.

## **Tools for Assessment & Evaluation:**

At GCJH, teachers will plan lessons to include a broad range of balanced assessment strategies that give students multiple opportunities and methods to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Teachers will also provide learning opportunities that meet individual students' interests and learning needs. We use a combination of Conversation, Observation and Product to gain information about student learning. Assessments are no longer limited to testing what students have learned at the end of a lesson or unit. We are shifting our focus to "formative assessment" (assessment "for" learning) where students receive regular and valuable feedback, directing them in additional learning strategies. The learning becomes the focus and not the 'test at the end'.

Assessment and Evaluation tools include (but are not limited to):

- Conferencing (Teachers sit down and have one on one conversations with students to assess performance and to provide individualized instruction)
- Checklists (used to record a student's completion of homework, projects, assigned class projects etc.)
- Debates (structured and controlled dialogue that permits students to organize, discuss, examine and evaluate varying viewpoints and/or evidence)
- Descriptive Feedback (TIMELY, specific oral or written information that helps students understand what they are doing well and what they need to do next in order to improve)
- Experiments (an activity usually conducted in a laboratory to test theory, followed by a write-up demonstrating the outcome)
- Journals/Reports/Logs (ongoing writing by students allowing them to process their thinking relating to learning outcomes)
- Observations (used to assess group work, individual work habits and understanding of a concept)
- Peer Assessments (used to allow students more responsibility and awareness of learning outcomes)
- Performance/Presentations (a demonstration of student achievement before an audience)
- Portfolios (a collection of work chosen by the student to demonstrate their learning)
- Projects (in-depth research on a chosen topic and/or a demonstration that they can apply certain knowledge/skills)



- Questioning (an informal method used for immediate feedback to and from the teacher to check for student understanding)
- Rubrics (a scale of specific outcomes we use to measure a student's performance used to assess presentations, reports, visual displays, essays, labs, assignments, portfolios and other items)
- Self-assessments (used to allow students to communicate their perceived level of competence on certain outcomes. This allows students to articulate greater understanding of their learning.)
- Surveys (a means of gathering information to inform)
- Written Assignments
- Tests/quizzes (usually carried out on a specific unit of work)
- Examinations (Grade 9 students at GCJH will write Year End assessments in June)

Again, teachers will use a variety of strategies in developing their evaluations and students will have a number of ways to demonstrate their learning.

### **Due Dates:**

All assignments require due dates. It is important for students to complete and pass in their assignments on time so that teachers can provide timely feedback.

### **Students With Special Needs:**

At Graham Creighton Jr High School we are dedicated to supporting the learning of ALL students. We recognize that students may struggle at times and are committed to working diligently to assist them in their academic growth. Any concerns about student achievement will be brought to the attention of the parent/ guardian in a timely manner to begin the process of referral to the School Planning Team. Once a student with special needs has been identified through various assessment activities, the Program Planning Team will begin the process of adapting programs OR developing an Individual Program Plan (IPP) to meet the specific needs of the learner. Program adaptations are done by the classroom teacher (working with resource/learning centre staff) and include a variety of tools or strategies depending on the specific student.

An IPP will involve writing a set of realistic program outcomes different from those designed by the Department of Education for subject area(s) and grade level. Parent participation is essential to the success of this process in both program adaptations or in the development of the IPP. We encourage students to be strong advocates for themselves and seek assistance when it is needed. As well, we encourage parents/guardians to communicate their child's areas of concern and needs so that we may all work together to ensure our students' success.

It should be noted that some students will require an Individual Program Plan in just one course, while other students may require an Individual Program Plan in all courses. If program adaptations are required, teachers will communicate to the parents the adaptations that are required to assess and evaluate learning and achievement related to the outcomes of the course. In the case of an IPP, teachers will base evaluations on the student's success in meeting the individualized outcomes developed.

### **Report Cards:**

The following is a brief explanation of marks found on report cards. As always, Graham Creighton Jr High school encourages open communication. If there is any confusion or issues with report cards or marks, parents/ teachers



should contact the school. **As of the 2014/ 2015 school year all junior high students will be given a report card that indicates a percentage grade.** GCJH is committed to ensuring that teachers in grades 7-9 appropriately use PowerTeacher Gradebook to track student achievement. Teachers set up Gradebook categories based on curriculum content (i.e., modules, units, strands, etc.) **PowerSchool passwords and login information will be available at the office upon request.**

#### **Report Card Descriptors for Achievement Grades 9-12 (from HRSB)**

- **90 – 100%** The student demonstrates **excellent or outstanding** performance in relation to the expected learning outcomes for this course.
- **80 – 89%** The student demonstrates **very good** performance in relation to the expected learning outcomes for this course.
- **70 – 79%** The student demonstrates **good** performance in relation to the expected learning outcomes for this course.
- **60 – 69%** The student demonstrates **satisfactory** performance in relation to the expected learning outcomes for this course.
- **50 – 59 %** The student demonstrates **minimally acceptable** performance in relation to the expected learning outcomes for this course.
- **Below 50%** The student **has not met minimum requirements** in relation to the expected learning outcomes for this course.

#### **Communicating Student Learning Events:**

September	Course Outlines sent home
September	Curriculum Night
November	Parent/ Teacher Meetings
December	1st Term Report Cards go home
April	2nd Term Report Cards go home
April	Parent/ Teacher Meetings
June	Final Report Cards go home

Parents/guardians are encouraged to log in to PowerSchool regularly to keep up to date with student performance. As well, regular contact with the teachers at Graham Creighton Jr High is encouraged.

**PowerSchool passwords and login information will be available at the office upon request.**

#### **Definitions:**



- **Assessment** – the process of gathering information on student achievement with the purpose of improving both teaching and learning.
- **Formative Assessments** (Assessment for Learning) – ongoing assessments that take place during the teaching and learning process for the purpose of showing growth over time, determining student needs, planning next steps in instruction, and providing students with descriptive feedback.
- **Summative Assessments** (Assessment of Learning) – assessments that take place at the end of a period of learning for the purpose of determining the extent to which learning has occurred.
- **Evaluation** (Summative Assessment) – the process of analyzing, reflecting upon and making judgments or decisions based on assessment data.
- **Expected Learning Outcomes** – goals prescribed by the Department of Education that indicate what teachers are required to teach and what students are expected to know.
- **Criteria**- are descriptions of what is expected from students in terms of their work or learning. Criteria help students focus on what is important and go beyond the requirement of a specific project.
- **Descriptive Feedback**- specific information in the form of written comments or conversations that help the learner understand what he or she needs to do in order to improve.
- **Self – Assessment**- the process of students observing their learning and collecting evidence of what they know and are able to do. This enables them to reflect - think about - their own learning and take appropriate next steps in their learning. Students that self-assess become reflective learners, knowing both their strengths and challenges as a learner.