Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan

2022

Saskatchewan

Versioning History

This chart provides a summary of revisions made to the final document since publication in May 2022. The document posted on **www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca** reflects the most recent version.

Date of revisions	Type of revisions made
May 17, 2022	Minor edits

Contents

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OVERVIEW

PREFACE

Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan embraces the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's *Student First* approach in which students' strengths, needs and interests are central to effective classroom-based assessment experiences. *Student First* is based on the premise that every student wants to achieve, every teacher wants each student to achieve, and the role of the education system is to support them in that endeavour. Among the insights the *Student First* engagement process revealed was that students are motivated to achieve their best when they understand and have input into their assessment of the intended learning outcomes. Putting the "student first" is being responsive to individual student needs in all aspects of instruction and assessment so that they may reach their full potential.

Further, *Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan* is informed by the Ministry of Education's publications, including K-12 curricula, *Actualizing a Needs-based Model* (2015a), *The Adaptive Dimension* (2017), and *Inclusive Education* (2021), all of which support student assessment by:

- focusing on the strengths, ways of learning, needs and interests of the students to support a class community environment that fosters respect, appreciation and acceptance of diversity;
- providing effective and authentic assessment by designing performance tasks that align with curricular outcomes and involving students as active participants in determining how their learning will be demonstrated;
- ensuring fair and equitable assessments, giving all students opportunities to make connections and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, abilities, values and attitudes in a variety of ways
- incorporating authentic assessment approaches to inform instructional practices and adaptations; and,
- nurturing independence and interdependence by providing opportunities that promote the development of personal empowerment and self-determination.
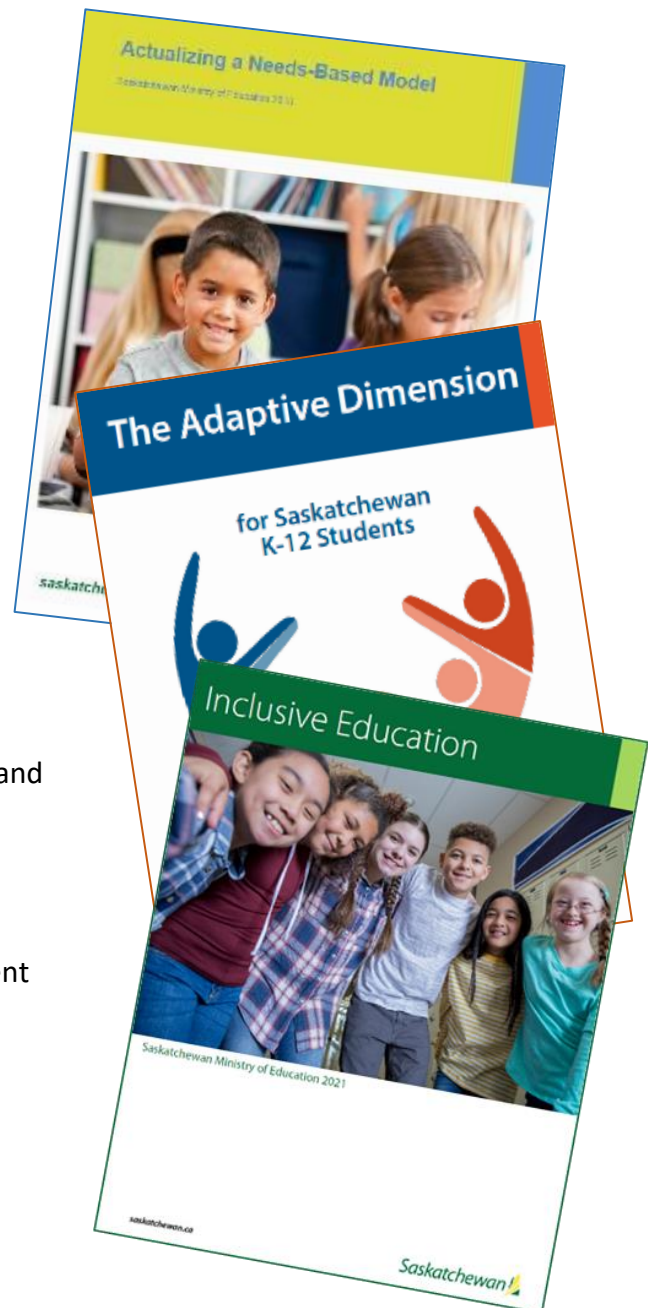
Culturally inclusive and affirming classroom-based assessment attitudes and beliefs are also responsive to the intent of *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework* (2018), which places Indigenous knowledge, cultures and languages within the structures, policies and curricula to ensure an equitable and inclusive system that benefits all learners. *Inspiring Success*:

- embraces culturally appropriate, inclusive, affirming, responsive and authentic assessment measures that foster improved educational opportunities and outcomes;
- supports reconciliation in education through the development of culturally inclusive and affirming curricula, and through relevant instruction and assessment; and,
- values relationships and authentic engagement and is committed to engaging children, youth, families, communities and Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers in holistic, culturally responsive education practices.

> *"In First Nations communities, cultural connections [are] of particular importance to engaging students, encouraging attendance and achieving learning outcomes."*
>
> *(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education et al., 2014)*
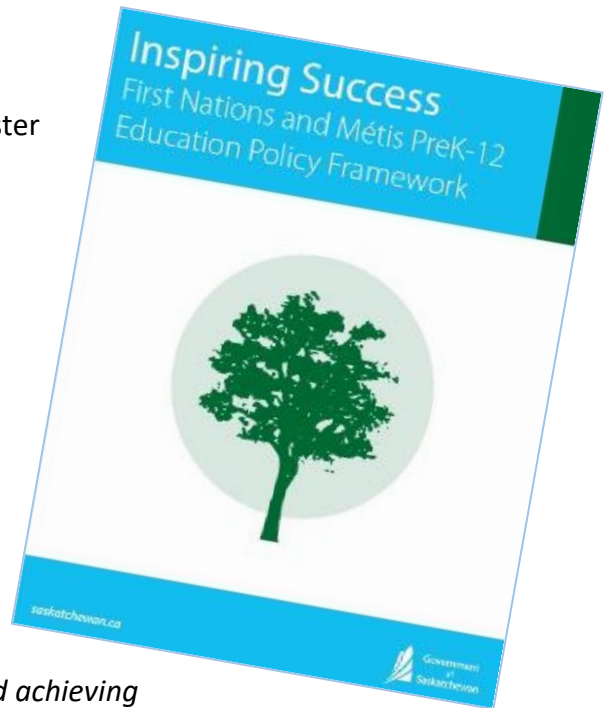
Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan is a resource intended to:

- provide research-based effective practices for classroom assessment;
- outline philosophical ideas and guiding principles for assessment in Saskatchewan classrooms; and,
- reflect the spirit of continuous improvement.

Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan aims to support teachers and school division and Conseil des écoles fransaskoises leaders. The overview and each module are intended to expand on the assessment model and its four guiding principles to assist teachers in embedding the principles into classroom assessment practice.

PURPOSE OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment and evaluation are continuous actions that are integral to the teaching and learning process. These actions involve students, parents/caregivers and teachers and are used to communicate consistent, accurate and meaningful information to all stakeholders. Overall, the main goal of assessment is to support and enhance student learning while empowering the student to become a responsible lifelong learner.

> **Assessment** is the act of gathering evidence of learning on an ongoing basis in order to understand individual students' learning and needs and inform future actions to support further learning.
>
> There are three purposes of assessment. Each type of assessment, systematically implemented, contributes to an overall picture of an individual student's achievement.
>
> - **Assessment *for* learning** involves the collection of evidence about student progress to support and improve student learning by informing instructional practices.
> - **Assessment *as* learning** actively involves students reflecting on and monitoring learning.
> - **Assessment *of* learning** involves teachers' use of evidence of student learning to make judgements about student achievement.
>
> **Evaluation** is the culminating act of interpreting the information gathered through relevant and appropriate assessments for the purpose of making judgements on the level of student learning, often at reporting times.
>
> (Adapted from *Physical Education 30*, Ministry of Education, 2019 and *Renewed Curricula: Understanding Outcomes*, Ministry of Education, 2010)

Saskatchewan schools and classrooms are complex and diverse learning communities. In order to provide effective environments for continuous learning, four guiding principles of assessment promote individual student success in a fair and culturally inclusive and affirming manner.

THE SASKATCHEWAN SUPPORTING STUDENT ASSESSMENT MODEL

The Saskatchewan Supporting Student Assessment model illustrates the interaction among the four guiding principles of assessment in Saskatchewan. Aligned with *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework* (2018), *Supporting Student Assessment* reflects the intellectual (mental), physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions and embraces, honours and affirms the diverse cultures and perspectives of all students in Saskatchewan. Four essential questions for effective assessment (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing?* and *Where to next?*) encompass these important dimensions to further engage Saskatchewan teachers and students in the assessment and evaluation process within the learning journey.

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO SUPPORT STUDENT ASSESSMENT

In Saskatchewan, four guiding principles are at the core of the grades 1-12 classroom-based assessment model. Dynamically interacting, these guiding principles are independent of each other, yet interdependent and provide effective assessment practices that:

1) engage and empower the learner;
2) support responsive instruction and inspire learning;
3) are culturally inclusive and affirming; and,
4) clearly inform stakeholders.

The following focuses on effective assessment practices by describing each of the four guiding principles of assessment in Saskatchewan.

1) Engaging and empowering the learner

Assessment is a collaborative process that engages and empowers students to understand and be responsible for their learning. Teachers are also accountable within this shared responsibility for their students' learning. Teachers can authentically involve students in assessment by:

- activating prior knowledge and worldviews to set learning goals with the students;
- setting appropriate and challenging expectations that encourage students to take responsibility for and ownership of their learning;
- using exemplars and student samples to inform students and engage them in the assessment process; and,
- actively engaging students in self-reflection, self-assessment and peer assessment.

2) Supporting responsive instruction and inspiring learning

Quality assessment results are gathered when students are provided multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning and when the assessment design attends to validity, reliability and fairness. Assessment:

- is a balanced approach that includes both formative and summative assessment results to support teachers and students in determining next steps in the learning process;
- encourages students to reach their full potential by confirming what they have learned and identifying what they have yet to learn; and,
- provides information about student strengths and areas of need.

3) Using culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices

Cultural responsiveness is intentional and focused on choosing and delivering culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices, reflecting the diversity in our province. Assessments are appropriate, relevant and responsive when they help all learners feel safe, accepted and supported in their assessment and learning journey. Culturally inclusive and affirming assessment is:

- student-centred and considers diverse cultural perspectives and preferences related to language, religion, race, ethnic background, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical and mental abilities (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015b);
- responsive and authentic, assisting teachers in making informed decisions about how to assess using fair and equitable assessment practices.

4) Clearly informing stakeholders

Clearly communicating to stakeholders, including students, parents/caregivers, in a frequent and timely fashion is an integral part of the assessment process. Clearly informing stakeholders involves:

- discussing the use of a variety of classroom-based assessment methods and results related to curriculum outcomes with students and the adults directly supporting them;
- communicating assessment results derived from the classroom and beyond to inform appropriate stakeholders about overall findings and next steps; and,
- collaborating in supporting students to successfully achieve learning outcomes.

FOUR DIMENSIONS WHICH SUPPORT STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Supporting Student Assessment aligns with *Inspiring Success First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework* (2019) where belief systems and worldviews of First Nations and Métis peoples are based on recognizing and respecting the delicate balance of interdependence within oneself and with all living things in the environment, both tangible and intangible. Within this balance are the intellectual (mental), physical, emotional, spiritual dimensions, (see model, page 9) as well as teachings that have been passed down through generations. These dimensions create balance and well-being in one's personal life, as represented by the four quadrants of the circle. In assessment, they can represent a balanced assessment approach that illustrates the progressive growth of all students as well as the interconnectedness and cyclical journey of lifelong learning.

Intellectual
- figure it out
- mental, cognitive
- understand curricular outcomes
- collaboratively develop success criteria
- identify potential cultural biases
- integrate cognitive processes of measuring and sharing progress
- understand the student's strengths and learning needs

Physical
- do it
- physical energy required for the planning and collaboration process
- provide multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate learning
- build on student self-identity and strengths
- connect to the student's physical environment during the learning and assessment process

Spiritual
- relate it
- provide a safe, culturally inclusive and affirming classroom environment
- share, hear and embrace diverse perspectives
- respect all people and their ideas
- believe that one can move forward
- develop relevant, attentive and culturally affirming worldview

Emotional
- see it
- feedback produces an emotional response for students and teachers
- help develop a vision, courage and resilience to move forward
- nurture strong, healthy and caring relationships
- focus on personal growth in learning and emotional well-being

Intellectual

The intellectual (mental) dimension can be simply expressed as "figuring it out." Within the *Supporting Student Assessment* model, teachers are encouraged to clearly understand and internalize curricular outcomes to support students and to collaborate with them in the development of success criteria. This includes researching to identify potential cultural biases related to demonstrating the achievement of the outcome. Having the end in mind, teachers aim for a balanced assessment approach and integrate the cognitive processes of measuring and sharing progress. Previous assessments help the student and teacher understand the student's strengths and current learning needs in order to define *Where am I now?* and plan for *Where am I going?*

Physical

The physical dimension can be summarized as "doing it." This aspect focuses on the physical energy required for the planning and collaboration process within *Where am I now? Where am I going?* and *How am I doing?* Teachers and students can co-construct success criteria and collaboratively choose assessment strategies that build on student self-identity and strengths, and provide multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate learning. Further, experiencing the learning and assessment space within a land-based context connects to the student's physical environment during the learning and assessment process.

Emotional

The emotional dimension can be stated as "seeing it." Providing and receiving quality feedback in a sensitive manner allows students and teachers to better "see" and accept where the students are in relation to *How am I doing?* Feedback produces an emotional response within students and teachers. Encouraging and developing a growth mindset in a culturally safe and ethical learning space helps students and teachers develop a vision, courage and resilience to move forward and address *Where to next?* in their learning journey. This collaborative process and shared responsibility are supported by nurturing strong, healthy and caring relationships within the class and community, which focuses on personal growth in learning and emotional well-being.

Spiritual

The spiritual dimension can be expressed as "relating it." Establishing a culturally inclusive and affirming classroom environment provides students and teachers a safe forum to share, hear and embrace diverse perspectives. At the core of the spiritual dimension are the interconnectedness and respect of all people and their ideas. Encouraging students to relate and respond to feedback with a growth mindset provides them with a plan and the belief that they can move forward and address *Where to next?* As students and teachers cyclically go through the assessment and learning process, they co-construct knowledge within their school and community to further develop a worldview that is relevant, attentive and culturally affirming.

FOUR ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Encompassing the four guiding principles and the four dimensions which support student assessment, the four essential questions for effective assessment provide a practical framework to inspire and support Saskatchewan teachers and students to collaboratively engage in the assessment and evaluation process. These four essential questions include: *Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing?* and *Where to next?* (See model, page 9.) In the spirit of reconciliation, the choice of the word "where" in the essential questions also aims to recognize the importance of place for the individual and their relationship to with the land in their learning and assessment journey.

Where am I now?

This essential question encourages teachers and students to explore, share, understand, appreciate and build upon their prior knowledge, experience and successes as they move forward in the cyclical learning and assessment journey. The process of relating learning and assessment to real life experiences, backgrounds (e.g., beliefs, customs, practices, places, languages, behaviours, abilities and sense of self, place and community) and knowledge can set the stage for and establish cultural inclusivity and affirmation. Determining, understanding and leveraging teachers' and students' diverse perspectives, worldviews and strengths can enhance growth and learning. Activating and addressing together *Where am I now?* can be accomplished by:

- safely developing an understanding of the diverse cultures of individuals, the class community and beyond; and,
- identifying the strengths and gifts of students as well as their areas of need (Saskatchewan Provincial Reading Team, 2015).

Where am I going?

Learning targets are clear and curriculum-referenced. It is important that teachers and students have a solid understanding of what students are expected to know and be able to do. This can be collaboratively accomplished by:

- identifying and clarifying outcomes;
- effective planning; and,
- determining success criteria.

How am I doing?

With an awareness of *Where am I now?* and *Where am I going?* in relation to the learning outcome and target, students and teachers can become actively engaged and empowered in the learning and assessment process. This can be achieved through:

- formative assessment (assessment for learning and assessment as learning);
- summative assessment (assessment of learning);
- feedback and self-assessment; and,
- teacher/student/caregiver reflection (check-ins and conferring).

Where to next?

For students to make progress in their learning, they need to provide and respond to quality feedback from teachers and peers that is objectively connected to the collaboratively developed success criteria. Using an ongoing feedback process can engage and empower learners to set loftier but realistic goals toward next steps in their learning. The focus of *Where to next?* is to use feedback to adjust goals in order to move learning forward and engage students and teachers in their shared responsibility. Further, teachers can consider the variables of the Adaptive Dimension by adjusting instruction, resources, learning environment and assessment to align with the student's new learning goals. For students to move forward in their learning, they can engage in the process by:

- accepting and sharing the responsibility for learning;
- responding to feedback; and,
- adjusting goals.

How the four essential questions support different educational contexts
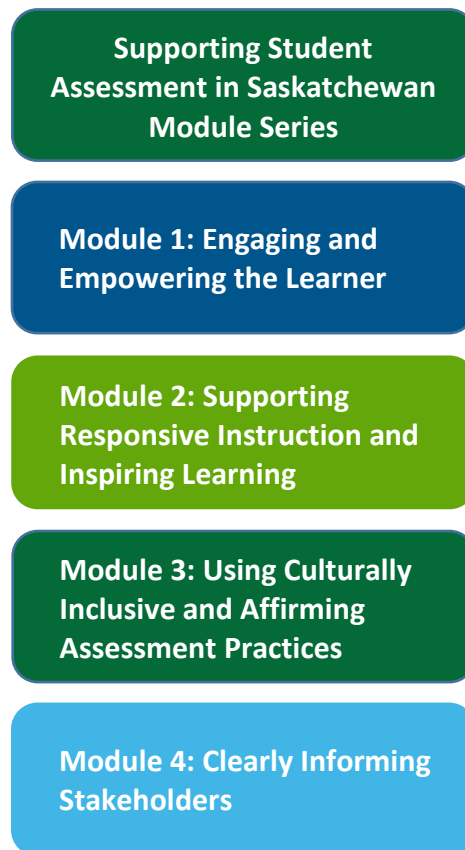
The four essential questions can be used and leveraged within a variety of educational contexts to move learning forward. They can help guide and support students in becoming lifelong, independent learners by providing a framework to guide personal growth as they engage in their personal learning and assessment journey. Teachers can use the essential questions as a structure to help them plan and determine instructional approaches within a collaborative cyclical assessment process. The four essential questions can also be used by teachers and students together to support class community growth and to emphasize an evolving understanding of educational success within a global perspective. The table below illustrates how the four essential questions could be phrased in different educational contexts.

Essential question	Context A Student and Teacher Essential Questions for Personal Growth	Context B Teacher Essential Questions to Support Student's Growth	Context C Teacher and Student Essential Questions to Support Class Community Growth	Descriptor
1	*Where am I now?*	*Where are they now?*	*Where are we now?*	Determining, understanding and leveraging diverse worldviews and strengths to address needs
2	*Where am I going?*	*Where are they going?*	*Where are we going?*	Planning, setting goals and collaboratively establishing success criteria
3	*How am I doing?*	*How are they doing?*	*How are we doing?*	Gathering evidence of learning as well as providing, collecting and reflecting on feedback.
4	*Where to next?*	*Where to next?*	*Where to next?*	Responding to feedback by adjusting goals towards next steps in learning

SUPPORTING STUDENT ASSESSMENT MODULE SERIES

The four guiding principles of student assessment in Saskatchewan, previously outlined, are further developed in the *Supporting Student Assessment* module series. Each module focuses on a guiding principle, examines current research that supports effective assessment practices, and describes how each principle is independent of each other, yet interdependent. In addition, practical tools and templates are provided, including key resources to support teachers in implementing effective and culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices in their classroom.

The following table outlines the Saskatchewan *Supporting Student Assessment* module series.

Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan Module Series

Module 1: Engaging and Empowering the Learner

Module 2: Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning

Module 3: Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices

Module 4: Clearly Informing Stakeholders

Saskatchewan educators are encouraged to explore and engage in the content of this resource to further grow and nurture their assessment literacy. The information and various assessment strategies in the overview and the modules can not only enrich individual teaching experiences but can ultimately improve Saskatchewan student learning.

HOW TO READ EACH MODULE

Each module relates to one guiding principle and consists of two main sections.

The first section describes the content of this guiding principle with a synthesis of Saskatchewan educators' research on effective assessment practices.

The second section, "Making Connections," provides practical ideas for educators.

It begins by providing examples of how the guiding principle could be applied *in the classroom*, showing how teachers might transform theory into action.

It also provides teachers with the opportunity to *reflect on their assessment practices* related to the guiding principle.

Finally, it includes additional *resources* and practical ideas and materials for teachers and students to use in their various learning spaces.

Note: The icons used on this page showcase the sections in *Module 1: Engaging and Empowering the Learner*. Each of the other modules uses the icon related to its guiding principle

Saskatchewan educators are encouraged to engage in the content of this resource to further grow and nurture their assessment literacy. The application of various assessment strategies in the modules can not only enrich individual teaching experiences but can ultimately improve Saskatchewan student learning and achievement.

SUMMARY

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's commitment to the success and well-being of all Saskatchewan students is reflected in the four guiding principles of assessment that are independent, yet woven within each other. These guiding principles work with the four dimensions (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional, spiritual) which support the learning and assessment process by developing a holistic view of the individual. Four essential questions for effective assessment (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing?* and *Where to next?*) encompass these important dimensions to further engage Saskatchewan teachers and students in the assessment and evaluation process.

Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan encourages students, school personnel and families in developing collaborative teams that are committed to a shared vision to inspire students and their class community to reach their full potential and become responsible lifelong learners. Assessment practices engage and empower the learner, support responsive instruction and inspire learning, are culturally inclusive and affirming, and clearly inform stakeholders. When using the guiding principles, dimensions and essential questions, educators are able to create a safe and ethical space (Ermine, 2006) in which all students are included, accepted and valued, and can become confident in demonstrating their learning.

MODULE 1: ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING THE LEARNER

Module 1: Engaging and Empowering the Learner **focuses on classroom-based assessment as a shared responsibility, as well as the four essential questions for effective assessment.**

SECTION 1: EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

How do you empower and engage your students in learning? Do you consider your students' strengths and areas of need as well as worldviews and backgrounds to build upon and move learning forward? Do you co-construct rubrics with them? Do you provide them opportunities for peer assessment aligned with those rubrics and engage your students in self-reflection on their learning? Do you provide feedback that helps your students grow further?

Module 1: Engaging and Empowering the Learner delves into the following:

- Assessment is a shared responsibility.
- *Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?*

ASSESSMENT IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Teachers and students collaborate in the assessment process.

Within the Saskatchewan *Supporting Student Assessment* model (see page 9), the guiding principle "Engaging and Empowering the Learner" encourages the mindset for teachers and students to work towards a shared responsibility throughout the assessment process. The four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?*) guide and support the process towards a shared responsibility that engages and empowers the learner. The mindset of shared responsibility inspires both students and teachers to become active participants and reflect on their journey of assessment and learning as they address these four essential questions.

The four essential questions can be used within the following educational contexts to move learning forward and provide opportunities for collaboration:

A. The four essential questions can help guide and support students in becoming lifelong, independent learners by providing a framework to guide personal growth as they engage in their learning and assessment journey. Similarly, teachers can use the same four essential questions to guide their own growth related to their educational professional development and assessment literacy.

B. Teachers may use the essential questions as a structure to help them plan and determine instructional approaches within a collaborative cyclical assessment process with individual students. In this context, the focus of the essential questions is to support student growth within the assessment process.

C. The four essential questions may also be used by teachers and students together to support class community growth. They embody the notion of shared responsibility in assessment and represent a community approach to success. They foster inclusivity and affirmation of all cultures and can be utilized to emphasize an evolving understanding of educational success within a global perspective.

The table below illustrates how the four essential questions can be phrased in different educational contexts.

Essential question	Context A Student and Teacher Essential Questions for Personal Growth	Context B Teacher Essential Questions to Support Individual Student's Growth	Context C Teacher and Student Essential Questions to Support Class Community Growth	Descriptor
1	*Where am I now?*	*Where are they now?*	*Where are we now?*	Determining, understanding and leveraging diverse worldviews and strengths to address needs
2	*Where am I going?*	*Where are they going?*	*Where are we going?*	Planning, setting goals and collaboratively establishing success criteria
3	*How am I doing?*	*How are they doing?*	*How are we doing?*	Gathering evidence of learning as well as providing, collecting and reflecting on feedback
4	*Where to next?*	*Where to next?*	*Where to next?*	Responding to feedback by adjusting goals toward next steps in learning

Why is using a collaborative assessment process important?

Assessment and evaluation are continuous actions that involve students, parents/caregivers and teachers. When students are encouraged to take a more active role in their learning by engaging in the assessment process, they are empowered to enrich their journey of becoming a responsible lifelong learner.

> *"When teachers explicitly teach students to become effective self-assessors, students are empowered to be in charge of their own learning – to identify goals, determine where they are in their learning with respect to those goals, and to take actions to close the gap."*
>
> *(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b)*

When teachers establish a collaborative working relationship with students, they empower the learner in the entire learning and assessment process. This balance in responsibility enhances student understanding and self-determination. In addition, engaging in this shared responsibility can support all learners. When students and teachers collaborate, there is increased opportunity to incorporate culturally inclusive and affirming learning opportunities, as well as to consider the adaptive dimension. The goal is to engage students in learning and meet the needs of all students.

While students, parents/caregivers, and teachers are all accountable for student individual personal growth, establishing a collaborative assessment process can engage and empower students to take responsibility for not only their own learning, but also contributing to the learning of their class community.

How do teachers and students establish a collaborative and authentic assessment process?

To support student growth, it is important that both teachers and students actively participate in establishing an authentic collaborative assessment process within their classroom. Together, teachers and students can:

- activate prior knowledge and worldviews to set learning goals;
- agree upon appropriate and challenging expectations that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning;
- use diverse student exemplars that represent various worldviews to better understand the mutually understood success criteria; and,
- actively engage in self-reflection, self-assessment and peer assessment.

In addition to the many shared responsibilities between teachers and students in the collaborative assessment process, each participant has individual and collective responsibilities. The table below describes some of these teacher and student responsibilities.

Teacher responsibility	Student responsibility
- Become familiar with grade-level curricular expectations. - Collaboratively develop success criteria with students when appropriate and ensure an understanding of those criteria. - Provide diverse and inclusive exemplars. - Provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. - Provide individual and class descriptive and constructive feedback. - Engage in individual and class goal-setting and action planning with the students. - Create a year plan with long range goals and tasks clearly indicating when particular outcomes will be targeted. - Facilitate effective classroom discussions, activities and tasks that elicit evidence of learning. - Communicate and engage with parents/caregivers throughout the process.	- Share prior knowledge, personal worldviews and experiences with others to set individual and class learning goals. - Understand the success criteria by engaging in collaborative development with the class and teacher. - Refer to various exemplars to inform and guide improvement. - Provide descriptive feedback to peers when asked. - Provide objective self-feedback. - Understand and communicate how they can best demonstrate their own learning. - Articulate individual and class successes and areas that need improvement. - Engage in individual and class goal-setting and action planning with the teacher.

Sharing assessment ownership contributes to well-being

Sharing the ownership of the assessment and evaluation process contributes to student and teacher well-being and can establish a healthy classroom learning environment. When students have an active role in assessment from the beginning, shared ownership becomes a natural part of their learning and assessment journey. Further, when students feel a disconnection between what they are learning and how they are being assessed or are not clear on the assessment criteria or process, this can cause stress and affect their personal well-being. Similarly, when teachers assess in isolation or are questioned about the fairness of their assessment practices, they too can experience stress and feel overwhelmed. One fix for both teachers and students is to ensure that students understand how grades have been determined and to involve students as much as possible in all phases of learning and assessment (O'Connor, 2012).

The Saskatchewan *Supporting Student Assessment* model (see page 9) utilizes four essential questions toward effective assessment to provide a practical framework that inspires and supports Saskatchewan teachers and students to collaboratively engage in the assessment and evaluation process. These four essential questions are: *Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing?* and *Where to next?*

> *"When students set their learning goals, and are able to track them in a clear and meaningful way, their achievement and well-being substantially improves."*
>
> *(Reeves, 2016)*

Understanding diverse student perspectives, backgrounds, strengths and areas of need

Where am I now? (see model, page 9) encourages teachers and students to explore, share, understand, appreciate and build upon their prior knowledge, experience and successes as they move forward in the ongoing cyclical learning and assessment journey. The process of relating learning and assessment to real life experiences, backgrounds (e.g., beliefs, customs, practices, languages, behaviours, abilities and sense of self, place and community) and knowledge can set the stage for and establish cultural inclusivity and affirmation. Determining, understanding and leveraging teachers' and students' diverse perspectives, worldviews, strengths and areas of need can enhance growth and learning. Activating and addressing together *Where am I now?* can be accomplished by:

- safely developing an understanding of the diverse cultures of individuals, the class community and beyond; and,
- identifying the strengths and gifts of students as well as their areas of need (Saskatchewan Provincial Reading Team, 2015).

Safely developing an understanding of the diverse cultures of individuals, the class community and beyond

In Saskatchewan, "inclusive education" is used to describe education for students with diverse backgrounds, providing equitable treatment and appropriate, high-quality education to all students (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2021). Culturally inclusive classrooms acknowledge the entire spectrum of student diversity including ethnicity, language, gender and sexual diversity, background, experiences, learning styles and other influences that may shape student identity. Emphasizing inclusion through culturally relevant and responsive curricula, instruction and assessment helps all learners feel empowered in affirming their own cultural identity. Having students and teachers discover and embrace their own and others' cultures enables them to not only see themselves in the learning and assessment process but also fosters a deeper understanding of their, and each other's, intersectionality and multiplicity of experiences, creating a safe and rich learning environment that is beneficial for all learners.

Identifying the strengths and gifts of students as well as their areas of need

In Saskatchewan, a *Student First* approach is central to inclusive educational experiences for learning and is reflected in the essential question *Where am I now?* where teachers and students can support each other in the learning and assessment process. This inclusive process encompasses a blend of philosophical beliefs, practices and processes to create flexible support systems and learning environments based on students' prior knowledge, strengths, abilities, interests and needs, enhancing the learning and assessment journey (Ministry of Education, 2021). Similarly, the *Adaptive Dimension* (2017) recognizes that students approach learning in multiple ways and acknowledges that the student's learning profile is shaped by their learning style, multiple intelligence preferences, gender and culture. Learning profiles can change as students respond to experiences. Teachers, students and parents/caregivers can actively respond to the strengths and needs of individual students and the class community by considering learning profiles, interests, self-concept as well as cognitive, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development.
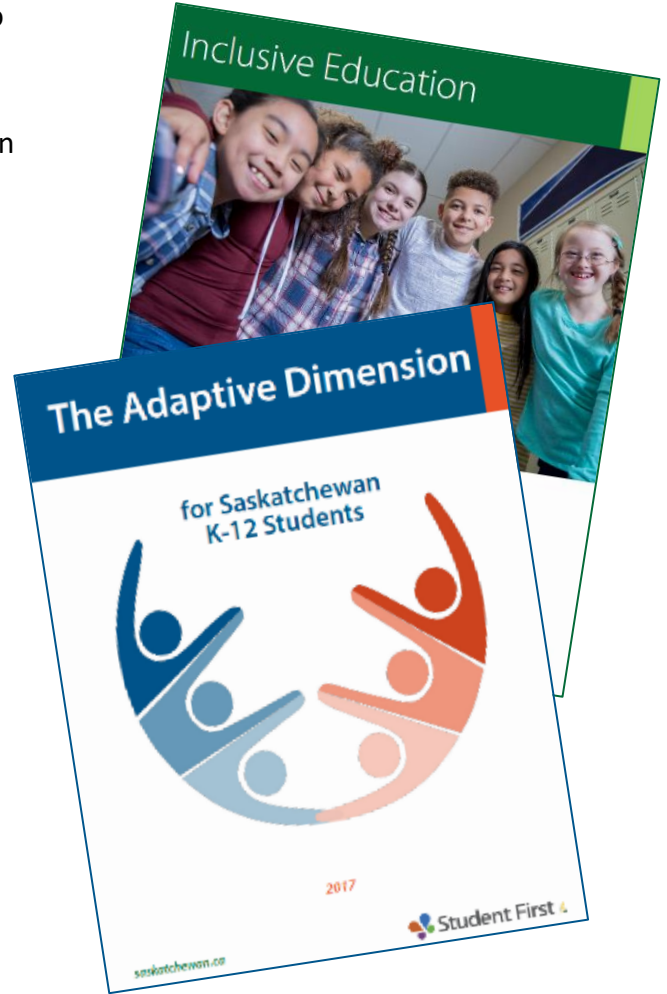
"Instruction is informed by ongoing assessment of students' strengths and needs. While some students require the challenge of abstract concepts, others need concrete examples to assist them in their thinking processes."
(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017)

For further resources, see *Where am I Now?* in "Section 2: Making Connections."

WHERE AM I GOING?

Success criteria are clear and curriculum-referenced.

Where am I going? within the guiding principle, "Engaging and Empowering the Learner," provides teachers and students opportunities to work together to gain a solid understanding of what students are expected to know and be able to do. This can be accomplished by:

- identifying and clarifying outcomes;
- effective planning; and,
- determining success criteria.

Identifying and Clarifying Outcomes

Outcomes and indicators in Saskatchewan curriculum are essential components for the creation of units of study for each subject area. Outcomes define what students are expected to know, understand and be able to do by the end of a grade or secondary level course in a particular area of study. Indicators are representative of what students need to know and/or be able to do in order to achieve an outcome. It is also important to consider the Broad Areas of Learning and Cross-Curricular Competencies, which are detailed in Saskatchewan curricula when planning units of study.

Effective Planning

A widely accepted effective strategy for aligning assessment to learning outcomes is backward design, that is, **planning with the end in mind**. Essentially, this means that the teacher will know exactly what the students need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to show achievement of the outcome being assessed.

Backwards planning involves a thorough examination of the curriculum, thoughtful integration of a variety of resources and experiences, as well as opportunities for interdisciplinary connections. It considers the cognitive processes required, as outlined by Bloom's Taxonomy in *Renewed Curricula: Understanding Outcomes* (Ministry of Education, 2010), to achieve outcomes. The process is sensitive to the unique needs of the students and learning environment.

> *"Our journey to success begins with the end in mind and uses assessment*
> *for learning to keep us on track and to provide tools for the journey."*
> *(Davies, Herbst and Reynolds, 2011)*

Determining Success Criteria

Clear success criteria are important to establish. Co-creating success criteria with students enables them to see and understand what success will look like and enhances the opportunity for inclusivity and student success.

What are success criteria?

Success criteria are the elements included in a task that clearly identify the requirements to successfully complete a task. Success criteria are based on curricular outcomes and indicators.

Making success criteria transparent

Success criteria and the assessment strategies for the specific outcome can be collaboratively established and should be shared with students before they engage in the learning process.

Co-constructing success criteria and rubrics

Together, students and teachers can clarify criteria for success using a variety of strategies such as brainstorming, classroom discussion, deconstruction of prompt, examination of exemplars, co-created rubrics, etc. Pre-existing exemplars may be examined with students where appropriate. Examining culturally inclusive exemplars with students engages them in the assessment process. When students take part in developing success criteria, they are more likely to understand what is expected of them and to actively participate. This can empower them to accomplish the task successfully.

Consider the following points:
- Success criteria should be co-written and be in student-friendly language so each student within the class community understands what is required.
- Success criteria are effective when they are authentic and relevant to individual students' and the class community lives and experiences.
- Existing assessment tools may be used or may be adjusted by the class community as part of the process of deconstructing their meaning and/or determining success criteria.
- Students and the class community may wish to set a realistic level of achievement according to the co-created success criteria. In this case, introducing the setting of SMART goals as further described in *Where to next?* can be collaboratively undertaken.

Co-construct criteria for products, process, and collections of evidence.
- *Learning becomes more explicit.*
- *Learners can confirm, consolidate, and integrate new knowledge.*
- *It scaffolds future learning.*
- *It teaches learners what quality looks like.*
- *It helps learners understand and use the language of assessment. (Davies, 2011)*

For further resources, see *Where am I Going?* in "Section 2: Making Connections."

HOW AM I DOING?

Knowing where I am in relation to the success criteria

Students and teachers can further exemplify the first guiding principle when learners become more engaged and empowered and when they collaboratively consider the question *How am I doing?* (See model, page 9.) This is achieved through:

- **Formative Assessment**
  - Assessment *for* Learning
  - Assessment *as* Learning
- **Summative Assessment**
  - Assessment *of* Learning
- **Feedback and Self-Assessment**
- **Teacher/Student/Caregiver Reflection**
  - Check-ins and Conferring

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment "focuses on the processes and products of learning. Assessment is continuous and is meant to inform the student, the parent/caregivers, and the teacher of the student's progress toward achieving the curriculum outcomes. Such assessments provide information upon which instructional decisions and adaptations can be made" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011). Formative assessment is also known as "assessment *for* learning" and "assessment *as* learning."

Assessment *for* learning uses information about student progress to support and improve student learning and inform instructional practices, and:
- is teacher-driven for student, teacher, and parent/caregiver use;
- occurs throughout the teaching and learning process, using a variety of tools; and,
- engages teachers in providing differentiated instruction, feedback to students to enhance their learning, and information to parents/caregivers in support of learning.

Assessment *as* learning involves student reflection on learning, and monitoring of their own progress related to curriculum outcomes and:
- is student-driven with teacher guidance for personal use;
- occurs throughout the learning process; and,
- engages students in reflecting on learning, future learning, and thought processes (metacognition).

<div align="right">(Adapted from Ministry of Education, 2019)</div>

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment (evaluation) "measures the products of learning. The main purposes are to determine knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that have developed over a given period of time; to summarize student progress; and to report this progress to students, parents/caregivers, and teachers. This type of evaluation occurs most often at the end of a series of learning activities, experiences, and inquiries, at the end of a unit of instruction, and at term or year-end when students are ready to demonstrate achievement of curriculum outcomes" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011). Summative assessment, also known as "assessment *of* learning," is another source of information for students to know *How am I doing?*

Assessment *of* learning involves teachers' use of evidence of student learning to make judgments about student achievement and:

• provides opportunity to report evidence of achievement related to curricular outcomes;
• occurs at the end of a learning cycle, using a variety of assessment strategies; and,
• provides the foundation for discussion on placement or promotion.

(Adapted from Ministry of Education, 2019)

Feedback and Self-assessment

Feedback and self-assessment are important elements in answering the essential question *How am I doing?* Quality feedback is important when engaging students in formative assessment. The nature of teacher and peer feedback has significant influence on the ability of students to take control of their own learning and to improve the quality of their work.

Effective feedback supports student learning by involving both teachers and students in:

• clarifying the critical aspects of any learning goal;
• identifying where individual students and groups of students are in relation to achieving the learning goal; and
• providing useful information about how to close the gap (Chappuis, 2009; Hattie, 2009).

> *"Research shows that when students are involved in the assessment process (learning to articulate what they have learned and what they still need to work on) achievement improves."*
>
> *(Black & William, 1998)*

Feedback includes reviewing what students have done well, and sharing what they need to do to improve in relation to the outcome. Effective feedback:

- focuses on the quality of the student work in relation to the success criteria;
- indicates specific suggestions for improvement;
- is timely;
- is descriptive in nature and fosters student thinking;
- focuses on limited areas so as not to overwhelm learners; and,
- allows time for improvement to occur.

Self-assessment supports student learning

Self-assessment empowers students to assume more responsibility for their own learning by engaging them in self-reflection and encouraging them to identify where they believe they have been successful and where they believe they require assistance. If students are to be successful in self-assessment, they must have teacher guidance and coaching as well as assistance in determining appropriate focuses and criteria for self-assessment (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011).

> *"Self-assessment requires students to use their self-knowledge to make a reasoned, metacognitively-driven assessment of their own work."*
>
> *(Hume (2010) in Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (2018))*

Self-assessment supports teachers

- When students are involved in self-assessment and share reflections of their learning, teachers can see the gaps between what they have taught and what students have learned.
- By collecting student self-assessments and reflections, teachers enrich the depth and variety of data about their students' learning by gaining insights into their thinking processes as well as worldviews and perspectives connected to the content.
- Teachers gain insight into how they may have to adapt their instructional practice for individual students and the class community and how to develop alternative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of an outcome, promoting cultural inclusivity and affirmation.
- Teachers can reflect on and target areas of professional growth. In essence, teachers can emulate self-assessment on their own instructional and assessment practices.

Peer assessment supports teacher- and self-assessment

In addition to teacher feedback and self assessment, feedback provided to and by peers through formative assessment can be important for the learner and the teacher. When students have had the opportunity to practice assessing and giving feedback aligned with the success criteria (e.g., through the use of exemplars) before providing it in a real setting, there is a positive effect on both self-assessment and peer assessment work.

Teacher/student/caregiver reflection

There are a number of ways that teachers, students and caregivers can find areas of success and improvement. By understanding the outcomes and the expectations for success, teachers and students will know where the learners are in relation to the outcome and how they can be supported to meet it. Students who can articulate where they are in relation to the learning outcome are able to share this with their caregivers in a variety of ways.

Check-ins and conferring

Checking-in and conferring are integral to the student learning process. Checking-in is the process of continuing the collaborative analysis of student performance as students work toward achievement of curricular outcomes. Conferring is the process of discussing the status of the learning in relation to the outcome and success criteria as well as reviewing descriptive feedback for improvement. The process of checking-in or conferring:

- is an ongoing, collaborative and informal process between teachers, students and caregivers; and,
- shifts from a summative or assessment of learning event that is teacher-led to a collaborative informal process that promotes ongoing student growth.

For further resources, see *How am I Doing?* in "Section 2: Making Connections."

WHERE TO NEXT?

Responding to feedback, adjusting goals and identifying actions for next steps in learning

Where to next? (see model, page 9) acts as a bridge to further engage and empower teachers and students in the process of learning and assessment when they reflect upon the learning progress and respond to quality feedback that is objectively connected to the success criteria. Using an ongoing feedback process can encourage learners and the class community to set challenging but realistic goals towards next steps in their learning. At this stage of the assessment process, the focus is using feedback to learn and adjust goals in order to move forward while engaging students and teachers in their shared responsibility of assessment.

As students, teachers and the class community move forward and address the essential question *Where to next?* they can become further engaged in the process and take collective ownership of learning by:

• accepting and sharing the responsibility for learning;
• discussing and responding to feedback; and,
• collaboratively adjusting goals.

> *"Formative assessments alone do little to improve student learning or teaching quality. What really counts is what happens **after** the assessments. Just as regularly checking your blood pressure does little to improve your health if you do nothing with the information gained, what matters most with formative assessment is how students and teachers use the results. Unfortunately, many educators today overlook this vital aspect of formative assessment. And ...they fail to produce the most valuable benefits of the formative assessment process."*
>
> *(Guskey, 2008)*

Accepting and Sharing the Responsibility for Learning

The assessment and learning process can become more enriching for teachers and students as they work together in determining how to benefit from feedback. The following table outlines some of the shared responsibilities in which teachers and students can engage when responding to the essential question *Where to next?*

Teacher Responsibilities	Student Responsibilities
• Create a learning environment that fosters a growth mindset and makes learning visible. • Provide descriptive feedback that offers further learning opportunities. • Explicitly teach self and peer feedback skills to the class community. • Explicitly teach and model goal setting (revising) skills. • Support students in adjusting SMART goals in relation to success criteria. • Adjust instructional and assessment plans to support students.	• Contribute to a positive learning environment by sharing their experiences and worldviews. • Discuss and personally reflect on their own learning and progress in relation to success criteria. • Use feedback to adjust their individual SMART goals accordingly. • Engage in discussion to adjust the class community SMART goals. • Identify and implement strategies to achieve new or revised SMART goals.

"Teachers shouls consult and collaborate with colleagues to identify students' strengths and needs to continuously correlate, monitor and adjust their instructional approaches."
(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017)

Discussing and Responding to Feedback

The feedback process includes collaboratively reviewing with individual students and the class community what they have done well and sharing with them what they can do to improve. When responding to feedback, students and teachers can:

- consider how the specific suggestions and descriptive feedback are aligned with the success criteria;
- think about how to adjust their individual and class community learning goals; and,
- identify and implement actions to achieve the new goals.

"The answer to Where to next? needs to be more directed to the refinement and seeking of more challenging goals, because these have the highest likelihood of leading to greater achievement."
(Hattie and Timperley, 2007)

When students discuss and respond to feedback provided by teachers or peers within the learning and assessment process, they delve further into the essential question *Where to next?* by considering:

- what further improvements need to be made to advance my progress; and,
- how can I extend or deepen my understanding of the concept*? (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

Feedback from teachers and peers can be difficult for students to accept because they may not necessarily agree with the feedback, there may be an issue about trusting the people providing the feedback or they may not be prepared to embrace different points of view or constructive criticism regarding their work. Encouraging students to approach feedback with a growth mindset can enable them to be more open and receptive to input, and empower them to maximize the opportunity for learning. A growth mindset can support students and the class community as they consider and accept feedback toward developing actions for improvement.

> *"Used with skill, assessment can motivate the reluctant, revive the discouraged, and thereby increase, not simply measure, achievement."*
> *(Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis & Arter, 2011)*

Using growth-minded language can motivate students to remain persistent, resilient and focused on the process of learning. It is important to provide and discuss descriptive feedback with learners regarding how their process leads to a result so that they can understand that their abilities will develop with effort (Dweck, 2016).

> *"In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment."*
> *(Carol Dweck, 2007)*

When discussing and responding to teacher and peer feedback with a growth mindset, students and teachers focus on advancement in learning by leveraging suggestions with an open mind. This healthy mindset can allow them to safely, actively and willingly re-examine the four essential questions *Where am I now? Where am I going*? *How am I doing*? and *Where to next*? Students, teachers and the class community can then reconsider their goals in order to reset more realistic or loftier goals.

Collaboratively Adjusting Goals

The natural and ongoing process of goal setting (based on the success criteria), feedback and reflection can provide students, teachers and the class community the strategies and opportunity to be further engaged in and responsible for their learning.

> *"The very nature of formative assessment is to support growth, and growth emerges from purposeful action. Developing a plan will ensure the information we gather and the action taken moves learning forward."*
>
> *(White, 2017)*

In this ongoing process, students and teachers set goals and reflect on progress frequently. They learn how to set goals that:

- are appropriate for grade level;
- directly relate to outcomes;
- can be justified by evidence of their work; and,
- are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely (SMART).

Specific	*What exactly will you accomplish?*
Measurable	*How will you know when you have reached this goal?*
Achievable	*Is achieving this goal realistic with effort and commitment? Do you have the resources to achieve this goal? If not, how will you get them?*
Relevant	*Why is this goal significant to your life?*
Timely	*When will you achieve this goal?*

Summary

Module 1: Engaging and Empowering the Learner demonstrates that as teachers and students focus on assessment as a shared responsibility as well as on the four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?*), they can become further engaged and empowered in the learning and assessment process. Together, they can consider individual and class community strengths and areas of need, prior knowledge and worldviews to build upon and collaboratively establish quality success criteria and learning goals. By engaging in peer assessment and feedback, individual students and the class community can reflect upon and adjust their goals to move learning forward.

SECTION 2: MAKING CONNECTIONS

The intention of the "Making Connections" section is to provide practical ideas and reflection opportunities for teachers and educational leaders. It includes personal stories that connect to the assessment content presented within the first guiding principle, "Engaging and Empowering the Learner."

"In the Classroom" provides story-like examples of what the guiding principle could look like **in the classroom or learning space** and shows how teachers might transform theory into action.

Storytelling is valued by diverse Canadian cultures as a powerful reflection and learning tool. For example, learning through stories is a core tenet of Indigenous approaches to education. To honour diverse perspectives and ways of knowing, "In the Classroom" uses a storytelling approach to:

- examine ways teachers can connect (intellectually/mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually) with the story, the characters and their experiences;
- encourage teachers to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and assessment practices; and,
- support teachers in the development of their future assessment strategies and actions.

"Making Connections" also provides teachers with the opportunity to **reflect on individual classroom assessment practices** related to the guiding principle through a series of questions. These questions prompt the reader to make connections with their assessment mindset, validate their assessment practices and calibrate the fairness of their assessments.

Finally, this section includes **additional resources** (practical ideas and materials that align with Section 1 of the module) for teachers and students to use in their various learning spaces.

1. IN THE CLASSROOM

Co-Constructing Success Criteria

Michelle has 25 years of teaching experience in a wide range of classrooms in urban and rural settings and continues to expand her knowledge on various aspects of formative assessment practices. For instance, Michelle has guided the Grade 4 class in the process of co-constructing success criteria to support them as they learn to peer- and self-assess writing products and set goals for improvement. The following is Michelle's summary of the process undertaken by the class in co-constructing success criteria towards effective writing.

First, we brainstormed a list of criteria for excellent sentences. We searched for examples of various sentences in the culturally diverse books of different levels of complexity that we read in class. We then added these attributes to our list of criteria. In partners, the students analyzed five sample sentences and listed the criteria that the authors of each sentence had achieved. As a class community, we shared our thinking about the criteria present in the sentences. This part of the process allowed our class to develop a common language for talking about the attributes of effective writing. It also invited the students to start developing the critical eye necessary for assessing their own work. As a class, we used a T-chart to organize and rank the sentences in order of complexity. After that, we practised assessing our current writing, thinking about which sample most closely matched our own work. We also learned to set goals on how to move our writing to the next level. Determining and using success criteria became an important tool in our writing. The students consulted them before they wrote in order to set goals for their writing and to self- or peer assess after writing.

When my students are clear about the outcome in mind, they are able to strive to reach that learning. They use the criteria as feedback for themselves and regularly offer feedback to one another. They are becoming increasingly effective at setting goals for improvement. Throughout the process, I am able to use observations during class discussions, have conversations with students as they self-assess and examine their products to formatively assess my students' progress towards our curricular outcomes. This information supports me as I develop the focused, purposeful lessons my students need to support their next steps towards achieving the learning outcome.

Peer Feedback and the SPARK Strategy

Meredith is teaching Grade 10 Social Studies. After setting project success criteria together with the students, they are provided with the opportunity to receive peer feedback, a strategy that is understood to be very empowering and engaging for students. Meredith then plans to support students in readjusting their goals after they receive their peer feedback.

Unfortunately, Meredith realizes that the students are very upset after receiving their peer feedback and doesn't know what to do. Reaching out to a colleague provides some suggestions on how to resolve the issue in order to move forward in a positive way. Meredith becomes aware of two strategies that could have been implemented before considering addressing *Where to next?*: establishing a growth mindset within the classroom and using the SPARK strategy for peer feedback.

Through the collegial conversation, Meredith learns about the importance of initially establishing a growth mindset with students in order to set a classroom culture focused on openness and learning. After implementing the tools found in the *Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan* resource Meredith observes that students are more ready to give, receive and respond to feedback.

In addition, Meredith took the time to teach students about the acronym SPARK (Specific, Prescriptive, Actionable, Referenced, Kind) so that they would have a strategy to use when providing effective feedback to their peers in a positive manner. They practiced using a SPARK template from the resource and students felt more at ease receiving structured feedback.

Although Meredith experienced some challenges in using peer assessment to adjust goals, the steps taken to resolve the conflict, especially using the growth mindset, helped students become more open to examining and adjusting their initial learning goals and taking further ownership of their learning.
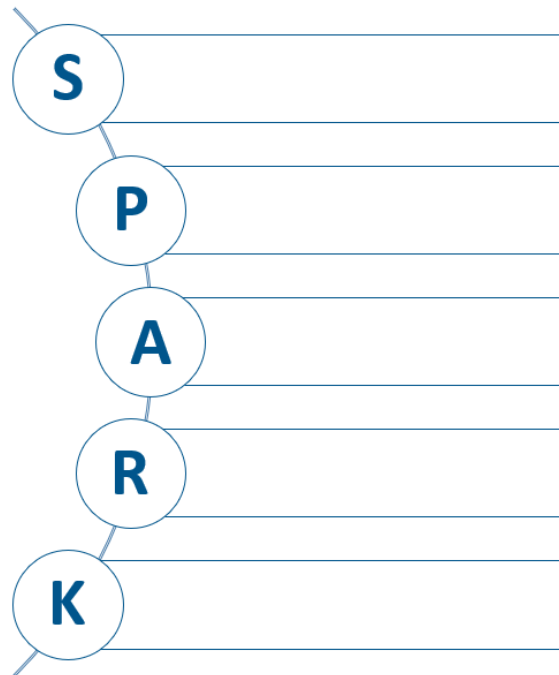
2. REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE

Assessment is a Shared Responsibility

- How do you encourage students to take responsibility and ownership of their learning?

- Do your students feel safe, comfortable and valued when participating in a collaborative assessment process?

- How do you use the four essential questions to support class community growth (e.g., *Where are **we** now? Where are **we** going? How are **we** doing? Where to next?*)?

Where am I now?

- Do you have diverse cultures of individuals in your class community?

- How do you work with students to understand and build upon their prior knowledge?

- Determining, understanding and leveraging teachers' and students' diverse perspectives, worldviews and strengths can enhance growth and learning. How do you safely develop an understanding of the diverse cultures of individuals, the class community and beyond?

- To what extent do you incorporate the aspects of *Where am I now?* in your classroom?

Where am I going?

- Do you co-construct success criteria with your students? What process do you undertake?

- Michelle has found that by engaging her students early in the process through co-constructing criteria, they use the criteria to self- and peer assess. What strategies do you use for involving students in their own learning?

- How can you initiate and further refine success criteria in your classroom so that you and your students can respond to the essential question *Where am I going?*

- In what ways have you seen your students become owners of their learning?

- To what extent do you incorporate the aspects of *Where am I going?* in your classroom?

How am I doing?

- Are you open to exploring multiple and varied ways for students to demonstrate their learning?

- Michelle engages students in learning by involving them in providing peer feedback to stimulate their self-reflection and lead them to a clearer understanding of the success criteria as well as to a more polished final product. What strategies do you use to engage students in peer and self-assessment?

- What approaches do you use in your classroom to empower students to respond to the essential question *How am I doing?*

- To what extent do you incorporate the aspects of *How am I doing?* in your classroom?

Where to next?

- Do you establish a growth mindset in your classroom?

- Meredith engages students in readjusting their goals by using feedback with a growth mindset. What strategies do you use to empower your students to reflect upon and adjust their learning goals?

- In what ways might you use peer feedback and self-assessment when supporting your students to respond to the essential question *Where to next?*

- Meredith shared a challenging experience with peer feedback when attempting to adjust students' goals. By recognizing that feedback was needed, and being willing to grow and improve, she reached out to a colleague and managed to change a difficult situation into a positive one. What strategies do you have to gather and respond to feedback regarding your instructional practices?

- To what extent do you incorporate the aspects of *Where to next?* in your classroom?

3.MORE RESOURCES

A. Assessment is a Shared Responsibility

A.1. Student Questionnaire on their Belief in Shared Responsibility of Assessment

To what extent do the following activities help you <u>learn better</u> in school.		Not at all	A little	Some-times	Often	Always
1.	Guessing what your teacher will be asking you on a test	0	1	2	3	4
2.	Sharing your knowledge and experiences with the class community on what you are learning about	0	1	2	3	4
3.	Co-creating success criteria with your teacher and classmates on what you are learning about	0	1	2	3	4
4.	Reviewing and understanding the success criteria for what you are learning about	0	1	2	3	4
5.	Setting learning goals for yourself	0	1	2	3	4
6.	Setting learning goals for the class	0	1	2	3	4
7.	Seeing examples of what you are learning about	0	1	2	3	4
8.	Giving and discussing feedback for the examples	0	1	2	3	4
9.	Giving feedback to your peer's work	0	1	2	3	4
10.	Receiving feedback from your peers	0	1	2	3	4
11.	Giving feedback to yourself	0	1	2	3	4
12.	Receiving feedback from your teacher	0	1	2	3	4
13.	Adjusting learning goals to move your learning forward	0	1	2	3	4
14.	Sharing your growth with your parents/caregivers	0	1	2	3	4
SCORE CHART 37-48 = Strong belief 25-36 = Good belief 12-24 = Progressing belief 0-11 = Low belief	**MY SCORE**					

A.2. Whose Assessment Responsibility is it?

Responsibility	Student	Teacher	Both
Read each action below and determine whether the responsibility belongs to the student, the teacher or both.			
A. Become familiar with grade-level curricular outcomes.			
B. Create a year plan with long range goals and tasks clearly indicating when particular outcomes will be targeted.			
C. Create a learning environment that fosters an ethical learning space and growth mindset.			
D. Share prior knowledge, experiences and perspectives.			
E. Collaboratively develop success criteria.			
F. Provide and review exemplars.			
G. Explicitly teach feedback skills.			
H. Review and understand the success criteria.			
I. Explicitly teach goal setting skills.			
J. Engage in goal-setting and action planning.			
K. Understand and communicate the multiple and varied ways that one can best demonstrate their learning.			
L. Participate in effective classroom discussions, activities, and tasks that elicit evidence of learning.			
M. Provide descriptive and constructive feedback.			
N. Engage with feedback.			
O. Reflect on progress in relation to success criteria.			
P. Communicate with parents/caregivers throughout the process.			
Q. Engage in adjusting SMART goals in relation to success criteria and action planning.			
R. Adjust instructional plans to support students.			

B. *Where am I now?*

B.1. Engaging Through Prior Knowledge

Determining what students already know provides opportunities to:
- identify student knowledge, strengths, abilities, interests and needs;
- become aware of the diversity of cultures in the class community; and,
- create a bridge between students' previous knowledge and new concepts.

There are several assessment strategies that teachers and students can consider to become aware of the individual student's and class community's prior knowledge in order to move learning forward.

B.1.a. KWL and KWHL

A common tool to identify students' prior knowledge in classrooms is a KWL chart. Before instruction, students fill in the KWL graphic by identifying what they already know (K) about something and what more they want (W) to learn about it. After instruction, they can complete the graphic by identifying what they have learned (L).

K: What I know

W: What I want to learn

L: What I learned
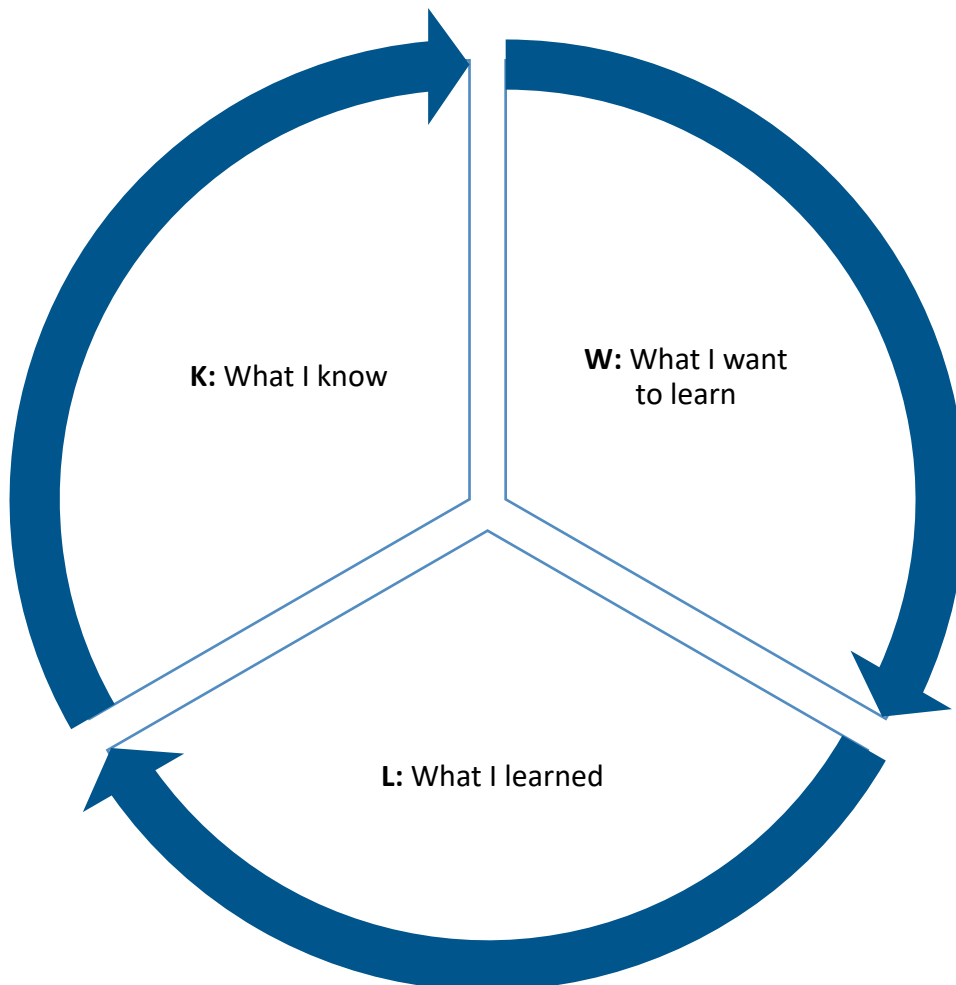
Similar to the KWL graphic, students and teachers can ask an additional question on how (H) they can learn it best (learning profile, culture, place, ways of knowing, etc.). As students complete the KWHL organizer they can become more engaged and empowered to take ownership of their learning.

K: What I know

W: What I want to learn

L: What I learned

H: How I can learn it
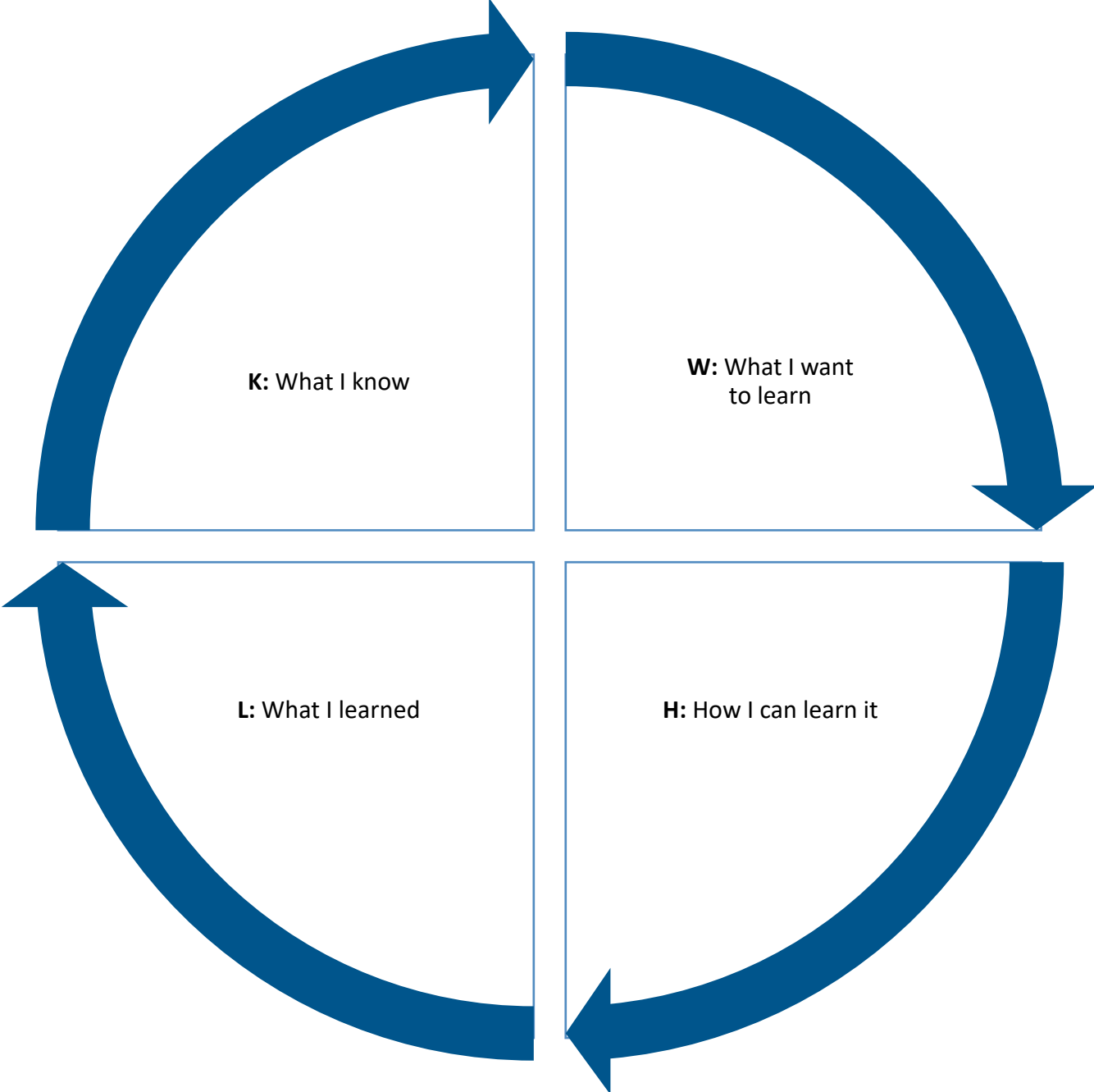
B.1.b. Understanding Prior Knowledge Within Various Worldviews

What do you think you know about this topic?

Where and how did you learn this information?
(family, reading, talking with an Elder, my community, travelling, etc.)

How is this topic connected to who I am?

B.1.c. Strategies to Activate or Assess Prior Knowledge

Strategies to Activate or Assess Prior Knowledge

Mindmap
Students create a mindmap or graphic organizer of their prior knowledge.

Pre-quiz
Students take a pre-quiz.

Draw
Students draw what they know about a topic and discuss their drawing with the teacher or with peers.

Hot Potato List
A student lists what they know about the unique topic on their page and pass their list to the next student who adds what they know, etc. Discuss the prior knowledge as a group.

Interview
Students interview classmates about what they know about a topic.

Debate
Conduct a debate within the class community on a chosen topic.

Challenge
Students are given a challenge or problem to investigate. Discuss as a class to discover what they know about it.

Fill-in
The teacher tells a story about a topic, leaving out key words or concepts. Students fill in the blanks with their prior knowledge.

Reveal
Students play a character in relation to a topic. The other students guess who or what they are representing and reveal the answer.

Blurt-out
The teacher shows or names a topic. Like a brainstorm, students "blurt out" what they know about the topic.

Rate
Students rate their own knowledge about a topic on a scale of 1 to 10 and discuss their rating with the teacher.

Four Corners
Teachers ask questions and have students move to one of four corners (where answers are assigned) depending on what they believe is the best answer.

Adapted from https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/27-ways-assess-background-knowledge/

C. *Where am I going?*

C.1. Backwards Planning Template

UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN PLANNING

Unit of Study:

Established Goals:
Here you will add the learning outcomes that you are going to address in this unit.

Understandings: *Here you will add the enduring understandings that you want students to take from this unit. These will be your "big ideas."*	**Questions**: *Here you will add your questions to guide inquiry in your unit—questions that will stimulate interest and engage students. By focusing on these questions, students will be directed towards the important ideas of the unit.*
Students will know … *Here you will add the content knowledge that you want to cover. These may come from the indicators, or might also address prerequisite knowledge that students will need for this unit.*	**Students will be able to …** *Here you will list the skills and behaviours that students will be able to exhibit as a result of their work in this unit. These will come from the indicators.*

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE	
Performance Tasks: *This will be your cumulative assessment developed in an authentic (or lifelike) manner where students can show that they have understood the big ideas of this unit.*	**Other Evidence**: *You will also want to collect other pieces of assessment evidence to indicate the breadth and depth of skills and knowledge accomplished in this unit.*

LEARNING PLAN

Learning Activities:
This section will include your lesson plans that direct the day-to-day activities in which your students will be engaged.

UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN PLANNING

Unit of Study:

Established Goals:

Understandings:	**Questions**:
Students will know …	**Students will be able to …**

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

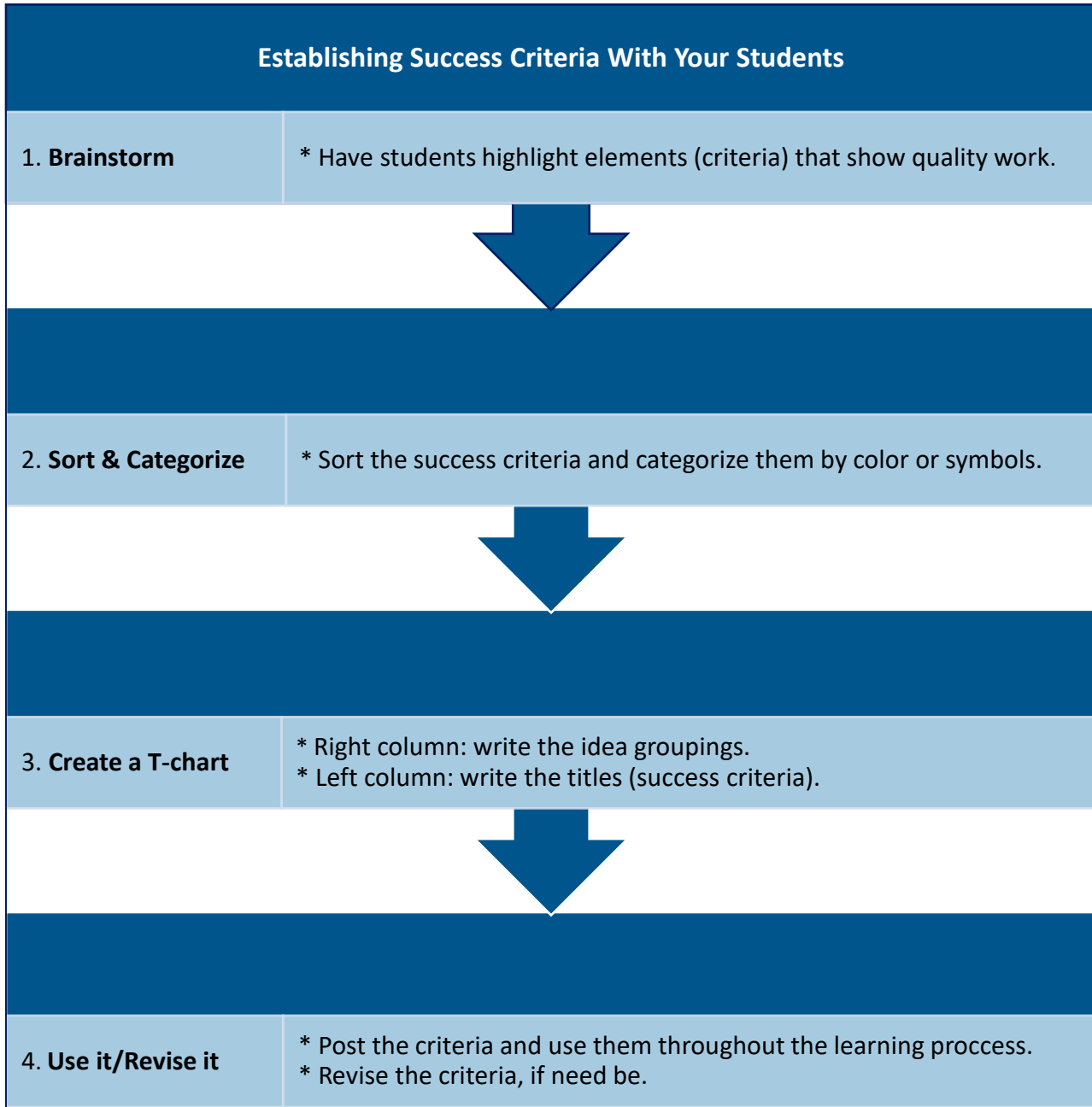| **Performance Tasks:**	**Other Evidence:**

LEARNING PLAN

Learning Activities:

C.2. Developing Success Criteria

Following a four-step process encourages student participation, understanding and ownership. The first three steps are done prior to or at the very beginning stages of the assignment to help students answer *Where am I going?* The figure below outlines the four-step approach suggested by Anne Davies (2011) to establish success criteria with students within a classroom.

Establishing Success Criteria With Your Students	
1. **Brainstorm**	* Have students highlight elements (criteria) that show quality work.
2. **Sort & Categorize**	* Sort the success criteria and categorize them by color or symbols.
3. **Create a T-chart**	* Right column: write the idea groupings. * Left column: write the titles (success criteria).
4. **Use it/Revise it**	* Post the criteria and use them throughout the learning proccess. * Revise the criteria, if need be.

Adapted from: Gregory, K., Cameron, C., & Davies, A. (2011). *Setting and Using Criteria for Use in Middle and Secondary School Classrooms.*

Following the four-step process with students encourages student participation, understanding and ownership. It is important to remember that the first three steps need to be done prior to or at the very beginning stages of the project or assignment.

Step One: Brainstorm

Teachers and students already have an idea of what the success criteria are. Using everyone's ideas helps to build ownership and understanding of the task's expectations.

1. Ask students questions such as, "What counts in writing a paragraph? What might be important in an oral presentation?"
2. Record all the ideas in the students' own words.
3. Contribute your own ideas if the students have not focused on some of your expectations in relation to the curriculum.

Step Two: Sort and Categorize

Limit the success criteria in a way to not overwhelm the students (e.g., 3-5 ideas).
Use language that the students can understand.

1. Have the students group common ideas together by saying,
   "I see that these ideas fit together. What big idea or common heading could we use to put these together?"
2. Show ideas that fit together by using different colours or symbols to code them.
   Label these ideas under a common heading.
3. Grouping similar ideas helps students understand and remember the success criteria as they use it in their work.

Step Three: Create a T-Chart

A visual reminder of the success criteria reminds students of what they are working towards (*Where am I going?*). Students are also able to work more independently and to take ownership on their learning and assessment journey.

1. Using a large T-Chart, label the common heading from the brainstormed list. These are the success criteria categories that are put onto the left-hand side of the T-chart.
2. On the right-hand side of the T-Chart, place the specific ideas from the brainstormed list under their common heading.
3. Post the T-Chart and ask, "Do you need any more categories or details to understand and remember any of the criteria?"

Step Four: Use it/Revise it.

Setting criteria is an ongoing process. Re-examine, add, revise, change or refine the success criteria throughout the year.

Developing Success Criteria Template

Step #1	**Brainstorm** *(Brainstorm a list of success criteria or possible responses.)*

Step #2	**Sort and Categorize** *(Group together common ideas from the success criteria list.)*

Step #3	T-Chart of Description and Criteria	
Description	**Criteria**	

Step #4	Use and Revise (T-Chart of Description and Criteria)

Adapted from Davies (2011).

D. *How am I doing?*

D.1. Formative Assessment Strategies

There are a wide variety of strategies that can be used for assessment. It is not the strategy itself that determines whether an assessment is formative or summative, but rather the way in which the information will be used. An assessment strategy is formative when the intent is to use the information gathered to support the teaching and learning process by adjusting or differentiating the teaching and learning methods as a response to this information. Below are a few examples of assessment strategies utilized in classrooms.

D.1.a. Exit or Entrance Slips

Exit or entrance slips are quick questions that students are asked to respond to at the beginning or end of a class period. They can be used in a variety of ways, but the overall goal is to ascertain the extent to which students understand the learning goal of a particular day.

How am I doing?	
Where would you place yourself on this checklist in relation to today's learning task?	**√**
I am beginning to understand.	
I'm making progress.	
I understand about half of the concepts.	
I'm almost there.	
I'm confident that I fully understand.	

Exit Slip

Name: _____   Date: _____

Question: _____

Answer:

Rate your understanding:

I understand   I understand a little   I don't understand
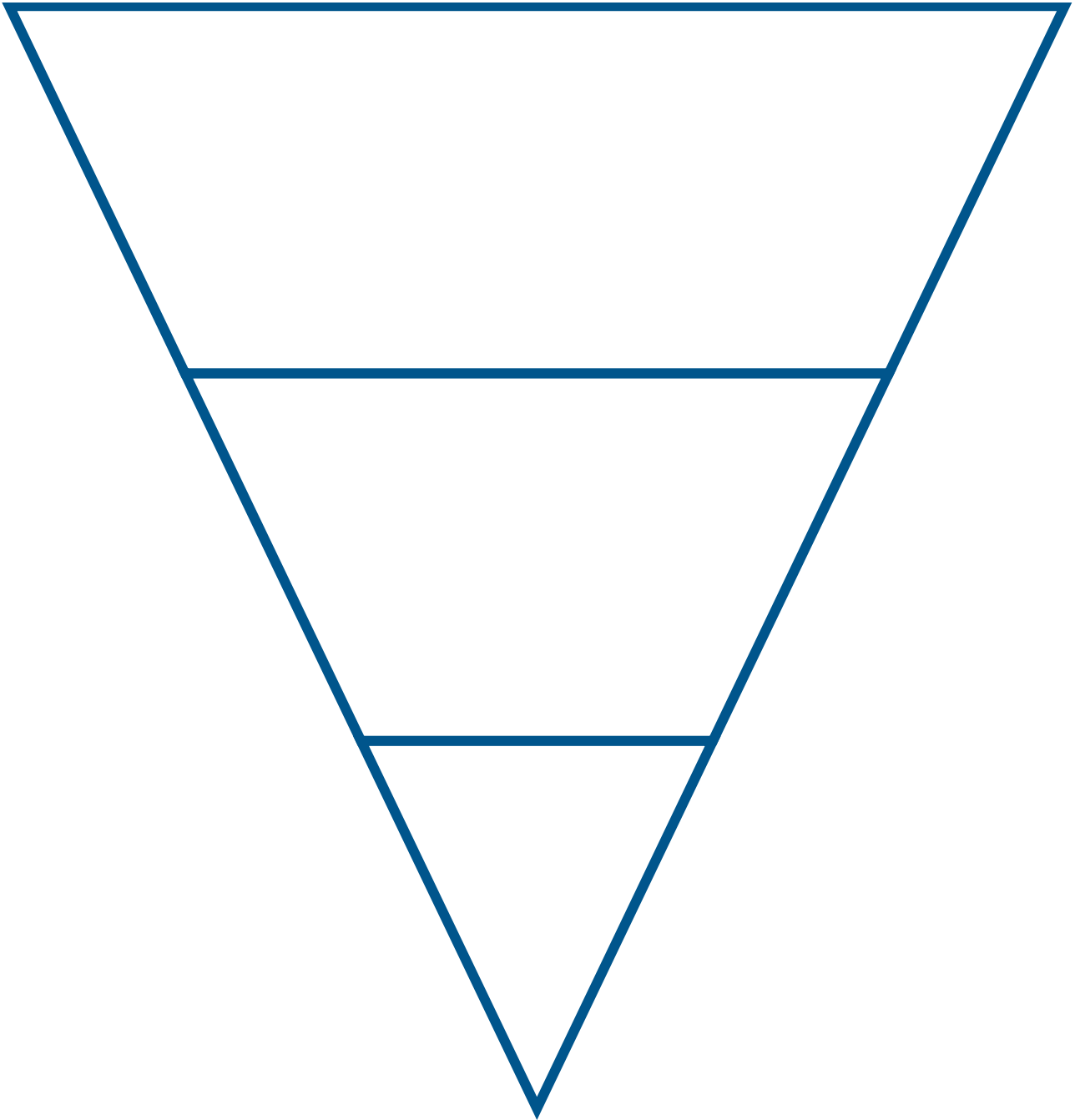
Check one:

___ I met my learning goal.

___ I am progressing toward my learning goal.

___ I did not meet my learning goal.

D.1.b. Inverted Pyramid

Students are asked to write down what they know in an inverted pyramid with

1) the most important information at the top;
2) the secondary information next; and,
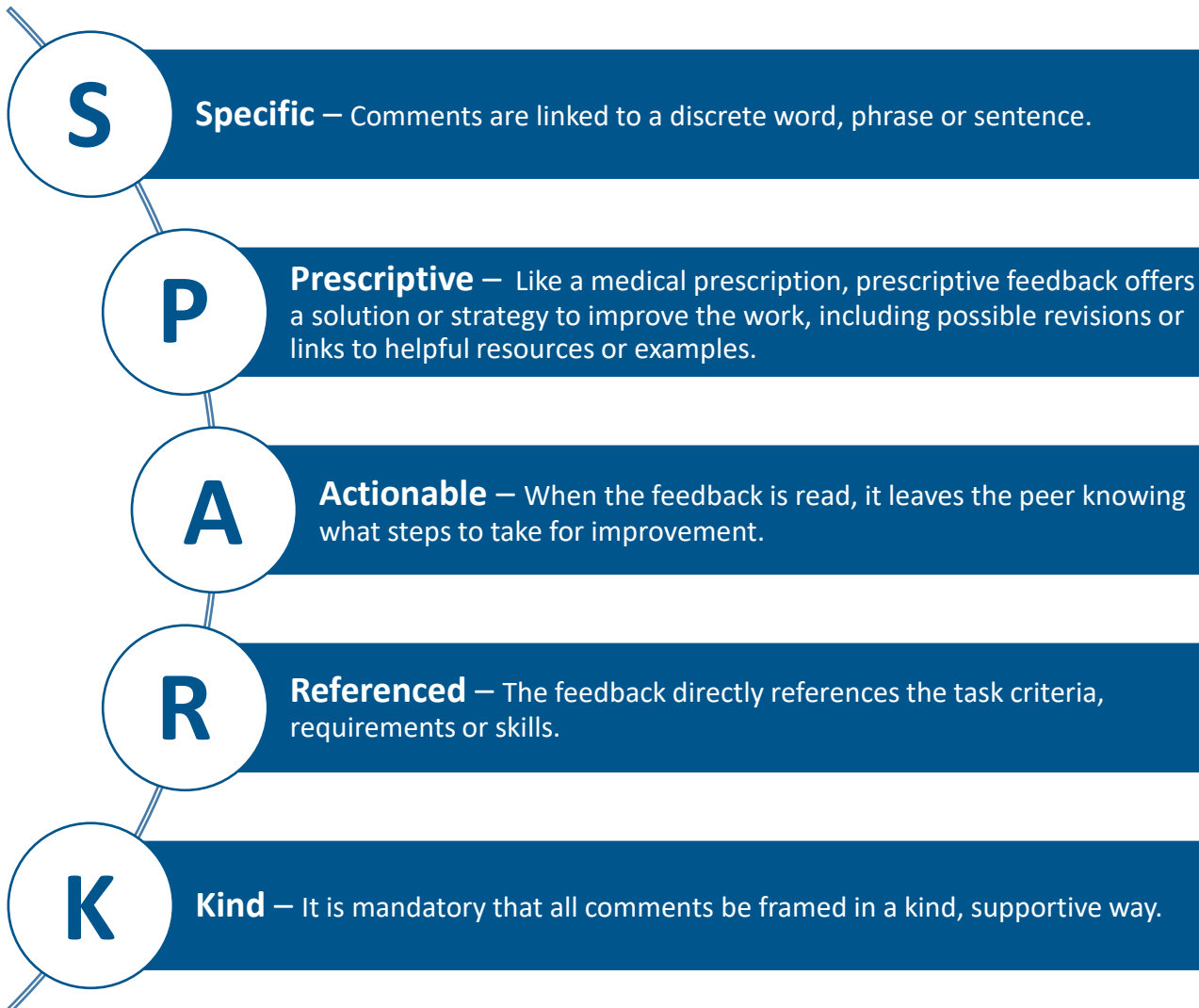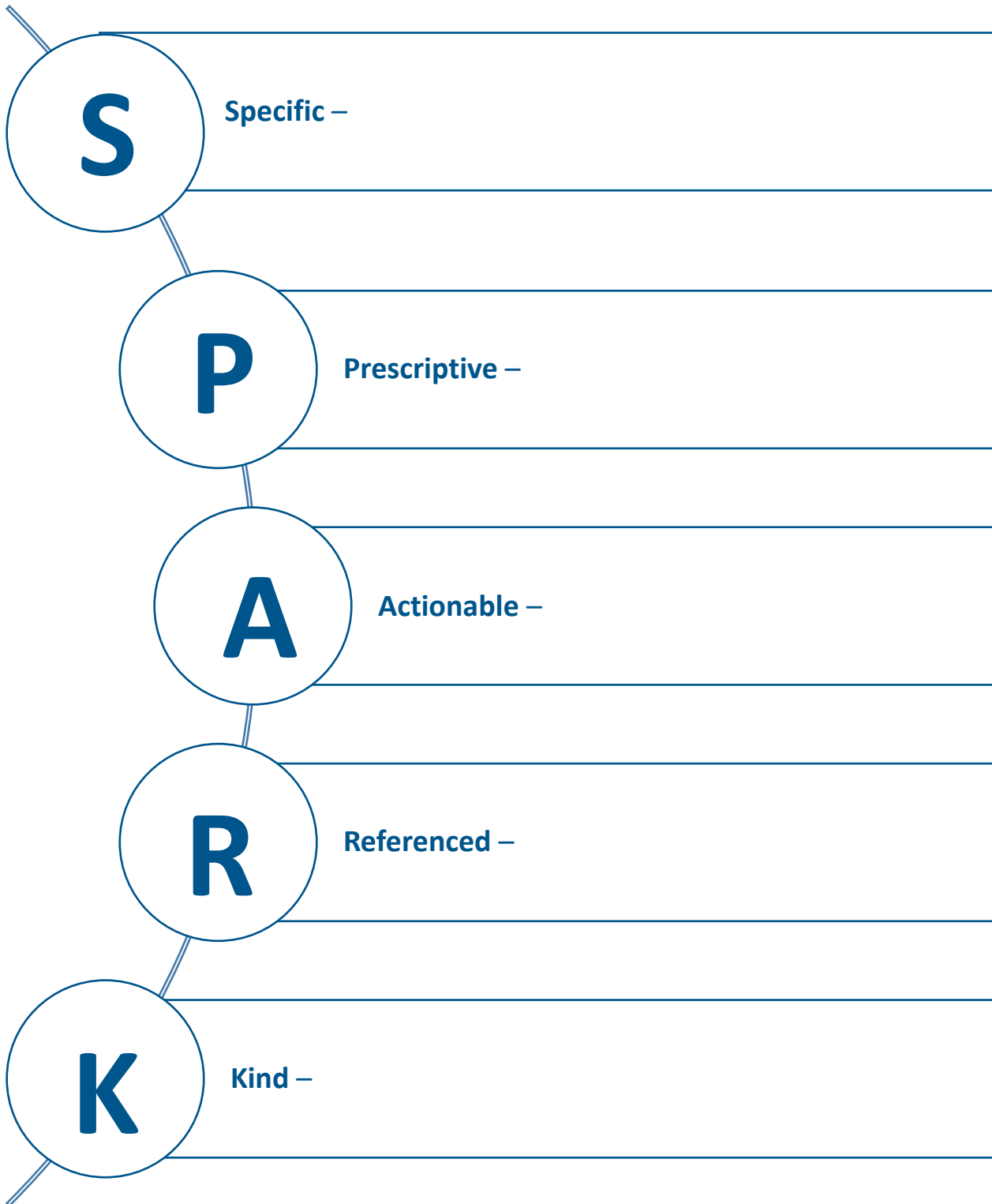3) and the least important information at the bottom.

D.2. Effective Feedback

D.2.a. Organizing Peer Feedback in the Classroom with SPARK

Quality feedback is of crucial importance when engaging students in formative assessment. Teaching students how to provide feedback related to the success criteria can be useful for both the giver and the receiver students. Quality feedback can be accomplished with the help of the acronym SPARK using the following steps:

- Set a guideline for a minimum and maximum number of quality comments.
- Practice giving SPARK feedback on <u>sample</u> student work. Explain your thought process as students help pinpoint what about a work is effective or ineffective, as well as how to offer quality SPARK-based comments.
- To also give students the chance to practice giving feedback independently, distribute the same example work. Use class discussion to share the variety of feedback offered.
- In the end, good peer feedback should provide students with meaningful information for improvement.

S — **Specific** — Comments are linked to a discrete word, phrase or sentence.

P — **Prescriptive** — Like a medical prescription, prescriptive feedback offers a solution or strategy to improve the work, including possible revisions or links to helpful resources or examples.

A — **Actionable** — When the feedback is read, it leaves the peer knowing what steps to take for improvement.

R — **Referenced** — The feedback directly references the task criteria, requirements or skills.

K — **Kind** — It is mandatory that all comments be framed in a kind, supportive way.

S Specific –

P Prescriptive –

A Actionable –

R Referenced –

K Kind –

Adapted from Gardner (2019) *Teaching Students to Give Peer Feedback* https://www.edutopia.org/article/teaching-students-give-peer-feedback

E. *Where to next?*

E.1. Establishing a Growth Mindset Classroom

A person's mindset sets the stage on how an individual establishes and achieves learning goals. A fixed mindset believes intelligence is static and may lead individuals to give up easily, avoid challenges and ignore useful feedback. Individuals with fixed mindsets may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential. However, a growth mindset believes that intelligence can be developed and may lead individuals to embrace challenges, be persistent and resilient as well as learn and improve through feedback. As a result, individuals with a growth mindset will reach ever higher levels of learning and achievement.

To realize the full implementation of the four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?*) within your classroom, it is important to consider establishing a growth mindset with each student. Further, having students' families aware of and engaged in growth mindset activities can enhance your students' overall learning journey, nurture family relationships and promote lifelong learning.

For more information on Growth Mindset, see:

- [Growth Mindset Feedback Tool and Framing Tool](#)
- [Growth Mindset goal-setting lesson plans and templates](#)
- [Growth Mindset Family Newsletter](#)
- *25 Ways to Develop a Growth Mindset* (see next page).

	25 Ways to Develop a Growth Mindset	
	Encourage students to…	**Rationale**
1	Acknowledge and embrace imperfections.	Hiding from your weaknesses means you'll never overcome them.
2	View challenges as opportunities.	Having a growth mindset means relishing opportunities for self-improvement. Learn more about how to fail well.
3	Try different learning tactics.	There's no one-size-fits-all model for learning. What works for one person may not work for you. Learn about learning strategies.
4	Learn about brain plasticity.	The brain isn't fixed; the mind shouldn't be either.
5	Replace "failing" with "learning."	When you fall short of a goal, you haven't failed; you've learned.
6	Stop seeking approval.	When you prioritise approval over learning, you sacrifice your own potential for growth.
7	Value the process over the end result.	Intelligent people enjoy the learning process, and don't mind when it continues beyond an expected time frame.
8	Cultivate a sense of purpose.	Students with a growth mindset had a greater sense of purpose. Keep the big picture in mind.
9	Celebrate growth with others.	If you truly appreciate growth, you'll want to share your progress.
10	Emphasize growth over speed.	Learning fast isn't the same as learning well, and learning well sometimes requires allowing time for mistakes.
11	Reward actions, not traits.	Tell students when they're doing something smart, not just being smart.
12	Redefine "genius."	The myth's been busted: genius requires hard work, not talent alone.
13	Portray criticism as positive.	You don't have to use the term, "constructive criticism," but you do have to believe in the concept.
14	Disassociate improvement from failure.	"Room for improvement" does not translate into failure.
15	Provide regular opportunities for reflection.	Let students reflect on their learning at least once a day.
16	Place effort before talent.	Hard work should always be rewarded before inherent skill.
17	Highlight the relationship between learning and "brain training."	The brain is like a muscle that needs to be worked out, just like the body.
18	**Cultivate grit**.	Students with that extra bit of determination will develop more self-confidence.
19	Have a vision or an image but realize that there is work that comes with it.	You won't achieve the goal if you're not ready for the work.
20	Use the word "yet."	Whenever you see students struggling with a task, just tell them they haven't mastered it *yet*.
21	Learn from other people's mistakes.	It's not always wise to compare yourself to others, but it is important to realize that humans share the same weaknesses.
22	Make a new goal for every goal accomplished.	You'll never be done learning. Just because your midterm exam is over doesn't mean you should stop being interested in a subject. Growth-minded people know how to constantly create new goals to keep themselves engaged and stimulated.
23	Take risks in the company of others.	Stop trying to save face all the time and just let yourself goof up now and then. It will make it easier to take risks in the future.
24	Think realistically about time and effort.	It takes time to learn. Don't expect to master every topic under the sun in one sitting.
25	Take ownership over your attitude.	Once you develop a growth mindset, own it. Acknowledge yourself as someone who possesses a growth mentality and be proud to let it guide you throughout your educational career.

Adapted from Briggs (2015).

STUDENT GROWTH MINDSET INVENTORY

A. Circle the number for each question which best describes you.
B. Total and record your score when you have completed each of the 10 questions.
C. Using the SCORE chart, record your mindset.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.	0	1	2	3
2. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.	3	2	1	0
3. Only a few people will be truly good at sports; you must be born with the ability.	0	1	2	3
4. The harder you work at something, the better you will be.	3	2	1	0
5. I often get angry when I get feedback about my performance.	0	1	2	3
6. I appreciate when people (e.g., parents, coaches or teachers) give me feedback about my performance.	3	2	1	0
7. Truly smart people do not need to try hard.	0	1	2	3
8. You can always change how intelligent you are.	3	2	1	0
9. You are a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that.	0	1	2	3
10. An important reason why I do my schoolwork is that I enjoy learning new things.	3	2	1	0

| SCORE CHART 22-30 = Strong growth mindset 17-21 = Growth with some fixed ideas 11-16 = Fixed with some growth ideas 0-10 = Strong fixed mindset | MY SCORE | |
| | MY MINDSET | |

Adapted from Dweck (2006).

E.2. Smart Goal Worksheet

Student SMART Goal Worksheet		
Today's Date:		**Target Date:**
Start Date:		**Date Achieved:**
What is my goal?		
Verify that my goal is SMART.		
S	**Specific:** *What exactly will I accomplish?*	
M	**Measurable:** *How will I know when I have reached this goal?*	
A	**Achievable:** *Is achieving this goal realistic with effort and commitment? Do I have the resources to achieve this goal? If not, how will I get them?*	
R	**Relevant:** *Why is this goal significant to my life?*	
T	**Timely:** *When will I achieve this goal?*	
This goal is important to me because:		
The benefits of achieving this goal will be:		

Take Action!	
Potential Obstacles	**Potential Solutions**
Who are the people I will ask to help me?	
Specific Action Steps:	

What?	Expected Completion Date	Date Completed

Adapted from OfficeArrow.com (2008)

MODULE 2: SUPPORTING RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION AND INSPIRING LEARNING

Module 2: Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning **focuses on how to use assessment results to collaboratively respond to individual student and classroom needs using valid, reliable and fair assessment practices**

SECTION 1: EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

How do you support your students in learning? Do you incorporate responsive instruction in your pedagogy? Do you use assessment results to inform your changes in instructional approaches to address individual and class community learning needs? How do you ensure your assessment tasks are valid, reliable and fair?

Module 2: Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning delves into the following:

- a balanced assessment approach;
- validity and reliability;
- fair assessment practices;
- adapting assessment practices; and,
- supporting well-being during the assessment process.

A BALANCED ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Nurturing learning through a balanced assessment approach

Within the Saskatchewan *Supporting Student Assessment* model (see page 9), the guiding principle, "Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning," encourages the use of a planned balanced assessment approach for teachers and students. As part of a larger balanced approach for an educational system, a strategically balanced assessment approach for individual students and the class community incorporates formative and summative assessments that provide meaningful and interpretable information for the student, teacher and parents/caregivers. The four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?*) of the *Supporting Student Assessment* model provide a stabilizing framework towards a balanced assessment approach.

By providing greater insight with respect to where students are *(Where am I now?)* and where they need to be *(Where am I going?)*, a balanced assessment approach offers students multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning over time and identify their individual student and class community learning needs. The essential question *How am I doing?* engages the learner in using assessment results and feedback to empower and inspire them to further their learning *(Where to next?)*.

When quality assessment practices provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to demonstrate learning and result in valid, reliable and fair data, this can contribute to cultural inclusivity and harmony among the four dimensions that support student assessment (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual). Teachers and students can collaborate on selecting approriate adaptations (environment, instruction, assessment, resources) within the multiple and varied opportunities (conversations, obervations and products) used in their gathering of evidence of learning.

Effective assessment for individual students and the class community connects assessment to learning. A balanced assessment approach can accomplish this by having formative and summative assessments interact with each other to support growth. Formative assessment provides information to teachers about student understanding and allows them to adjust their teaching in order to have a postive impact on learning. Understanding when to attend to each source of information is important. Formative assessment results also support teachers as they adjust instruction to meet their students' immediate learning needs. Further, formative assessment can inspire students to take ownership of their own learning and can inform parents/caregivers of their child's learning progress. Summative assessment interacts with formative assessment by confirming that learning has taken place and that learning goals have been achieved. For example, summative assessments can use the same reporting scales and the same questions as the formative assessments, making it easier to compare analyses. Timely summative results can provide opportunities for teachers to share individual and class community results with future teachers to use as part of their planning process, as well as to reflect on their own professional growth regarding assessment practices.

Balanced Assessment Approach in the Classroom
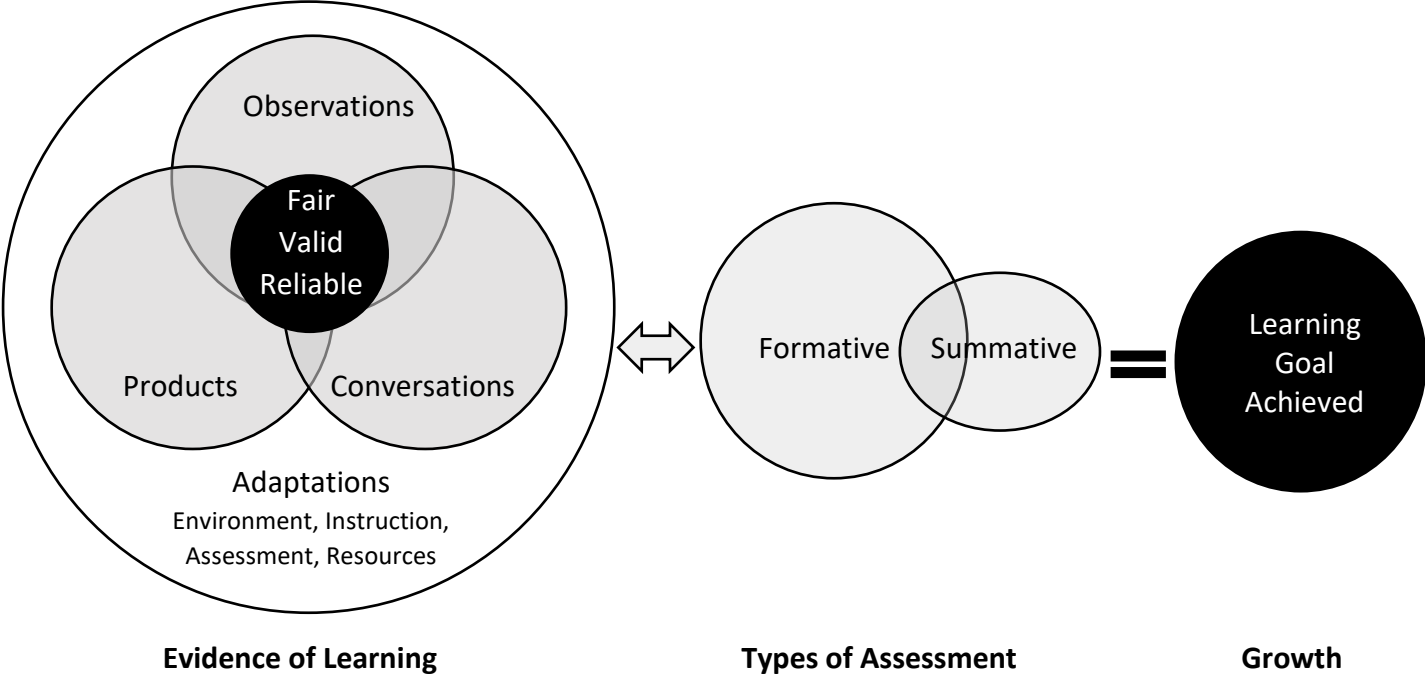
For more information, see
"Section 2: Making Connections."

ASSESSMENT INFORMS RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION

As highlighted in the guiding principle "Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning," responsive instruction demonstrates a belief in the value, the learning potential and the unique individual needs of all students. This way of thinking utilizes assessment results to support teachers and students in determining student strengths and areas of needs, and guides them toward possible next steps in the learning process. In addition, it is important that teachers are open to providing multiple and varied opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning so that they have a deeper understanding of how to respond and where to make adaptations (environment, instruction, assessment, resources) to improve student learning.

> *"Responsive teaching is a way of thinking and being with children that involves making evidence-based decisions within the learning program that meet the needs of the children while valuing relationships. Responsive teaching uses assessment data to provide learning opportunities that are challenging, engaging, strengths-based, culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate."*
>
> *(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017b)*

Responsive instruction requires the collection and use of evidence of learning or data. All information gleaned through data collection, whether formal or informal, quantitative or qualitative, is used in an efficient and effective manner to support children's learning success. It is a continuous cycle of ongoing observation and assessment, collaboration and intentional planning that ultimately leads to strategic implementation and thoughtful instruction. As a result, adaptations and responsive teaching demonstrate reflective practice. Educators monitor the supports to look for successes as well as to address ineffective responses that require further adjustment of goals or success criteria, adaptations or discontinuation.

Adapted from Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2017b)

Responsive instruction requires the ongoing collection of evidence from individual, small group and class community learning activities to ensure that adaptations are effective or to identify which adaptations need to be revised. Over time, a teacher gains experience and ideas in providing effective responsive instruction through exploring new opportunities and resources for learning, exchanging with colleagues while developing their own assessment toolkit.

A balanced assessment approach encourages teachers to engage in responsive instruction. To do this effectivefly, the process of gathering evidence of learning as well as the student results themselves are to be valid, reliable and fair. Designing student assessments that collect valid and reliable evidence is an important initial step in ensuring fair assessment in the classroom. Attention to the process of documenting quality evidence of learning while applying assessment tools and effective assessment practices can be challenging for both students and teachers, but if completed well can provide valuable information for stakeholders.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The terms validity and reliability are often mistakenly used synonymously. Although they are related because validity can have an impact on reliability, they are different. Strong validity supports improved reliability, however, consistent reliability does not ensure valid assessments. Even if strong reliability may be present, this may not support validity. This section aims to clarify the differences between these two concepts.

What is validity?

Validity in student assessment is focused on understanding what is to be measured in relation to the curriculum, and how it can be measured accurately. When reflecting on the validity of student assessments used, teachers can ask themselves the following questions: *How well does the assessment measure what we are trying to measure according to curricular expectations? Does the interpretation of the results lead to appropriate conclusions and consequences?* Strong validity within an assessment provides the opportunity for conclusions on how to respond to the needs of their students more effectively to improve learning. When an assessment lacks validity, assessment results can be misinterpreted and can lead to unintended responses.

Validity is the key consideration when planning for assessment. It is imperative that assessment tools align with curricular outcomes to ensure the validity of the assessment tasks. When assessments are valid, they accurately measure what students know, understand, and can do in relation to the curricular outcomes.

> Validity is *"the degree to which an assessment or evaluation actually measures what it claims to measure and the extent to which inferences, conclusions, and decisions made on the basis of the results are appropriate and meaningful."*
>
> *(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a)*

What is reliability?

Reliability in assessment is focused on consistent interpretation by different teachers regarding a student's demonstration of learning, at different times, using multiple and varied methods. When reflecting on the reliability of their assessments, teachers can ask themselves the following questions: *How confident am I that this assessment process provides enough consistent and stable information to allow me to make statements about a student's learning with certainty? Would I or another teacher arrive at the same conclusion if we assessed at a different time using the same assessment methods?*

If teachers are uncertain about whether they have been consistent in assessing or knowing how to respond to the needs of their students, there is probably not yet enough information to make a reliable conclusion about student learning. The following considerations can support teachers in improving their reliability on student assessment:

- **Am I consistent within my own assessment practices?**
- **Am I consistent in my assessment practices within my school and division?**
- **Am I consistent in my assessment practices within Saskatchewan?**

Reliability is "the degree to which an assessment or evaluation is consistent and stable in measuring what it is intended to measure. An assessment or evaluation is considered reliable when the same results occur regardless of when or where the assessment or evaluation occurs or who does the scoring."

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a)

Essentially, these two important terms address the following questions:

- **Validity**: *Does my assessment align with curricular outcomes and success criteria?*
- **Reliability**: *Am I consistent with my own and other teachers' assessment practices?*

Together, validity and reliability support teachers and students in addressing the four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing?* and *Where to next?*). Further, when validity and reliability are strongly established, they can provide a solid foundation towards fair assessment.

FAIR ASSESSMENT

Fairness is critical when assessing student work. Fairness does not mean treating everyone the same: "What is fair won't always be equal" (Wormelli, 2018). Consideration of bias, cultural safety and responsiveness, and the Adaptive Dimension are all part of an educator's toolkit when it comes to fair assessment practices.

Fair is not always equal. In a class community that integrates fairness and differentiation, students are provided the type and amount of support needed to achieve curricular outcomes. Essentially, the difference between equality and equity is that in an "equal" system, all students are given the same resources, but in an "equitable" system, resources are provided to students based on their individual needs (McGraw Hill, 2018). Further, strong consideration of both validity and reliability improves fairness and supports the teacher in responding to their students' individual and class community needs.
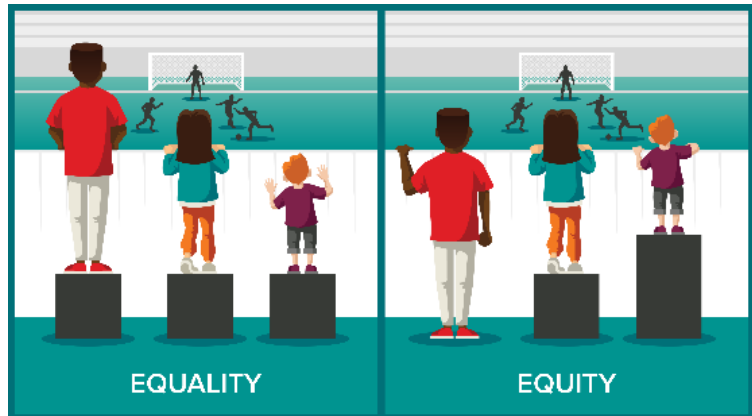
(McGraw Hill, 2018)

For levels of achievement to accurately reflect student attainment of curricular outcomes, students and teachers can strive to remove any barriers inhibiting learning, as well as consider individual and class community learning needs, experiences and worldviews.

The following three considerations of fair assessment can support students and teachers when reflecting upon a balanced and fair assessment approach:

- identifying potential bias in assessment;
- incorporating culturally inclusive and affirming assessment tasks; and,
- adapting assessment practices.

The next section, "Adapting Assessment Practices" discusses how teachers can consider differentiation in their assessment practices, which promotes fairness in assessment.

Differentiated instruction is doing what's fair for students."

(Wormeli, 2006)

For more information on fair assessment, see *Module 3: Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment* Practices.

For more information, see "Section 2: Making Connections."

ADAPTING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Teachers have the responsibility to adapt practices, or differentiate, to meet the needs of all students. *The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students* (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a) states that there are four variables of the Adaptive Dimension: learning environment, instruction, assessment and resources. Aligning with the guiding principle of supporting responsive instruction to inspire learning, assessments can be adjusted to meet individual needs. Adapting assessment practices can also include offering students multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to an outcome. Assessments should connect to, and not compromise the integrity of, the intent of the outcome and its set of indicators. Outcomes are not to be adapted.

> *"Differentiated instruction is a collection of best practices, strategically employed to maximize students' learning including giving them the tools to handle undifferentiated experiences. If we accept this premise then every aspect of our work including our grading and assessment practices should be developmentally appropriate, fair to all students and should advance their understanding."*
>
> *(Wormeli, 2018)*

The Adaptive Dimension advocates for:

- fair and equitable assessments, giving all students opportunities to make connections and demonstrate the extent of their knowledge, skills and abilities in a variety of ways;
- the connection to and maintaining the integrity of the intent of the outcome and its set of indicators;
- changes to the format (oral/written), the length of time allowed, or the place of assessment (private space/classroom), when necessary;
- the inclusion of a variety of evidence, active participation and student self-assessment; and,
- opportunities for students to be successful by adapting assessments to match student strengths and needs.

Effective assessment in diverse learning spaces includes systematic gathering and documenting of a variety of evidence (products, conversations and observations). In addition, this process encourages active student participation through peer assessment and self-assessment. By focusing on and considering a variety of adaptations to align with student and class community strengths and needs, students can demonstrate their learning in a successful manner.

> *"If the mission of schools is proficiency for all students, then differentiation is not merely desirable, it is imperative."*
>
> *(Cooper, 2011)*

The table below provides some examples of adaptations in the assessment process.

<table>
<tr><td>**Examples of adaptations in assessment practices**</td></tr>
<tr><td>

- Vary options for demonstrating learning (oral, written, visual, dramatic, multimedia).
- Change the location of the assessment (e.g., private or land-based space rather than the classroom).
- Adjust the length of time allowed to complete the assessment.
- Agree upon specific dates for completion of individual parts of an assignment.
- Consider using a reader and/or a scribe.
- Communicate details about assignments and examinations to parents/caregivers in electronic or print format.
- Document evidence and use a variety of ongoing assessments to monitor students' progress.
- Discuss options regarding topics, tasks, resources and learning groups.
- Collaborate in assessing growth by using portfolios, celebrations of learning and/or electronically documented learning.
- Involve families in developing plans for supporting student achievement.

(Adapted from *The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students*, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a)

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"Adaptations are intended to meet students' needs by enriching, extending, reinforcing or teaching differentially. Students are provided with adaptations in order to give them opportunities to achieve curricular outcomes. When adapting an assessment, curriculum outcomes are not changed."

(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a)

It is important to note the difference between modification and adaptation. When the Adaptive Dimension is at work, the curriculum outcomes are not altered or omitted. Conversely, when a school division team, in consultation with parents/caregivers and students, changes the outcomes of a curriculum, the student has moved beyond classroom adaptations into a qualitatively different program (e.g., eIIP, level 11, 21 and 31 credit courses). When a student's program is modified, adaptations can still be made to instruction, materials, environment and/or assessment in order for students to achieve the modified outcomes. In short, the Adaptive Dimension can be used for all students whereas modifications refer only to qualitatively different programs for some students.

"Students who require additional supports have their needs met at the

classroom or school level through targeted/group approaches or individualized plans developed by the collaborative school team (see Inclusion and Intervention Plan Guidelines). In addition, secondary students who require additional supports are provided with courses and/or programming options based on individual strengths, abilities, interests, needs and goals (see provincial core curriculum, Locally Modified Courses, Locally Developed Courses, Alternative Education Programs and Functional Integrated Programs)."

(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2021)

For more information, see
"Section 2: Making Connections."

SUPPORTING WELL-BEING DURING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment process can cause stress to students, teachers and parents/caregivers. At times, this can affect personal well-being and disrupt the balance between the four dimensions (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional and spiritual) that can support student assessment. (See model, page 9.) Incorporating a collaborative and balanced assessment approach that includes culturally inclusive and affirming assessment and responsive instruction can effectively attend to well-being as well as inspire learning. Further, considering the aspects below can support student, teacher and parent/caregiver well-being during the assessment process: variety and strengths, data and research, technology, as well as calibrating and collaboration.

Variety and strengths

Providing students a variety of options to demonstrate their learning empowers them to become aware of and build on their strengths to broaden their learning. Gathering and documenting a variety of evidence of learning allows more opportunity for responsive instruction that can promote well-being. In addition, leveraging prior knowledge, culture and areas of strength supports and motivates students to be active, confidant and inspired learners. When students feel safe and secure in their learning and assessment journey, the well-being of students is attended to.

> *"As students become more involved in the assessment process, teachers find themselves working differently … Many teachers are spending less time marking at the end of learning and more time helping students during the learning."*
>
> *(Davies, 2007)*

Data and research

John Hattie's work on effect sizes considers assessment and the well-being of participants. Hattie's (2017) research, *Visible Learning*, synthesizes thousands of meta-analyses regarding influences on student achievement and helps students and teachers understand which variables can have the greatest effect on learning. The average variable effect size is 0.4 and any effect size above that value is deemed to have a significant positive effect on student learning. For example, setting standards and success criteria (0.75), setting appropriately challenging goals (0.59), using quality feedback (0.66) and student evaluating and reflecting on their progress (0.75) in the assessment process can contribute positively to student growth and well-being in the learning and assessment process.

Technology

Many educators are seeing digital technology as an effective and engaging tool for students to demonstrate their learning as well as to support them in documenting evidence of learning. However, overusing information technology can lead to potential physical and psychological health risks, creating an imbalance within the four dimensions that support student assessment. Physical health risks can include carpal-tunnel syndrome, eyestrain, and poor posture. Psychological health risks might include internet addiction, negative mental health effects, decreased perception of self-concept and satisfaction in life (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015c). A balanced assessment approach that includes a sensible number of demonstrations of learning using information technology can support digital health and wellness as well as individual and class community growth.

Calibrating and collaboration

Calibrating and collaboration can support students and teachers in their well-being during the assessment and evaluation process. Initially, teachers can engage students in actively developing a clear understanding of expected performance by reviewing examples of work anchored to the various levels of the success criteria. These techniques help students understand and calibrate the various performance levels and improve their own demonstration of learning. Therefore, this supportive process provides clarity while building knowledge and confidence regarding the four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing?* and *Where to next*?) which may help reduce student stress and support their well-being.

Upon providing diverse exemplars, students and teachers can use their initial demonstrations of learning with peer and self-assessment to collaboratively calibrate their draft products related to the success criteria. Further clarifying expectations and having the freedom to collaboratively make edits to their success criteria can empower students to take ownership of their learning and enrich their understanding of the assessment process, thereby reducing stress and supporting their well-being.

> *"Exemplars are as critical as rubrics. In order to help students become clear about what the criteria mean, teachers should use samples of students' work anchored to the levels."*
>
> *(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011)*

Moreover, students who can see themselves in the success criteria through the calibration process can affirm their cultural identity, strengthening their own well-being. Similarly, as calibrating can provide opportunities for enhancing one's own cultural affirmation, a collaborative learning and assessment process can promote cultural inclusion and affirmation within the class community and beyond.

Teachers can further refine their understanding and clarification of success criteria related to students' demonstration of learning by engaging in a professional learning community. Working together in assessing each other's student work can improve validity and reliability among teachers. Such sharing in a professional community also builds confidence in teachers' assessment practices, expands their assessment literacy and, in turn, can support their well-being. This collaboration using calibrating techniques can have an immediate or long-term impact on the teachers and the students. Improvement of teacher assessment practices can improve student learning and achievement, potentially having a positive impact on the well-being for all.

> *"Used with skill, assessment can motivate the reluctant, revive the discouraged, and thereby increase, not simply measure, achievement."*
>
> *(Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis & Arter, 2011)*

For more information on considering culture in supporting well-being during the assessment process, see *Module 3: Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment* Practices.

For more information, see "Section 2: Making Connections."

Summary

Module 2: Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning focuses on using a planned and balanced assessment approach by students and teachers to enhance the learning and assessment journey. Gathering valid and reliable evidence of learning together through fair assessment practices supports responsive instruction by leveraging strengths and addressing individual and class community learning needs. Further, applying the Adaptive Dimension and supporting well-being during the assessment process can further inspire students to achieve curricular outcomes and contribute to personal growth and lifelong learning.

SECTION 2: MAKING CONNECTIONS

The intention of the "Making Connections" section is to provide practical ideas and reflection opportunities for teachers and educational leaders. It includes personal stories that connect to the assessment content presented within the second guiding principle, "Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning."

"In the Classroom" provides story-like examples of what the guiding principle could look like **in the classroom or learning space** and shows how teachers might transform theory into action.

Storytelling is valued by diverse Canadian cultures as a powerful reflection and learning tool. For example, learning through stories is a core tenet of Indigenous approaches to education. To honour diverse perspectives and ways of knowing, "In the Classroom" uses a storytelling approach to:

- examine ways teachers can connect (intellectually/mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually) with the story, the characters and their experiences;
- encourage teachers to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and assessment practices; and,
- support teachers in the development of their future assessment strategies and actions.

"Making Connections" also provides teachers with the opportunity to **reflect on individual classroom assessment practices** related to the guiding principle through a series of questions. These questions prompt the reader to make connections with their assessment mindset, validate their assessment practices and calibrate the fairness of their assessments.

Finally, this section includes **additional resources** (practical ideas and materials that align with Section 1 of the module) for teachers and students to use in their various learning spaces.

1. IN THE CLASSROOM

Fairness, Validity and Bias

Cecilia is a French Immersion Physical Education teacher who assigned a project related to outcome 8.12 (8.13 in the Physical Education curricula for the English program). There is an array of student personalities in the class, and Cecilia tends to gravitate to the calm and composed students.

One day, Marcel, a fairly quiet student, debates with Danie, another student, about various approaches a player can undertake when disagreeing with a call by an official. As Cecilia assesses the debate, she is swayed more by Marcel's personality than by the persuasive debating techniques and the quality arguments of Danie. This results in Marcel obtaining a better mark than Danie. Cecilia is not aware of the low reliability of her assessment, nor of her biases towards those two students.

The following day, Marcel approaches Cecilia, grateful for the mark, but inquires how the mark could be improved in relation to the success criteria. When Cecilia looks carefully at the success criteria, she realizes that she may have assessed Marcel incorrectly by identifying techniques and arguments that were in fact not demonstrated. She also realizes that she improperly assessed Danie by not recognizing that in fact many positive elements outlined in the success criteria *had* been demonstrated by Danie, but were overlooked because of Cecilia's bias.

Later, in class, Cecilia declares that the inital assessment of the debate may not have been fair, and suggests that if students would like to discuss how they think they demonstrated their learning more fully, according to the success criteria, she is certainly open to discussing and reassessing their demonstration of learning.

Cecilia learned that although she was consicous of the validity of her assessment, she needs to be more mindful of biases that affect reliability and fairness when assessing the students' demonstration of learning.

Flexibility in the Assessment Process

Keasik teaches Grade 8 students and is in his fourth year of teaching and has noticed that students shine more when they can demonstrate their learning in various ways. As a result, Keasik is working to become more flexible in providing varied opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning, particularly in Science.

First, Keasik and the students co-constructed success criteria related to outcome CS8.3.

Success Criteria Chart Outcome: CS8.3 - Distinguish structural and functional relationships among cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems in humans and how this knowledge is important to various careers.	
Indicators	**Success Criteria**
Pose questions about the composition of the human body.	✓ *Questions are broad and connected to composition of the human body.*
Research various ideas and theories, past and present, used to explain the composition of the human body.	✓ *Both a past and a present theory are identified.* ✓ *Key concepts are identified and discussed.* ✓ *Theories are compared.*
Analyze why cells and tissues are specialized in multi-cellular organisms.	✓ *Analysis is detailed and accurate.*
Describe the function and provide examples of the four major types of tissue found in humans.	✓ *Functions of the 4 major types of human tissue are described clearly, with examples.*
Construct a representation of the relationships among cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems in humans using examples from the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, excretory, and nervous systems.	✓ *Representation is easily understood.* ✓ *Relationships are identified.* ✓ *Relationships are explained in detail.*
Relate the needs and functions of various cells and organs to the needs and functions of the human organism as a whole.	✓ *Needs and functions are identified.* ✓ *Relationships between cells, organs and the human organism are explained.*
Summarize the main points of modern cell theory and identify the contributions of men and women, past and present, to the development of the theory.	✓ *The main points of the modern cell theory are clearly summarized.* ✓ *Individual contributions of cell theory are identified.*

Adapted from *Science 8,* Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 31

A success criteria chart could also be developed using a circular chart, with the outcome at the center and indicators and success criteria in concentric circles.
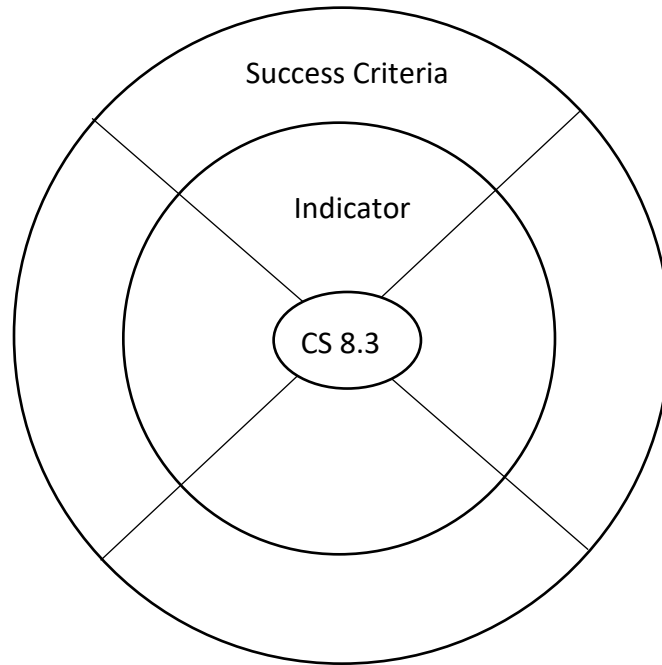
Then, Keasik opened up a class discussion on how students might want to demonstrate their learning in relation to the success criteria of outcome CS8.3. The students came up with several ways that they might demonstrate their learning, such as:

- a written document (narrative or informational);
- an oral presentation (e.g., using PowerPoint or a visual aid such as a poster or a model); and,
- a video or a podcast.

As students worked on their products, Keasik scheduled opportunities to formally provide each other feedback on drafts in relation to the success criteria. Upon this peer assessment process, Keasik and the class noticed that they had to revise the success criteria a little. However, they found it overall relatively easy and enriching to provide feedback to their peers no matter what medium was used to show their learning. In addition, after taking time to self-assess, some students took further ownership of their learning by changing the way they show their understanding. For example, one student had started to use PowerPoint but then chose to exhibit the learning through an interpretive dance with props, providing an opportunity to for self-expression in a more personal and culturally authentic manner.

The next step in the process was to engage in the final assessment and evaluation of their learning. Keasik was pleasantly surprised to witness that most students' self-assessment aligned with Keasik's summative assessment. Keasik gained confidence as a teacher and planned to engage and empower students further by including student participation and choice in how they want to demonstrate their learning for other subject area outcomes.

2. REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE

A Balanced Assessment Approach

- Do you balance the use of formative and summative assessments in your practice?

- How do you use formative assessment to support your students in their learning?

- In what ways does your summative assessment connect with your formative assessment?

Assessment Informs Responsive Instruction

- Do you incorporate responsive instruction in your pedagogy?

- How do your assessments provide meaningful and interpretable information for you to adjust your instruction and address individual and class community learning needs?

- To what extent do you use assessment and responsive instruction to inspire student growth?

- Keasik engages students in learning by involving them in providing and receiving peer feedback. This can stimulate their self-reflection and lead them to a clearer understanding of the success criteria as well as to a more polished final product. What strategies do you use to engage and inspire students?

Validity and Reliability

- Do you know the difference between validity and reliability?

- How do you ensure that your assessments are valid?

- Cecilia acknowledges the misstep in assessing the students' debate. How would you address a misstep if your reliability was inconsistent?

Fair Assessment

- Are you fair when you assess your students?

- How do you ensure your assessment tasks are valid, reliable and fair?

- In what ways do you use a variety of evidence of learning to meet the principles of validity, reliability, and fairness?

- How do you minimize your personal biases when assessing student work in your class?

Adapting Assessment Practices

- Do you offer students multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to an outcome?

- In what ways do you adapt your assessment practices to support responsive instruction to meet individual student needs?

- How do you adapt the learning environment to provide your students the best opportunity to demonstrate their learning?

- Do you use a variety of assessment strategies that consider the medium, type and category of an assessment?

Supporting Well-Being During the Assessment Process

- Does the assessment process cause you stress and does it affect the well-being of your students?

- How do your responsive instruction and assessment practices promote well-being in your class community?

- How has information technology impacted you and your students regarding your well-being (positive or negative)?
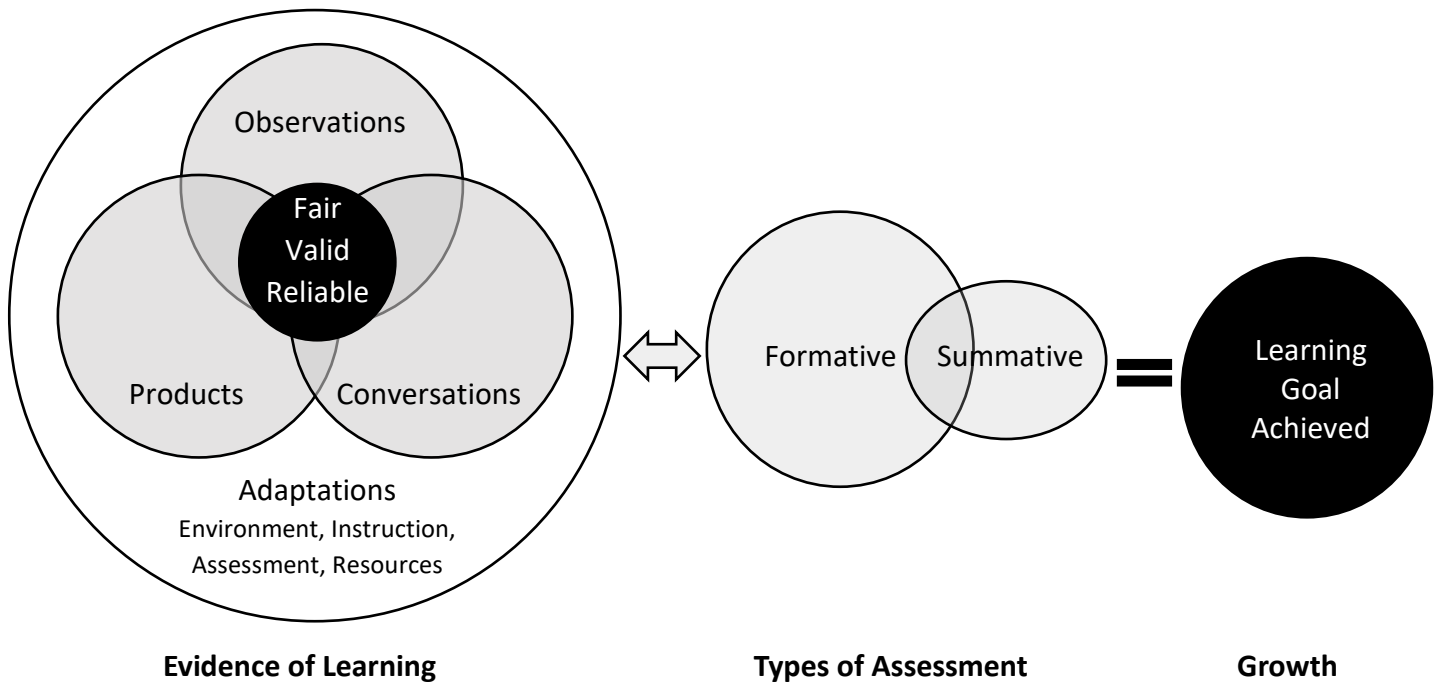
3. MORE RESOURCES

A. A Balanced Assessment Approach

To facilitate planning for balanced assessments and responsive instruction, teachers can use this template as they consider many elements when planning student opportunities to demonstrate learning: evidence of learning, adaptations, medium, type and category of assessment. A balanced assessment approach reflects triangulated evidence (observations, conversations, products) of student learning that meets the principles of validity, reliability, fairness as well as the Adaptive Dimension (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a) and includes the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis.

Balanced Assessment Approach in the Classroom

Observations

Fair
Valid
Reliable

Products   Conversations

Adaptations
Environment, Instruction,
Assessment, Resources

Evidence of Learning

Formative   Summative

Learning
Goal
Achieved

Types of Assessment   **Growth**

Medium of assessment	Type of Assessment	Adaptive Dimension	Triangulated Evidence	Categories (tabs)
• *Auditory (A)*: Data collected through auditory senses. • *Written (W)*: Data presented through writing. • *Active (V)*: Data presented through demonstration, presentation, drama, visual art, movement, etc.	• *Formative*: e.g., 3-2-1, Exit Slips, Four Corners, etc. • *Summative*: e.g., interview, presentation, test, etc.	• *Environment* • *Instruction* • *Assessment* • *Resources*	• *Observation*: Something students can demonstrate • *Conversation*: Something students can say • *Product*: Something students can create	• *Culturally Honouring (H)*: Reflects different ways of knowing • *Low Maintenance (L)*: Requires minimal time and work from the teacher • *Student Engagement (E)*: Centered on engaging a student in learning • *Improving Outcomes (O)*: Centered on achieving improved outcomes • *Informing Instruction (I)*: Centered on guiding the teacher's next instruction

Example of a Balanced Assessment Approach in the Classroom (see graphic on previous page):

Learning Outcome: Wellness 10: W1. Evaluate one's understanding of wellness while participating in various learning opportunities that balance the dimensions of wellness.

Evidence of learning:

Observations: Exit Slip, Onion Ring, Role Play

Products: Poster, Presentation, Journal

Conversations: Jigsaw, Jeopardy, Ball Toss

(Adaptations: Scribe, Additional time, Involve Family)

Types of Assessment:

Formative: Exit Slip, Role Play, Jigsaw, Jeopardy Ball Toss, Onion Ring, Journal, Poster

Summative: Journal, Poster, Presentation

B.1. Three-Two-One (3-2-1)

Students write three key points about what they have learned, two questions they still have, and one picture representing their learning.

3-2-1 REFLECTION

Name: _____   **Date:** _____

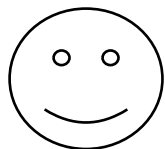Show what you know by filling in this reflection form.
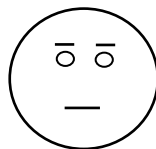
3

Three things I learned:

_____

_____

_____

2

Two questions I still have:

_____

_____

1

One picture representing my learning:
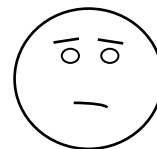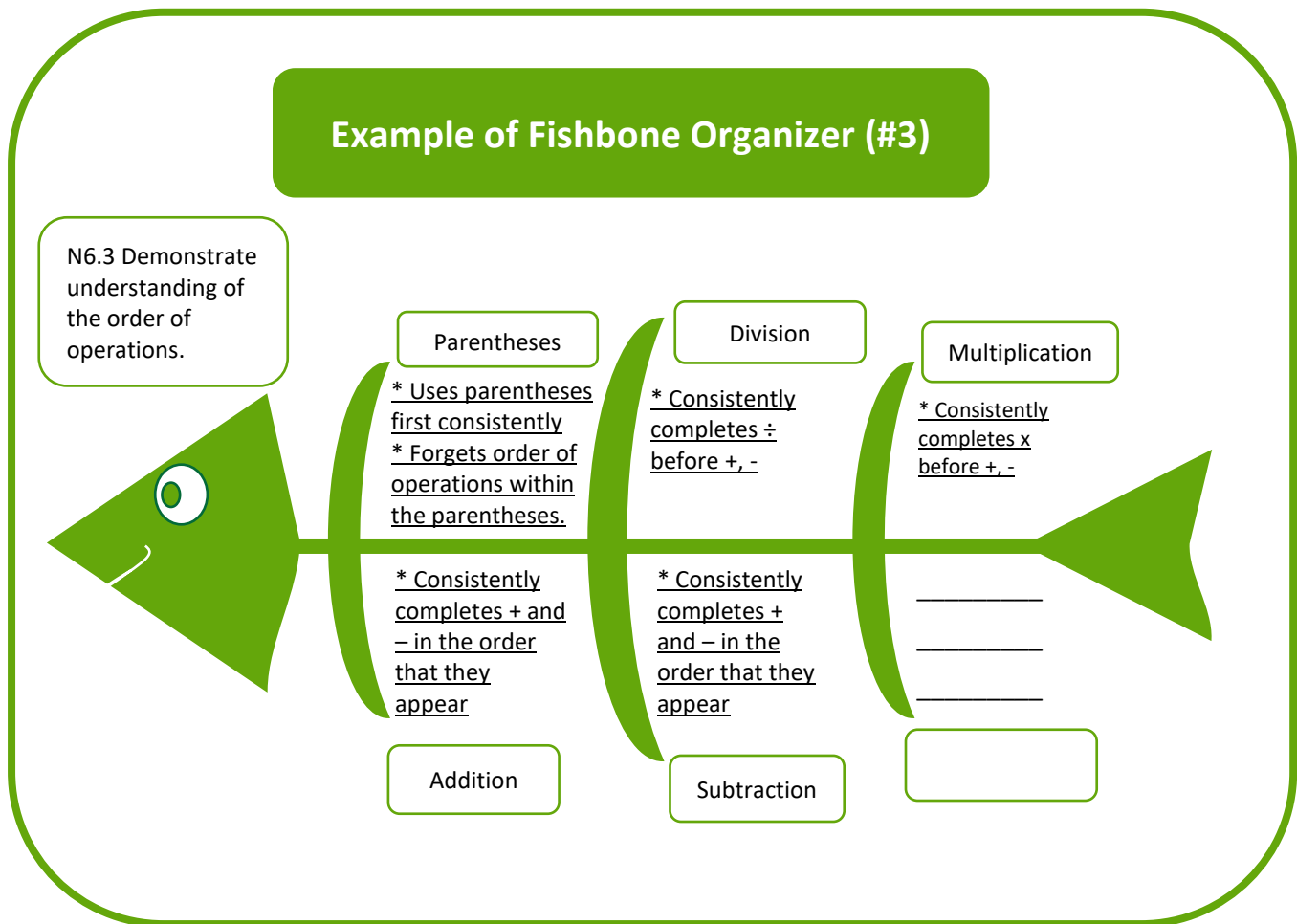
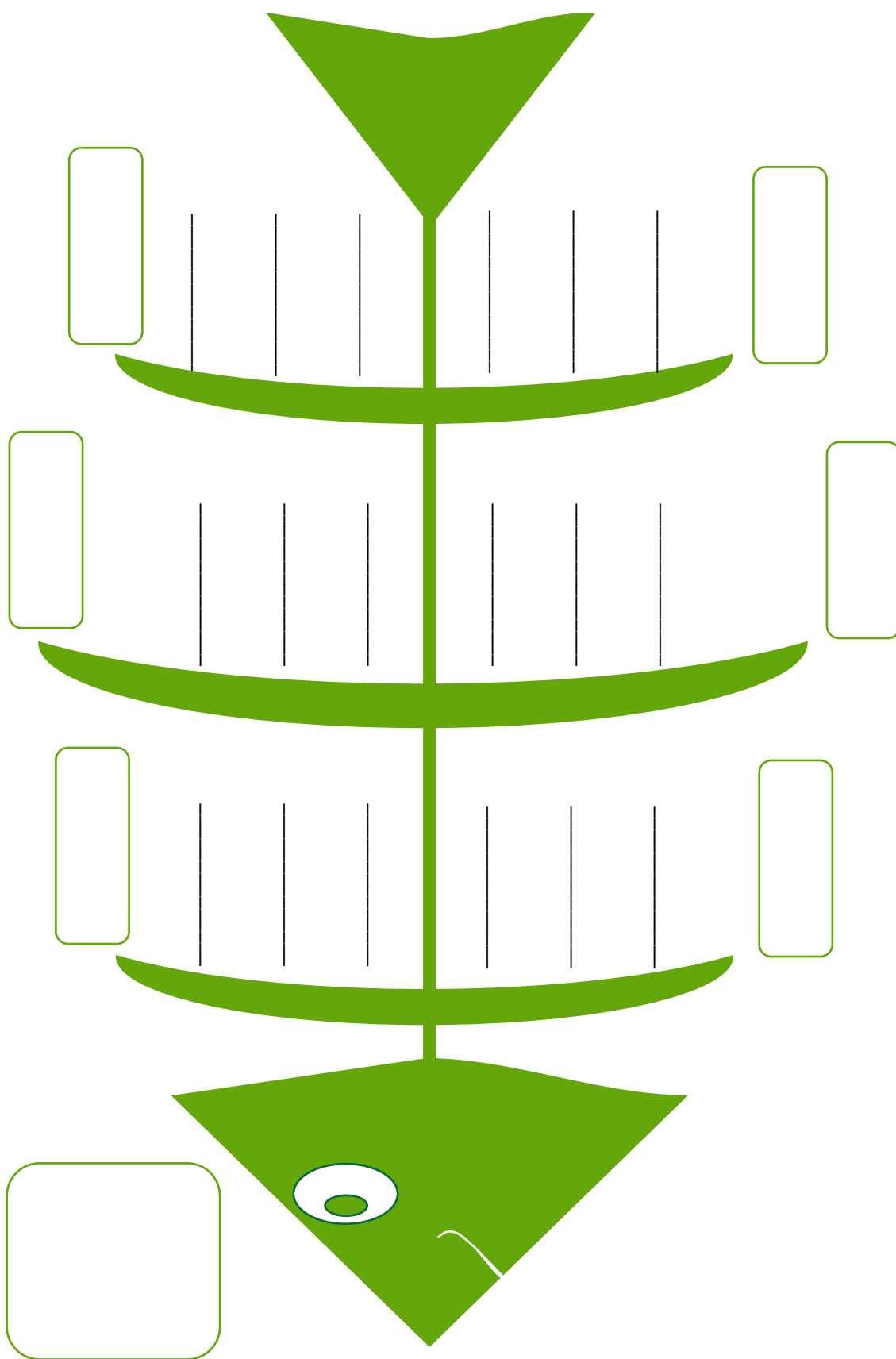I understand.   I understand a little.   I don't understand.

B.2. Fishbone Organizer

The Fishbone Organizer helps students structure and organize information. The head of the Fishbone names the idea/outcome/issue to be examined, with causes or key concepts listed on the backbone and supporting ideas listed on the ribs. This organizer can be used in the following ways:

1) Students can organize their thoughts for an upcoming task (e.g., organize ideas for an expository text) like a concept map;
2) Students can organize their inquiry questions pertaining to an outcome (e.g., analyze the cultures and traditions in communities within your area towards the outcome of Social Studies in 3.2); and,
3) Students and teachers can resolve an issue in *How am I doing?* by identifying the problem and its possible causes and regrouping them into categories (e.g., in Math, review the student's use of the order of operations to determine misunderstandings).

The Fishbone Organizer is a simple yet efficient diagram that supports teachers and students in sharing insights.

Example of Fishbone Organizer (#3)

N6.3 Demonstrate understanding of the order of operations.

Parentheses
* Uses parentheses first consistently
* Forgets order of operations within the parentheses.

Division
* Consistently completes ÷ before +, -

Multiplication
* Consistently completes x before +, -

* Consistently completes + and – in the order that they appear

Addition

* Consistently completes + and – in the order that they appear

Subtraction

_____
_____
_____

B.3. Learning Log

Students log their learning by summarizing their prior knowledge, identifying new vocabulary and important things to remember, representing the concept visually, making connections and stating points that they are not so sure about.

LEARNING LOG

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Topic: _____

What I already knew

New words

Things to remember

My picture of it

This reminds me of …

I'm not so sure about this:

B.4. Feedback Tool: Two Stars and a Wish

When using feedback as an assessment strategy, teachers need to ensure that students fully understand the criteria for assessment, have opportunities for practice in comparing pieces of work to rubrics or criteria, and understand and practice what feedback looks and sounds like. Feedback consists of providing information regarding ways in which the work addresses or does not address the established criteria. When using Two Stars and a Wish, participants can give feedback by identifying two things they think have been done well (stars) in relation to success criteria and offering one suggestion (wish) for improvement.

TWO STARS AND A WISH

Name: _____ Date: _____

Feedback Participant: _____

Topic: _____

Success Criteria	**To what extent did the work meet the success criteria?**

Two Stars
(Two things I think have been done well)
☆ _____
☆ _____

One wish
(How can the work improve in relation to the success criteria?)

_____

B.5. Formative Assessment Planning Chart

Formative assessment is not separate from teaching and learning. It must be planned for and purposefully embedded in the teaching and learning process of every classroom. Identifying and preparing for the ways in which evidence of learning will be gathered can support responsive instruction. The chart below can support teachers as they engage in this critical process.

Lesson:	***Date:***

I need to know that students understand …

I will identify this by:
- ☐ Asking a question
- ☐ Checking what students say (conversation)
- ☐ Checking what students do (observation)
- ☐ Checking what students produce (product)
- ☐ Other

Tools I will use are:

☐ Checklist	☐ Whiteboards
☐ Think-pair-share	☐ Traffic lights
☐ Retelling	☐ Matching questions
☐ Discussion groups	☐ Homework
☐ Observation of body language	☐ Exit slip
☐ Role play	☐ Entrance slip
☐ Demonstration	☐ Concept map
☐ Sorting activity	☐ Journal entry
☐ Model building	☐ Drawing/representation
☐ Placement of sticky notes	☐ Mini quiz
☐ Four corners	☐ Summative test
☐ Thumbs up	☐ Other

Actions I will take in response:
- ☐ Reteach
- ☐ Change instructional strategy
- ☐ Change groupings
- ☐ Provide additional time
- ☐ Provide alternative materials
- ☐ Other

Validity and reliability are key considerations when planning for assessment. Essentially, these two important terms address the following questions:

- Validity: *Does my assessment align with curricular outcomes and success criteria?*
- Reliability: *Am I consistent with myself and other teachers with my assessment practices?*

#	Statement	Hardly Ever	Some-times	Often	Most of the Time
Validity					
1	My assessment task aligns with the curricular outcome(s).	0	1	2	3
2	My students and I have the same understanding of the curricular expectations.	0	1	2	3
3	My students are evaluated against curriculum outcomes instead of other students.	0	1	2	3
4	My documentation of evidence of learning is outcome-referenced.	0	1	2	3
5	My interpretation of results leads to appropriate conclusions and provides ideas on how to respond to the needs of my students more effectively to improve learning.	0	1	2	3
Reliability					
1	I separate reporting of learning behaviours from learning achievement.	0	1	2	3
2	I provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.	0	1	2	3
3	I use triangulation of a variety of data sources (conversations, observations and products) to evaluate students.	0	1	2	3
4	My formative and summative assessment tasks are linked to success criteria.	0	1	2	3
5	My assessment practices are consistent with those of my colleagues within my school and/or school division.	0	1	2	3
6	I build common understandings by assessing student work with colleagues regarding identified criteria.	0	1	2	3
7	The results of school division assessments inform my practice.	0	1	2	3
8	The results of provincial, national and international assessments inform my practice.	0	1	2	3
9	Another teacher would arrive at the same conclusion if we assessed at a different time using the same assessment tasks.	0	1	2	3
10	My assessment process provides enough consistent and stable information to allow me to make statements about a student's learning with certainty.	0	1	2	3

| SCORE CHART					
33-45 = Strong validity and reliability	**MY SCORE**				
22-32 = Good validity and reliability					
11-21 = Progressing in validity and reliability	**MY VALDITY AND RELIABILITY**				
0-10 = Room to grow in validity and reliability					

D. Fair Assessment

Fairness is critical when assessing student work. Fairness does not mean treating everyone the same. Consideration of bias, cultural safety and responsiveness and the Adaptive Dimension are all part of an educator's toolkit when it comes to fair assessment practices.

In addition, strong consideration of both validity and reliability in assessment practices can improve fairness and supports the teacher in responding to their students' individual and class community needs, experiences and worldviews.

For levels of achievement to accurately reflect student attainment of curricular outcomes, students and teachers can strive to explore alternative ways for students to demonstrate their learning.

In addition to validity and reliability, ensuring that assessments identify potential bias, incorporate culturally inclusive and affirming assessment tasks, and adapt assessment practices promotes a fair and balanced assessment approach.

Validity

Reliability

Fairness

A Balanced
Assessment Approach
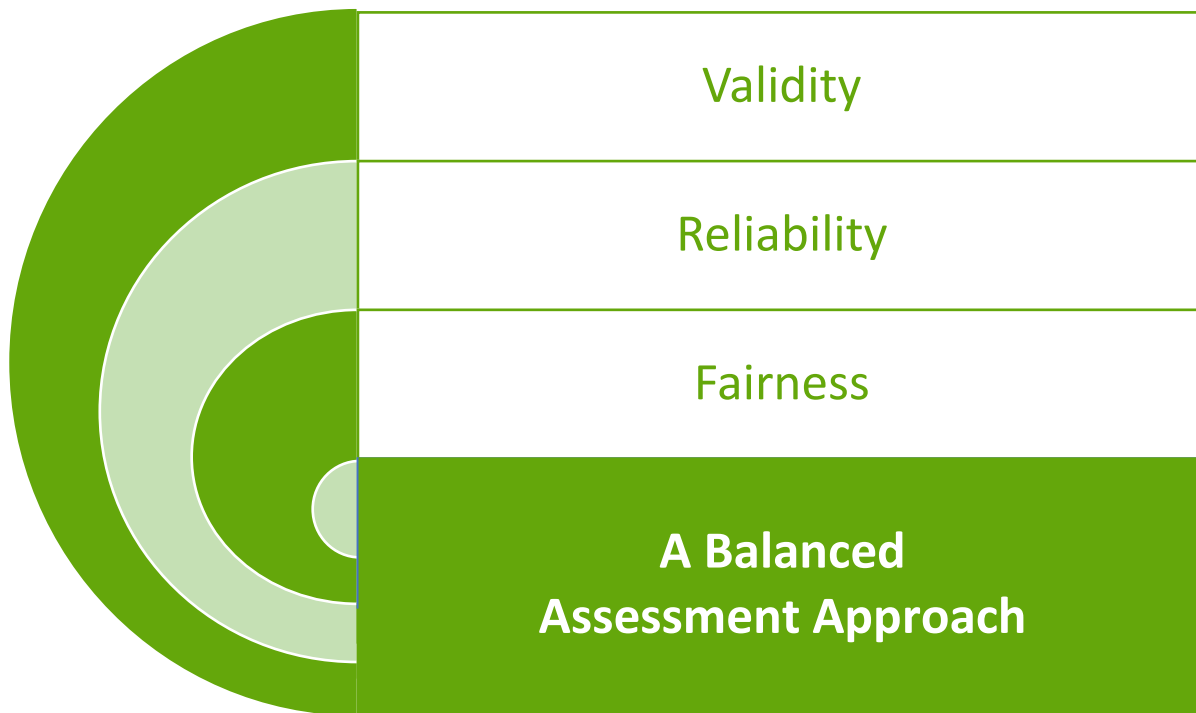
The checklist on the following page provides an opportunity for teachers to self-assess to ensure they consider fairness in their assessment practices.

Fair Assessment Checklist for Teachers	√
1	I ensure the learning and assessment space of my class community is ethically and culturally safe.	
2	I consider my own biases when engaging in the assessment process.	
3	I place the outcomes in a context of the students' worldviews and communicate them with students in student-friendly language.	
4	My students and I co-construct success criteria that are inclusive, transparent, affirming and align with curricular outcomes.	
5	I consider representing a diverse range of learning in the assessment tasks.	
6	I provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.	
7	My students and I compare their work to the pre-set success criteria (i.e., a rubric).	
8	I use student practice work formatively to provide feedback or feed-forward to students to further their learning.	
9	I incorporate the Adaptive Dimension and provide differentiated or equitable assessment support based on individual needs.	
10	I use language that is appropriate and non-discriminatory in my assessment practices.	
11	I strongly consider both validity and reliability in the assessment process.	
12	I do not penalize students for late or non-submitted demonstrations of learning.	
13	I communicate non-academic behaviours separately from curricular outcomes.	
14	I communicate results of groupwork only on individual achievement rather than providing a single grade for all group members.	
15	I gather students' perspectives in an open and anonymous way to improve future assessment practices.	

E. Adapting Assessment Practices

The table below provides some examples of adaptations in the assessment process. Which ones do you apply in your classroom?

	In my assessment practices, I apply the following adaptations:	√
1	I consider using a reader and/or a scribe.	
2	I adjust the length of time allowed to complete an assessment.	
3	I discuss options regarding topics, tasks, resources and learning groups.	
4	I vary options for demonstrating learning (oral, written, visual, dramatic, multimedia).	
5	I change the location of the assessment (e.g., a private space rather than the classroom).	
6	I document evidence and use a variety of ongoing assessments to monitor students' progress.	
7	I communicate details about assignments and examinations to parents/caregivers in electronic or print format.	
8	I involve families in developing plans for supporting student achievement.	
9	I determine due dates for individual parts of an assignment after considering input from students.	
10	I collaborate in assessing growth by using portfolios, celebrations of learning and/or electronically documented learning.	
11	Other:	
12	Other:	
13	Other:	
14	Other:	
15	Other:	

Adapted from *The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students*, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a

F. Supporting Well-Being During the Assessment Process

The assessment process can cause stress to students, teachers and parents/caregivers. At times, this can affect personal well-being. Describe how you monitor and adjust (when necessary) the following aspects to support well-being during the assessment process.
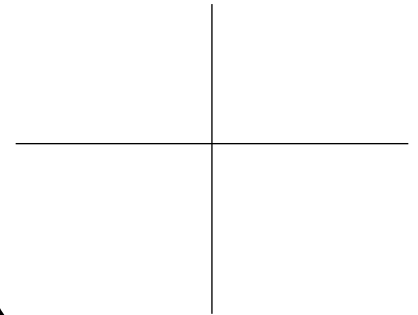
Responsive instruction

Culturally inclusive and affirming assessment

Building relationships

Building on strengths

Calibrating and collaboration

Balancing the four dimensions that support assessment

Providing a variety of assessments

Data and research

Technology

MODULE 3: USING CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE AND AFFIRMING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Module 3: Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices **focuses on supporting teachers in understanding and providing culturally relevant and responsive assessments that help all learners feel safe, accepted, respected and supported in their learning and assessment journey.**

SECTION 1: EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

How does culture relate to the way you support students in their learning and assessment? Do you incorporate culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices in your classroom?

Module 3: Using Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices delves into the following:

- consideration of culture in student assessment; and,
- culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices.

CONSIDERATION OF CULTURE IN STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Within the *Supporting Student Assessment* model (see page 9), the guiding principle "Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices" is at the core of the learning and assessment process. Culturally inclusive and affirming assessment is student-centred and takes into consideration perspectives, preferences, language and background. Responsive and authentic, it assists teachers in making informed decisions about how to assess using fair and equitable assessment practices for all students.

Canadian and Saskatchewan classrooms are becoming more and more culturally diverse, reflecting the diversity of the world, our country and our province. Increases in international migration has resulted in more provincial minority groups. In addition, Indigenous school-aged populations in provincial education systems are increasing and the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 62 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) advocates for the development of culturally appropriate curricula, which is directly connected to educational instruction and assessment practices. This evolution and diversity adds immense wealth to our learning cultures (Volante, DeLuca and Klinger, 2019). Students enrich learning environments by bringing in their ways of speaking, thinking and interacting. Culturally relevant and linguistically responsive curricula as well as instructional and assessment practices help all learners feel safe, accepted and supported in achieving curricular outcomes.

Within a culturally inclusive and affirming assessment process, the four essential questions *(Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?)* provide opportunities to students, teachers and parents/caregivers and their community to share their knowledge, experiences and perspectives. This can place curricular outcomes in an inclusive and meaningful context and promote mutual understanding and respect among all participants. In a holistic perspective, being mindful of the four dimensions that support student assessment (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual) when engaging in the assessment process provides an opportunity to appreciate and affirm the experiences and perspectives of diverse cultures.

Defining Culture

Culture often relates to ethnic or social groups; however, it can be expanded to include other elements such as language, religion, race, ethnic background, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, as well as physical, mental and social abilities, which constitute and impact an individual's beliefs, thoughts and way of life (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015b).

Culture can be also be described as the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual (Matsumoto, 1996, in Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Spencer-Oatey (2012) further explains that culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and their interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour. Cultural practices can be dynamic, shifting, and ever-changing (Paris, 2012).

In addition, culture encompasses broad notions of similarity and difference and is reflected in our students' multiple social identities and their ways of knowing and of being in the world (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The combining, overlapping or blending of individual cultural traits from a person's multiple identities is referred to as intersectionality. Essentially, intersectionality is an analysis related to identity and everyone has multiple identities. Systems of hierarchy have been created around our identities, and the combinations (or intersections) of those systems affect how life goes for us. Some of these identities give us a leg up, while others push us a rung down the ladder (Sen, 2017).

Culture in the Classroom

Culturally inclusive and affirming education in Saskatchewan represents all students in a classroom and ensures that all students are able to see themselves in the teaching and learning process. Culturally inclusive curricula, instruction and assessment acknowledge the entire spectrum of student diversity including ethnicity, language, gender and sexual diversity, background, experiences, learning styles and other influences that may shape student identity. Additionally, these processes reinforce educators' understanding and recognition of each student's uniqueness to make learning personally relevant and meaningful.

> *The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education "is guided by a Student First approach in which students' strengths, abilities, interests and needs are central to inclusive educational experiences for learning. Inclusive opportunities promote increased understanding and acceptance of diversity within the classroom, school and community."*
>
> *(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2021)*

Culturally inclusive and affirming education yields positive learning outcomes for the various cultural groups in the classroom. Through this, a sense of classroom community can be created and nurtured. For example, Battiste (2013) summarizes that Indigenous knowledge is inherently tied to the people's mutual relationship with their place and with each other over time. Recognizing and including the diverse perspectives, experiences and worldviews in the classroom creates a rich learning environment that is beneficial for all learners.

Culturally inclusive and affirming practices in the classroom can enable all learners to:

- become informed about, reflect on, and critically evaluate what is happening around them;
- critically reflect on their perception of their culture and identity;
- make connections and find their place in their communities to develop a strong sense of belonging; and,
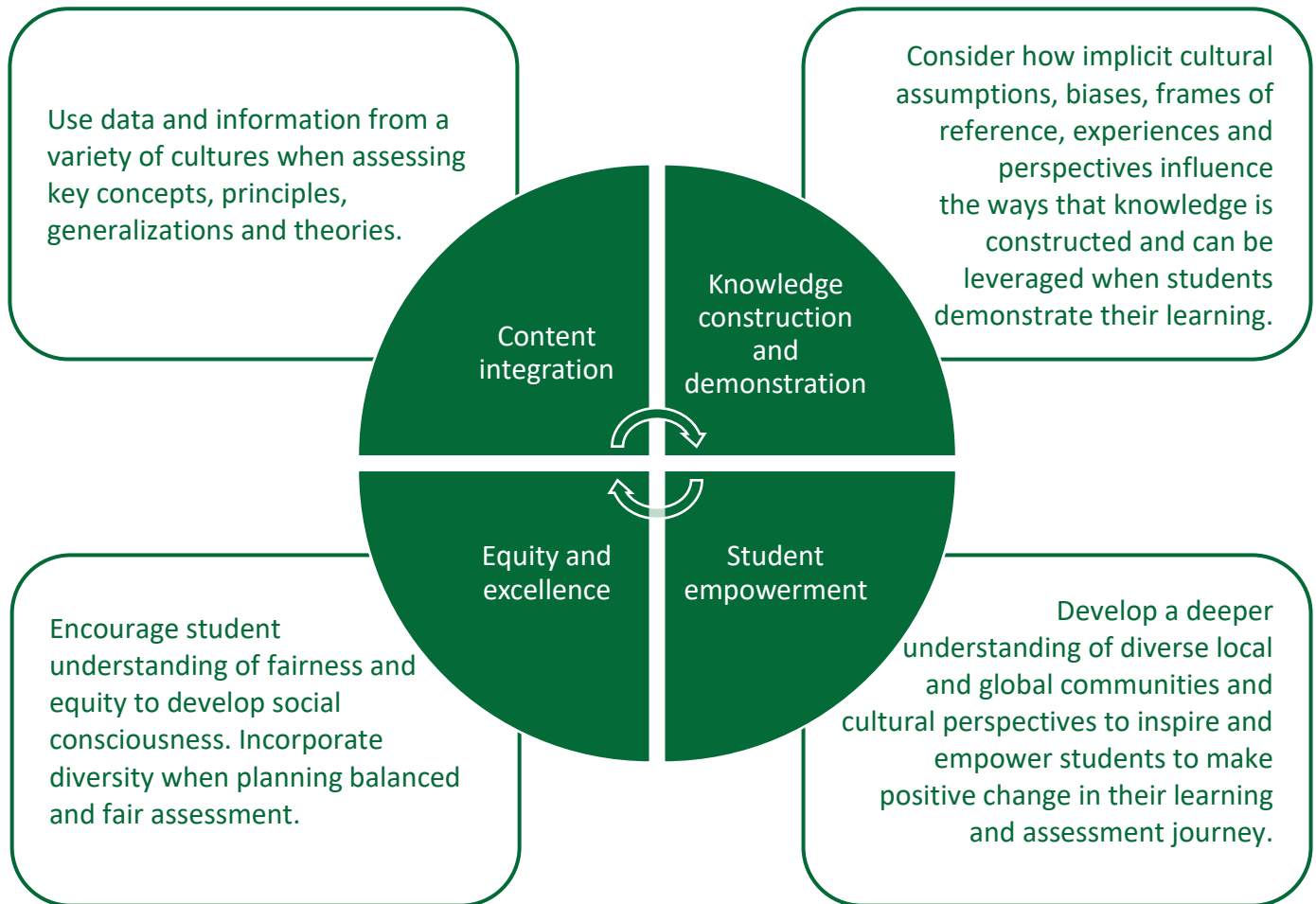- contribute to the collective well-being of their communities.

> *"First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada understand the value and importance of learning and education, especially as they relate to their communities. (…) Success as a people rather than as individuals is an important perception, just as having an identity as a First Nations, Inuit and Métis is deeply lodged in one's connection to a people and a place and is, for most, inseparable from their languages, cultural and place-based connections, families, and communities. Therefore, improved learning is not achieved by identifying individual successes, as is often reported among Canadians. In the case of Aboriginal peoples', successes in learning are intimately tied to the overall community orientations and collective well-being demonstrated from the applications of their learning."*
>
> *(Bouvier, Battiste, and Laughlin in Deer and Flakenberg, 2016)*

Aspects of Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices

Culturally inclusive education goes beyond the 'heroes and holidays' approach. The acknowledgement of diversity is not reduced to simplistic, symbolic, and meaningless tasks such as eating ethnic or cultural foods, dancing and singing songs, and reading folktales or being treated as an add-on or an afterthought (University of Toronto, 2016; Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011). Instead, diverse perspectives and frames of reference are embedded within curriculum, instruction and assessment, leading to sustaining and extending the richness of a pluralist society (Paris, 2012).

Some constructs that propose approaches for inclusive curricula can also be used in an assessment context as aspects which can guide growth towards culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices. The four aspects (content integration, knowledge construction and demonstration, student empowerment and equity and excellence) are illustrated in the following diagram.

Use data and information from a variety of cultures when assessing key concepts, principles, generalizations and theories.

Consider how implicit cultural assumptions, biases, frames of reference, experiences and perspectives influence the ways that knowledge is constructed and can be leveraged when students demonstrate their learning.

Content integration

Knowledge construction and demonstration

Equity and excellence

Student empowerment

Encourage student understanding of fairness and equity to develop social consciousness. Incorporate diversity when planning balanced and fair assessment.

Develop a deeper understanding of diverse local and global communities and cultural perspectives to inspire and empower students to make positive change in their learning and assessment journey.

Adapted from Peel District School Board (2000) in University of Toronto (2016).

The Mindset of a Culturally Responsive Educator

Cultural responsiveness is intentional and focused on delivering culturally inclusive and affirming curricula, instruction and assessment practices. Culturally responsive assessment is student-centred and leverages students' experiences and worldviews which can benefit all students. Through a culturally responsive mindset, teachers can make informed decisions about how to assess fairly and what equitable assessment practices could look like. A mindset that enables them to work creatively and effectively to support all students in diverse settings can shape a culturally inclusive and affirming classroom.

> *"The knowledge children bring to school, derived from personal and cultural experiences, is central to their learning. To overlook this resource is to deny children access to the knowledge construction process."*
>
> *(Villegas & Lucas, 2002)*

A culturally responsive educator works toward establishing an ethical space (Ermine, 2007) for learning which provides a place for different knowledge systems to interact with mutual respect. It is a culturally safe place that recognizes different knowledge systems as equal and gives no one system more weight or legitimacy than the other. Focusing on collaboration, co-creation and relationship-building, this approach allows participants of the learning and assessment journey to bring their own systems forward.

To support the development of an ethical space for learning, teachers can embrace the six characteristics of a culturally responsive educator's mindset (Villegas and Lucas, 2002): sociocultural consciousness, high expectations, a desire to make a difference, a constructivist approach, deep knowledge of the students and culturally appropriate teaching practices. The diagram below briefly describes the six characteristics of the mindset of culturally responsive educators. Culturally responsive educators have:

Sociocultural consciousness	• an awareness of how socio-cultural structures impact individual experiences and opportunities.
High expectations	• positive and affirming views of all students of all backgrounds.
A desire to make a difference	• see themselves as change agents working towards more equity.
A constructivist approach	• understand that students construct their own knowledge.
A deep knowledge of their students	• know about the lives of students and their families; know how students learn best and where they are in their learning.
Culturally responsive teaching practices	• design and build instruction on students' prior knowledge in order to stretch students in their thinking and learning.

Adapted from Villegas and Lucas (2002)

By establishing this ethical space for learning as well as utilizing quality instructional and assessment practices, teachers can provide culturally inclusive and affirming learning opportunities for the individual students and the class community.

Student Responsibility and Well-Being

Establishing a culturally inclusive and affirming assessment process requires students to be engaged and to embrace responsibility. Doing so can empower them to support their personal well-being. Respect of diversity is encouraged when students and teachers show genuine interest in their own culture and in other cultures. An open and positive attitude can support students in affirming their own identity and culture as well as that of their classmates. The affirmation of a variety of worldviews and perspectives can inspire students to take responsibility in their learning, promoting the foundation for a healthy well-being.

Some of the student responsibilities that foster cultural inclusivity, affirmation, responsibility and well-being in the assessment process include:

- establishing an initial personal and class community goal while considering various ideas and worldviews;
- sharing and listening to insights and perspectives when co-constructing success criteria to contribute to the necessary social interaction within the class community;
- knowing themselves and sharing what they know to collaboratively determine how best to demonstrate learning (e.g., using manipulatives, oral stories);
- engaging thoughtfully in peer assessment that includes respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relationships (Thorne, 2019);
- considering truthfully their own holistic development regarding assessment and learning (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual);
- considering their own strengths and including other perspectives and worldviews when adjusting goals;
- highlighting cultural symbols or people from family and community that can honour the importance of interconnections among school, home, and community (e.g., *sayncheur flayshii/ceinture fléchée*/sash or Elder) to enrich and adapt success criteria; and,
- understanding, valuing and connecting to the knowledge, perspectives and ways of knowing of their cultures when demonstrating learning.

Encouraging student responsibility when incorporating culturally inclusive and affirming assessment can effectively attend to student well-being. It can inspire students to affirm their cultures' worldviews and perspectives, provide them opportunities to take responsibility in their learning and, in turn, establish an environment conducive to intellectual (mental), physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

> *Culturally responsive "assessment, when practised in an ethical and responsible fashion, can promote wellness and support meaningful change." (Johnston and Claypool, 2010)*

CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE AND AFFIRMING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Collectively, education's increased recognition of cultural diversity underscores the importance of teaching and learning environments that reflect and support our pluralistic society (Volante, DeLuca and Klinger, 2019). Accordingly, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) (2017) encourages all teachers to develop teaching and assessment practices that recognize and support diversity within the classroom, the school and the community as well as to adjust their communications and interactions to account for such differences (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015b). Further, as outlined in *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework* (2018), to affect positive change, the responsibility exists for all teachers and administrators to transform teaching practices, individually and collectively, in ways that affirm cultural identity, value diversity and build positive relationships between and amongst teachers and students. This includes the development of culturally responsive and authentic assessment.

Diverse Cultural Perspectives and the Four Essential Questions

Students and teachers in a culturally inclusive and affirming class community can work together using the four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?*) (see model, page 9) to enhance culturally relevant, respectful and responsive assessment practices. When communicating about student growth, the essential questions provide a structure and opportunities for teachers, students, parents/caregivers and their community to share their knowledge, experiences and perspectives in a thoughtful, inclusive and meaningful context, promoting mutual understanding and respect among all. Including parents/caregivers every step of the way can provide an opportunity to incorporate their reservoir of knowledge, recognize and value them, as well as establish a relationship where they can explain their culture's perspectives in relation to the learning and assessment process.

Where am I now?

Determining, understanding and leveraging prior knowledge, strengths and diverse worldviews to enhance growth is the focus of the essential question, *Where am I now?* As teachers and students connect learning and assessment to real life experiences, cultures and knowledge, they can set the stage for understanding the individual and class community learning strengths and needs as well as establish an ethical space that promotes cultural inclusivity and affirmation in their class community.

- Teachers and students can work together in establishing a culturally safe and ethical space to gain a solid understanding of what students know and who they are. In other words, they come to appreciate where they are coming from and where they currently are as individuals within the class community in terms of their prior knowledge, worldviews and perspectives.

- As teachers and students establish a culturally safe and ethical space, they can leverage the diverse class community gifts and experiences to broaden their learning towards achieving the curricular outcomes and nurture relationships.

- Engaging and weaving the two processes outlined above in a thoughtful manner will strengthen and empower the individual student and class community to clarify and confirm their identity and promote inclusion and cultural affirmation.

Where am I going?

Considering *Where am I now?* when identifying outcomes, setting learning goals, creating effective plans and determining success criteria can help enrich the participants' worldviews and clarify the path of *Where am I going?*

- Teachers and students can work together to consider what they currently know (*Where am I now?*) in relation to the expected learning outcomes (*Where am I going?)* to initiate the understanding of the learning and assessment journey in which they are engaging.

- Co-creating success criteria with the Adaptive Dimension in mind enables students to see what success will look like and enhances inclusivity. Success criteria is effective when it respects diverse perspectives and prior knowledge and is relevant to students' lives and experiences.

- Examining various culturally inclusive exemplars with students engages them in the assessment process. By building on their strengths and leveraging what they know through their cultural background when examining exemplars, students are more likely to understand what is expected of them and nurture cultural inclusivity and affirmation.

- Using their cultural perspective and worldview along with the support of their teacher and parents/caregivers, students can initially set a realistic level of achievement connected to the co-created success criteria.

How am I doing?

Students become more engaged, inspired and empowered when teachers, students and parents/caregivers collaboratively consider the essential question *How am I doing?* Through formative assessment, feedback, self-assessment, reflection, conferring, all participants can benefit from placing culture at the heart of informing *How am I doing?*

- Students contribute to a positive learning environment by providing and receiving culturally respectful peer feedback acknowledging their classmates' experiences and worldviews and sharing their own. Cultural affirmation can happen through an active role of sharing knowledge during formative assessment or peer feedback, and can be matched through students' understanding of each others' perspectives. Parents/caregivers, interpreters or community leaders can be called upon to complete the feedback loop.

- The aspects of *How am I doing?* support teachers in gaining insight into how they may have to adapt their instructional practice, consider culturally inclusive and affirming learning and assessment practices, develop alternative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding and allow time for improvement to occur.

- To determine how a student is doing and to ensure culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices, teachers can reflect on who the experts are in their community that they can draw on to inform their practice (e.g., calling a settlement agency to get an understanding of the culture, accessing a translator, engaging an Elder).

- As culturally responsive educators in *How am I doing?* teachers can consider how to support students in demonstrating their learning in a contextual and relevant way so that it resonates for them.

- Considering the linguistic aspect of assessment is important. When activating prior knowledge and experience, teachers can remind themselves to word the assessment in a way that allows students to bring their lens of understanding (e.g., seek out non-traditional texts in English Language Arts; design a Social Studies assessment on power structures for students that can relate to war-torn countries or gender and sexual diversity struggles). The Adaptive Dimension, English as an Additional Language and the Common Framework of Reference are tools that can be used to ensure that assessment tasks align with the student's language level.

- When conferring, consideration of various cultural ways of interacting and communicating (verbal, written, signing, interpreter, determining who should be involved) can enhance positive relationships with stakeholders and foster further engagement of all participants.

Where to next?

Understanding one's own culture and that of others when supporting students in responding to feedback, adjusting goals and identifying actions for next steps in learning can enrich classroom cultural inclusiveness and affirmation as participants address the essential question *Where to next? (See model, page 9.)*

- The process of providing and responding to peer feedback in relation to the success criteria contributes to a positive learning environment by allowing students to share their unique perspectives, experiences and worldviews with each other. This process can promote inclusion and affirmation of diverse cultures as well as extend students' awareness of *Where to next?*
- A growth mindset can foster a culturally inclusive and affirming classroom that supports students and teachers in the process of adjusting goals and developing actions when addressing *Where to next?*
- *Where to next?* also provides an opportunity to adjust success criteria to include the uncovered diverse perspectives which can promote cultural affirmation for all students.
- Including parents/caregivers in reviewing the outcomes and expectations when considering future actions in *Where to next?* provides a broader perspective and opportunity for richer collaboration and communication to occur among stakeholders.

Validity and Reliability in Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment

As described in *Module 2: Supporting Responsive Instruction and Inspiring Learning*, validity in classroom assessment is focused on understanding what is to be measured in relation to the curriculum and how it can be measured accurately. In a traditional approach, validity is the degree to which an assessment or evaluation actually measures what it claims to measure, based on appropriate and meaningful inferences, conclusions, and decisions (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a).

As the field of education becomes more aware of and acknowledges the impact of diverse cultures on learning, attending to cultural validity in assessment becomes a key consideration for culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices. Aikenhead, Brokofsky, *et al*. (2014) state that culturally valid assessment means that a teacher takes into consideration students' home language and their cultural values, beliefs, experiences, communication patterns, and recurrent learning strengths. These authors further explain that culturally valid assessment builds on students' cultural assets to encourage achievement for students of diverse cultures (e.g., creating a postcolonial learning environment for Indigenous students). This approach gives preference to formative assessment that focuses on helping students to learn (assessment for learning).

As for reliability in classroom assessment, it is traditionnally focused on consistent interpretation by different teachers regarding a student's demonstration of learning at different times. In this approach, reliability is the degree to which an assessment or evaluation is consistent and stable in measuring what it is intended to measure. An assessment or evaluation is considered reliable when the same results occur regardless of when or where the assessment or evaluation occurs or who does the scoring (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a).

Reliability within a culturally inclusive and affirming assessment approach can undertake a holistic view of students' demonstration of learning by including multiple and varied assessment methods. This can support teachers and students to assess a student's overall achievement more reliably while being sensitive and inclusive to their diverse cultural backgrounds and learning needs. In other words, using triangulation (conversations, observations and products) to assess student achievement can support reliability in a culturally inclusive and affirming assessment approach.

Identifying Bias

Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner are considered biases (Peoples, Islam, and Davis, 2021). A bias in a particular assessment can harm a student or enhance the affirmation of another student's culture. It is useful to be mindful of one's own assumptions or biases. According to Montenegro and Janikowsi (2017), it is unrealistic and counterproductive for teachers to think they are approaching their assessment work from an impartial stance or to assume that the students being assessed also operate from an impartial stance. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences, perspectives and biases as well as to unlearn any preconceptions they may have (Battiste, 2013) before they can

consider that their assessment practices are culturally inclusive. Failing to recognize how culture and one's own experiences affect the assessment process can limit the positive impact of assessment for individual students and the class community.

> *Teachers attempt to minimize implicit biases (…) of their own background. Recognizing such biases in the first place is often called "maintaining a critical stance." This skill is very important to culturally valid assessment. (…) Culturally appropriate assessment and evaluation require cultural awareness and sensitivity, as well as a critical stance towards our own taken-for-granted cultural biases hidden within our culture's language, social institutions, and history."*

> *(Aikenhead, Brokofsky et al., 2014)*

Biases can take the form of favouring or disadvantaging a particular person or group. Potential biases to be aware of can include:

- **Invisibility/Omission** - some groups may be rarely seen, or not seen at all;
- **Stereotyping** - use of pared down, simplified images and attributes;
- **Imbalance** - one-sided interpretation of issues or situations;
- **Unreality** - avoidance of in-depth analyses of situations and circumstances in life;
- **Fragmentation/Isolation** - treatment of gender, age, and cultural differences as separate, add on information; and,
- **Linguistic Bias** - language that is patronizing or ignores disability, age and gender differences, and cultural diversity (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006).

Fair Assessment

Fostering culturally inclusive and affirming assessment provides students, teachers and parents/caregivers confidence that assessment is delivered in a fair manner. Fairness in assessment is a critical component when examining students' demonstration of learning because it provides an equitable access to students' opportunity for achievement. Consideration of bias, cultural responsiveness, and the Adaptive Dimension are all parts of an educator's toolkit when it comes to fair assessment practices.

> *Fairness does not mean equality and what is fair won't always be equal. Teachers provide scaffolding and support or raise the challenge level of tasks for some students to meet instructional needs. Grades earned on subsequent assessments are fairly earned by all groups.*

> *(Wormelli, 2018)*

Through a fair assessment process and ethical learning space, students can develop a growth mindset and can become successful strategic learners when they are offered a variety of approaches and options to demonstrate their learning. Aligning assessment approaches to match students' life experiences and culturally-based responses ensures that assessment practices are fair, inclusive and authentic, and that they contribute to student learning and overall sense of connection to learning (Alberta Education, 2005).

Overall, teachers' assessment practices require a culturally inclusive and affirming way of thinking that develop fair practices that provide accurate information about students' learning, regardless of their cultural background (Volante, DeLuca and Klinger, 2019). The following table outlines examples of what fair assessment best practices are and what they are not.

What fair assessment is …	What fair assessment is not …
Clear, concise outcomes which are placed in a context of the students' worldviews and communicated with students in student-friendly language.	**Vague outcomes which are only known by the teacher and represented by their worldview.**
Clear and concise learning outcomes communicated at the beginning of the learning process allow students to see the level of success they are trying to achieve. Students can relate more easily to outcomes when they are placed in the context of students' worldviews. This removes the guesswork for students and provides them affirmation of their own culture.	
Providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning.	**Providing only one opportunity to demonstrate their learning.**
Students learn in different ways and at different paces. To honour this diversity, teachers can allow students to revisit their demonstration of learning. When assessing the achievement of an outcome, responsive instruction, the Adaptive Dimension and triangulation can be incorporated to address student needs and provide multiple and equitable opportunities for all students. More time can be provided for students to reflect on their work, make changes or corrections, and then re-submit for more feedback, feed-forward and/or reassessment.	
Providing differentiated assessment tasks that address individual student needs.	**Requiring all students to complete the same assessment task.**
Assessment is one of the variables that teachers have the authority and responsibility to adapt to meet the needs of all students. Providing students with choices and flexibility in how they demonstrate knowledge and skills is an equitable practice that can foster culturally inclusive and affirming assessment.	

For further information, see
Section 2: Making Connections.

Four Dimensions Which Support Student Assessment

Supporting Student Assessment aligns with *Inspiring Success First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework* (2018) where belief systems and worldviews of First Nations and Métis peoples are based on recognizing and respecting the delicate balance of interdependence within oneself and with all living things in the environment, both tangible and intangible. Within this balance are the intellectual (mental), physical, emotional, spiritual dimensions (see model, page 9) as well as teachings that have been passed down through generations. These dimensions create balance in one's personal life, as represented by the four quadrants of the circle (see page 12). In assessment, they can represent a balanced assessment approach that illustrates the progressive growth of all students as well as the interconnectedness and cyclical journey of lifelong learning.

Stonechild and McGowan (2009) acknowledge that the four components of the self (mind, body, heart and spirit) must be honoured in order for the learning spirit to be nourished on its lifelong learning journey. Students must be supported to believe in themselves as lifelong learners with many learning gifts and capacities, thereby establishing a growth mindset. These authors state that the learning journey is experiential by nature because culture is an integral element and learning generally takes place within a community or societal context. In essence, learning begins from a place that values the learner's self, experience, knowledge and worldviews in a culturally inclusive and affirming approach that promotes holistic, learner-centered assessment and focuses on the self as a lifelong learner.

> *"Students should be evaluated holistically. In addition to evaluating the cognitive domain, holistic assessment processes strive to assess the growth and well-being of a student's emotional, physical, and spiritual capacities."*
>
> *(Johnston and Claypool, 2010)*

Similarly, Aikenhead, Brokofsky et al. (2014) concur that Indigenous ways of learning are fundamentally experiential and holistic, engaging the whole person, including their emotions as well as the physical and spiritual dimensions, and not just the intellectual dimension of their learning. In all, this approach encompasses different ways of knowing and provides students meaningful learning that results in a more fulfilling educational experience and promotes culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices. The following describes how these four dimensions can support student assessment in Saskatchewan.

Intellectual

The intellectual (mental) dimension can be simply expressed as "figuring it out." Within the *Supporting Student Assessment* model, teachers are encouraged to clearly understand and internalize curricular outcomes to support students and to collaborate with them in the development of success criteria. This includes researching to identify potential cultural biases related to demonstrating the achievement of the outcome. Having the end in mind, teachers aim for a balanced assessment approach and integrate the cognitive processes of measuring and sharing progress. Previous assessments help the student and teacher understand the student's strengths and current learning needs in order to define *Where am I now?* and plan for *Where am I going?*

Physical

The physical dimension can be summarized as "doing it." This aspect focuses on the physical energy required for the planning and collaboration process within *Where am I now? Where am I going?* and *How am I doing?* Teachers and students can co-construct success criteria and collaboratively choose assessment strategies that build on student self-identity and strengths, and provide multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate learning. Further, experiencing the learning and assessment space within a land-based context connects to the student's physical environment during the learning and assessment process.

Emotional

The emotional dimension can be stated as "seeing it." Providing and receiving quality feedback in a sensitive manner allows students and teachers to better "see" and accept where the students are in relation to *How am I doing?* Feedback produces an emotional response within students and teachers. Encouraging and developing a growth mindset in a culturally safe and ethical learning space helps students and teachers develop a vision, courage and resilience to move forward and address *Where to next?* in their learning journey. This collaborative process and shared responsibility are supported by nurturing strong, healthy and caring relationships within the class and community, which focuses on personal growth in learning and emotional well-being.

Spiritual

The spiritual dimension can be expressed as "relating it." Establishing a culturally inclusive and affirming classroom environment provides students and teachers a safe forum to share, hear and embrace diverse perspectives. At the core of the spiritual dimension are the interconnectedness and respect of all people and their ideas. Encouraging students to relate and respond to feedback with a growth mindset provides them with a plan and the belief that they can move forward and address *Where to next?* As students and teachers cyclically go through the assessment and learning process, they co-construct knowledge within their school and community to further develop a worldview that is relevant, attentive and culturally affirming.

> *"First Nations and Métis have a diversity of worldviews, values and belief systems within and among their nations. … Teachers and administrators are encouraged to work with local First Nations and Métis Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers to learn about their worldviews and ways of knowing."*
>
> *(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2018)*

Supporting All Students by Honouring their Worldviews and Perspectives

For all students, the most successful teaching methods are those that actively engage students intellectually, physically, emotionally, and sometimes spiritually (Aikenhead, Brokofsky et al., 2014). Assessment strategies or methods that harmonize with diverse students' cultural assets can be continuously built into a teacher's current repertoire or toolkit. Some considerations listed below regarding examples of culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices and the Adaptive Dimension align with First Nation, Métis and Inuit approaches and can be relevant to a diversity of other cultural groups. They are learner-centered and can benefit all learners.

Examples of Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices

- Engage students in the assessment process at all stages: determining prior knowledge and worldviews, co-constructing criteria, self-assessing, providing choice in how to demonstrate understanding and adjusting goals to move learning forward.

- Focus on the four dimensions that support student assessment and learning (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional and spiritual).

- Use the 4 Rs to guide assessment practices – *respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relationships* (Thorne, 2019).

- Assess and build upon the strengths of each individual student (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a).

- Allow hands-on materials and manipulatives to be used to demonstrate learning.

- Place as much value on oral explanations for demonstrations of understandings as on written products.

- Understand and value the knowledge, perspectives and ways of knowing that individual students have, and find ways to connect that to new learning in order to promote culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices.

- Include a student's community of support in the assessment process (e.g., family members to honour the importance of interconnections among school, home, and community).

- Include the community through projects – learning is contextual and experiential, has a service component, and strengthens development. Encourage students to assess their impact on the community and on their personal growth.

- Use examples of culturally compatible methods including storytelling, talking circles, involving Elders or Knowledge Keepers in classroom and land-based assessment. All students respond well to experiencing a variety of assessment methods, but especially those methods that acknowledge students' needs and recurrent learning strengths (adapted from Aikenhead, Brokofsky et al., 2014).

- Use rubrics or success criteria that undergo a culturally conscious development process and are shared with students to accurately assess learning for all students while allowing variation in how the learning is demonstrated (Montenegro and Jankowski, 2017).

> *"By being mindful of how culture affects students' meaning-making processes, cognition, and demonstrations of learning, we can better understand and appreciate the learning gains that students make (…) and provide a more holistic representation of what students know and can do."*
>
> *(Montenegro and Jankowski, 2017)*

- Establish culturally inclusive portfolios. These can lead to more holistic and reliable formative assessment where results are more indicative of what students can do or lead to more targeted improvements in teaching and learning (Montenegro and Jankowski, 2017).

- Provide multiple and varied options to demonstrate student learning. A menu system allows students to engage in and take responsibility for their learning. When students set their learning goals and are able to track them in a clear and meaningful way, their achievement and well-being substantially improves (Reeves, 2016).

- Use various assessment strategies that encourage students to express what they have learned such as exit slips, reflective journal entries, portfolios, experiential problem-based reports, and clearly written open-ended test questions (Aikenhead, Brokofsky et al., 2014).

- Implement a multi-method assessment model developed for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners (Johnston and Claypool, 2010) that encourages the use of multiple sources of data to determine students' level of understanding, various methods of assessment, as well as the four dimensions (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional, spiritual) to be assessed. This model promotes the use of multimodal assessments for triangulation of evidence and can be applied to all learners. The following table represents these three areas of consideration.

Multi-method Assessment Process		
Source of data	**Assessment method/strategy**	**Dimensions**
• student • parents/caregivers, siblings • extended family • elders, community members • peers • teachers • paraprofessionals • administrators	• multiple and varied assessment forms • conversation, observation, product • curriculum-based • norm-referenced • place-based • portfolio • rubrics	• intellectual (mental) • physical • emotional • spiritual

Adapted from Johnston and Claypool (2010)

Using a variety of these culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices can enhance a student's sense of belonging because their own learning, experiences and worldviews are deemed as important and valid. Overlooking assessment practices that consider diversity, culture and fairness can result in inequalities of student success (Montenegro and Janikowski, 2017). Culturally responsive assessment, when practiced in an ethical and responsible fashion, can also promote wellness and support meaningful change (Johnston and Claypool, 2010).

The Adaptive Dimension and Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices

Teachers have the responsibility to adapt practices to meet the needs of all students. The *Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students* (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a) states that there are four variables of the Adaptive Dimension: learning environment, instruction, assessment and resource. Applying the Adaptive Dimension throughout the assessment process provides the opportunity to implement culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices such as the examples outlined in the previous section. Adjusted to meet individual and class community needs, assessments that consider the Adaptive Dimension can also provide all students multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge, skills and abilities that respect their learning styles, worldviews and perspectives.

The Adaptive Dimension advocates for:

• fair and equitable assessments, giving all students opportunities to make connections and demonstrate the extent of their knowledge;

• the connection to and maintaining the integrity of the intent of the outcome and its set of indicators;

• changes to the format (e.g., oral/written), the length of time allowed, or the place of assessment (e.g., private space/classroom/ outdoors), when necessary;

• the inclusion of a variety of evidence (conversations, observations, products), active participation and student self-assessment; and,

• teachers providing opportunities for students to be successful by adapting assessments to match student strengths and needs.

Summary

Module 3: Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices supports teachers in understanding and providing culturally relevant and responsive assessments that help all learners feel safe, accepted, respected and supported in their learning and assessment journey. As teachers and students consider the definition of culture and leverage a better understanding of it, they can create a culturally safe and ethical learning space that promotes culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices. Striving towards a mindset of a culturally responsive educator, teachers can support students in affirming a variety of worldviews and taking responsibility for their learning, promoting a healthy well-being.

To incorporate culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices, the four essential questions can be used as a framework to consider diverse cultural perspectives. Further, being mindful of bias when designing multiple and varied culturally valid assessments can promote student achievement and support reliability as well as fair assessment practices. In addition, the four dimensions which support student assessment (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional, spiritual) can contribute to a balanced assessment approach that fosters the progressive growth of all students. In essence, honoring diverse worldviews and perspectives by teachers, students and the class community can nurture various cultures' dignity, identity and integrity. The challenge for education is to change school philosophy, policy, pedagogy and practice (Battiste, 2013) to advocate for culturally inclusive and affirming assessment approaches.

SECTION 2: MAKING CONNECTIONS

The intention of the "Making Connections" section is to provide practical ideas and reflection opportunities for teachers and educational leaders. It includes personal stories that connect to the assessment content presented within the third guiding principle, "Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices."

"In the Classroom" provides story-like examples of what the guiding principle could look like **in the classroom or learning space** and shows how teachers might transform theory into action.

Storytelling is valued by diverse Canadian cultures as a powerful reflection and learning tool. For example, learning through stories is a core tenet of Indigenous approaches to education. To honour diverse perspectives and ways of knowing, "In the Classroom" uses a storytelling approach to:

- examine ways teachers can connect (intellectually/mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually) with the story, the characters and their experiences;
- encourage teachers to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and assessment practices; and,
- support teachers in the development of their future assessment strategies and actions.

"Making Connections" also provides teachers with the opportunity to **reflect on individual classroom assessment practices** related to the guiding principle through a series of questions. These questions prompt the reader to make connections with their assessment mindset, validate their assessment practices and calibrate the fairness of their assessments.

Finally, this section includes **additional resources** (practical ideas and materials that align with Section 1 of the module) for teachers and students to use in their various learning spaces.

1. IN THE CLASSROOM

Discovering Cultural Competence

In a professional development workshop, Ali learns that establishing a culturally inclusive mindset within the class community is important. This mindset helps to set the stage for a collaborative assessment process in a culturally and ethically safe space. As a high school teacher, Ali wants to ensure that the learning environment of the class community is inclusive. Ali begins by reflecting on his own beliefs, attitudes, biases and assessment practices by using the Cross Cultural Competence Continuum (see the table on page 120 of this resource, adapted from Saskatchewan Learning Leaders Wiki, 2009, in Aikenhead et al., 2012). Ali chooses the category of "Cultural Blindness" due to efforts to proudly try to treat everybody the same. Multicultural resources have been helpful to some extent, but oversimplify the complexity of cultural and racial issues. Over the school year, Ali would like to take steps to advance in cultural competence by attaining at least the "Acceptance" or "Cultural Pre-competence" stage of the continuum. Through this self-awareness activity, Ali learned about the need for further development of cultural competence.

To create a culturally and ethically safe space within the class community, Ali initiates and develops a similar self-awareness student activity to support them in identifying their current position along the continuum. The students also use journaling throughout the semester to reflect on *Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? and Where to next?* regarding the Cultural Competency Continuum.

Over the semester, Ali observes through actions and journal entries that students feel increasingly included and safe in the classroom and that their cultures are valued and understood. Students also indicate that they feel confident and culturally safe enough to participate in a collaborative process that includes contributing their ideas to the class community success criteria, setting goals as well as giving and receiving feedback.

Inquiry and the Four Dimensions Which Support Student Assessment

Tracy is a teacher at an elementary school in urban Saskatchewan. Tracy is committed to using the inquiry approach to learning. Initially, students develop inquiry questions regarding what they wonder about in a particular topic connected to an outcome. Tracy reads in different curricula that student reflection is an important part of the inquiry process. She also notes that inquiry-based documentation is a rich source of varied evidence of learning from which teachers can gain a more in-depth look into their students' understandings. Such documentation can include reflective journals, interviews, models or videos.

Tracy also finds that the four dimensions which support student assessment fit naturally within the inquiry learning process for all students. Tracy encourages students to explore the **intellectual (mental)** dimension, also known as "figuring it out," by examining what they currently know, what they wonder about and what they would like to learn more about. From there, students take part in the planning (How are we going to get there?), exploring, researching and documenting their learning in multiple and various ways. This aligns with the **physical** dimension of the four quadrants.

To support their journey toward deeper understanding and ways this knowledge can be applied, students gather feedback from various sources which produces a response as part of the **emotional** dimension. Students' reflection and their response help them better "see" and accept where they are in relation to *How am I doing?* Engaging in and providing feedback, as well as using and responding to the feedback they receive, helps Tracy's students better relate their learning to themselves, their environment and their community. In doing so, they address the **spiritual** dimension by being inspired to further explore, wonder and learn more about different perspectives and worldviews connected to the topic.

Weaving in the four dimensions through the inquiry learning approach allows Tracy and the students to be active learners, passionate about their learning and confident in the belief that they can move their learning forward. In addition, this process empowers them to document their learning in multiple and various ways to highlight their growth and can lead them to a deeper understanding of their world, human experience and various cultures.

2. REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE

Consideration of Culture in Student Assessment

- Do your students feel culturally safe in their class community?

- What does the term "culture" mean to you?

- How do you consider culture when planning to gather evidence of learning?

- Ali's initial position on the Cross Cultural Competency Continuum (see page 120) is in the "Minimization (Cultural Blindness)" category. Where do you currently position yourself on this continuum?

- Which of the six characteristics of a culturally responsive educator's mindset do you see in your instructional and assessment practices?

- To what extent do you use culturally responsive assessment practices that support student responsibility and well-being?

Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices

- Do you consider your assessment practices to be culturally inclusive and affirming?

- How do you envision working with your students in promoting a culturally inclusive and affirming class community using the four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?*)?

- How do you ensure cultural validity in your assessments?

- What biases do you and your students have when developing success criteria?

- How do you differentiate assessment tasks to respond to student needs?

- In what ways does Tracy support student well-being through the use of the four dimensions and the inquiry approach?

3. MORE RESOURCES

A. Consideration of Culture in Student Assessment

A.1. Defining Culture: Think-Pair-Share

As described in Section 1, culture can be described as the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people that constitutes and impacts an individual's thoughts and way of life. Using the table below, **think** about the extent to which you agree or disagree with whether the following constitute a culture. If you think of other items, add them below.

	What is Culture?				
#	I believe the following constitute a culture:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	ethnicity				
2	language				
3	religion				
4	race				
5	school				
6	classroom				
7	family				
8	gender				
9	sexual orientation				
10	workplace				
11	role/team in the workplace				
12	physical abilities				
13	mental abilities				
14	social abilities				
15	social group				
16	sports team				
17	musical group				
18	improv team				
19	socioeconomic status				
20	geographic area				
21	political ideology				
22	other:				

Pair

With a partner, consider and discuss the following questions. Be prepared to share your findings with the larger group/class community.

Which items that consitute culture do you agree on?	• • •
What stands out when you compare your answers?	• • •
Which items did you add and why?	• • •
Has your perception of culture changed? If so, how?	• • •

Share

With the large group/ class community, participate in the Four Corners activity below.

1) Assign an extent level (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree) to each of the four corners or areas of a space. For the three (3) items identified below, complete the following:

- For item # 6 (classroom), go to the corner representing the extent to which you INITIALLY positioned yourself.

- On the same item, where would you position yourself NOW, after your pair discussion?

- As a class community, discuss what they noticed (e.g., changing positions or not) and the reason for it.

2) Repeat the above process for factors # 9 (sexual orientation) and #16 (sports team).

3) If participants are engaged or need more discussion, select more items.

A.2. Culture competence in the classroom

How culturally competent are you as a teacher? Read the characteristics of the Teacher Cultural Competence Continuum below. Determine where you would position yourself as a teacher on this continuum. In the future, where would you like to see yourself on this continuum?

Teacher Cultural Competence Continuum					
Denial (Cultural destructiveness)	**Defence (Cultural incapacity)**	**Minimization (Cultural blindness)**	**Acceptance (Cultural pre-competence)**	**Adaptation (Cultural competence)**	**Integration (Advanced cultural competence)**
❐ I don't believe in cultural differences. ❐ I believe that people who behave or look different don't know any better. ❐ I tend to impose my own value system on others, knowing that I am right and others are confused or wrong.	❐ I begin to realize that my value system is not absolute and I am not happy about this. ❐ I am threatened by cultural differences. ❐ I believe that other cultures are inferior, but I know better than to say or impose my values on them. ❐ I view other cultures in a negative fashion.	❐ I trivialize differences. ❐ I believe that differences, though real, do not matter. ❐ I believe that, as different as people are, they are still more similar than different. ❐ I assume that people share the same values and beliefs.	❐ I accept differences as legitimate and complex. ❐ I accept the inevitability of other value systems and behaviour norms; I may find these hard to deal with but I do not judge them and am not threatened by them. ❐ I am tolerant and have a sympathetic attitude toward everyone.	❐ I value and celebrate cultural differences. ❐ I am willing and able to change my own behaviour to conform to different norms. ❐ I am able to empathize with people from a different culture. ❐ I do not give up my own culture's values but integrate aspects of other cultures into my belief system.	❐ I believe that I can become different and still be myself. ❐ I effortlessly adjust to suit the culture of the people I am with. ❐ I feel that I belong to a multicultural society ❐ I am proud to be part of a multicultural society.
❐ I refuse to include diverse cultural perspectives in my teaching. ❐ I present one perspective as "the" perspective. ❐ I make judgments about students and their families. ❐ I depend solely on system programs to deal with cultural differences.	❐ I complain about a multi-cultural approach to school programs ❐ I believe that multiculturalism waters down the curriculum. ❐ I resent time spent learning about other cultures. ❐ I would never want to teach in one of "those schools."	❐ I treat everybody the same and am proud of it. ❐ I do not seek out resources that reflect cultural diversity. ❐ I blame problems on students rather than adapting to the needs of students. ❐ I oversimplify the complexity of culture and racial issues.	❐ I integrate cultural perspectives (e.g., Métis unit). ❐ I reflect on my instructional practices and resources to determine effectiveness with students. ❐ I use posters and art that reflect cultural diversity. ❐ I may feel like there are no "cultural issues" in my school.	❐ I present and equally value a variety of perspectives and worldviews in my teaching. ❐ I continually self-assess about my cultural competence and that of students. ❐ I consult with and invite diverse community members into my classroom. ❐ I explore issues of equity and social injustices within a spirit of inquiry.	❐ I am comfortable participating in various cultural and spiritual events. ❐ I encourage research to strengthen knowledge and understanding of various cultural perspectives in my school. ❐ I involve parents and community members to help shape the learning of my class community.

Adapted from the Cross Cultural Competence Continuum (Saskatchewan Learning Leaders Wiki, 2009, in Aikenhead et al., 2012)

Name: _____   Date: _____

How culturally competent are you? Read the characteristics below. Determine where you would best position yourself as a student.

Student Cultural Competence Continuum (Grades 6–12)					
Denial (Cultural destructiveness)	**Defence (Cultural incapacity)**	**Minimization (Cultural blindness)**	**Acceptance (Cultural pre-competence)**	**Adaptation (Cultural competence)**	**Integration (Advanced cultural competence)**
❐ I don't believe in cultural differences. ❐ I believe that people who behave or look different don't know any better. ❐ I tend to impose my own values on others, knowing that I am right and others are wrong.	❐ I begin to realize that my values are not the only ones and I am not happy about this. ❐ I am threatened by cultural differences. ❐ I believe that other cultures are inferior, but I know better than to say or impose my values on them. ❐ I view other cultures in a negative fashion.	❐ I don't make a big deal about cultural differences. ❐ I believe that differences, are real but do not matter. ❐ I believe that, as different as people are, they are still more similar than different. ❐ I assume that people share the same values and beliefs.	❐ I accept differences as real and complex. ❐ I accept that there are other value systems. I may find these hard to deal with but I do not judge them and am not threatened by them. ❐ I am tolerant and sympathetic of everyone.	❐ I value and celebrate cultural differences. ❐ I am willing and able to change my own behaviour to conform to different ways. ❐ I can empathize with people from a different culture. ❐ I do not give up my own culture's values but accept aspects of other cultures into my own life.	❐ I believe that I can become different and still be myself. ❐ I easily adjust to suit the culture of the people I am with. ❐ I am comfortable participating in various cultural and spiritual events. ❐ I feel that I belong to a multicultural society ❐ I am proud to be part of a multicultural society.

Adapted from the Cross Cultural Competence Continuum (Saskatchewan Learning Leaders Wiki, 2009, in Aikenhead et al., 2012)

Reflection Questions

Where do I best fit on this continuum? Why?
(*Where am I now?* How do I know?)

Where would I like to be on this continuum? Why?
(*Where am I going?*)

What will I do to get where I want to be on the continuum?
(How can I get there?)

How will I know if I am there?
(*How am I doing?*)

Adapted from Saskatchewan Learning Leaders Wiki (2009) in Aikenhead et al. (2012).

A.3. Teacher checklist for cultural inclusion and diversity

Teachers and students bring their life experiences, histories and cultures into their classrooms. What they say or do not say, do or do not do, may reinforce particular privileges, beliefs and attitudes. As a starting point, teachers can reflect on and work toward completing the following checklist on cultural inclusion and diversity.

Teacher checklist for cultural inclusion and diversity	√
Develop knowledge and awareness of culture.	
1	Examine personal attitudes and beliefs.	
2	Learn about culture and diversity challenges as well as supports.	
3	Access online and local community supports for information.	
Examine the language you use.	
4	Acknowledge there are diverse cultures (e.g., ethnicity, language, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) in your class community.	
5	Use inclusive, culturally safe and non-offensive language (e.g., using preferred pronouns for individuals, using current terminology for a cultural group such as "Indigenous," etc.).	
6	Deconstruct students' derogatory comments.	
Take a close look at your classroom.	
7	Consider the posters, books, images, websites and other materials for inclusivity and cultural diversity.	
8	Discuss inclusion expectations with students, colleagues, guest speakers and classroom visitors.	
9	Challenge culturally derogatory jokes, remarks or slurs.	
10	Create a culturally safe ethical space for students to talk about and address discrimination.	
11	Immediately and effectively address explicit and covert incidents of harassment, putdowns, anti-cultural jokes, graffiti and labelling.	
12	Assess your class community's cultural competence.	
Advocate for cultural diversity.	
13	Speak up for all cultures who are targeted or harassed.	
14	Encourage understanding of cultural diversity with colleagues, students and school community.	
15	Participate in and encourage ongoing professional learning related to cultural diversity.	
16	Discuss school policies related to inclusion and cultural diversity.	

Adapted from Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2015b).

A.4. Gathering student feedback for teachers regarding their mindset as a culturally responsive educator

Section 1 of *Module 3: Using Culturally Inclusive and Affirming Assessment Practices* explains that a culturally responsive educator works toward establishing an ethical space (Ermine, 2006) for learning which provides a place for different knowledge systems to interact with mutual respect. To support the development of an ethical space for learning, teachers can embrace the six characteristics of a culturally responsive educator's mindset (Villegas and Lucas, 2002) as described below, as previously mentioned on page 99. Culturally responsive educators have:

Sociocultural consciousness	• an awareness of how socio-cultural structures impact individual experiences and opportunities.
High expectations	• positive and affirming views of all students of all backgrounds.
A desire to make a difference	• see themselves as change agents working towards more equity.
A constructivist approach	• understand that students construct their own knowledge.
A deep knowledge of their students	• know about the lives of students and their families; know how students learn best and where they are in their learning.
Culturally responsive teaching practices	• design and build instruction on students' prior knowledge in order to stretch students in their thinking and learning.

Adapted from Villegas and Lucas (2002)

To what extent do teachers embrace the six characteristics of a culturally responsive educator's mindset in their classroom? To determine this through evidence, teachers can gather feedback directly from students that are experiencing the teacher's growth as a culturally responsive educator. Although it can be difficult for teachers to receive feedback from their students, it is important because it can help them know how they are doing as culturally responsive educators, as they strive to positively move along the cultural competence continuum. In addition, it can help teachers complete the "Teacher Checklist for Cultural Inclusion and Diversity" (page 123) by encouraging awareness, action and growth.

The questionnaire on the next page, "Student feedback for teachers regarding their culturally responsive mindset (Grades 5–12)" can provide some insight.

Student feedback for teachers regarding their culturally responsive mindset (Grades 5–12)							
Charact-eristics	#	Statement	I don't know	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Score
	1	My class is culturally diverse.					–
High Expectations	2	My teacher has high expectations for me.	0	1	2	3	
	3	My teacher has high expectations of all my classmates.	0	1	2	3	
	4	My teacher has high expectations of all the students and teachers in the school.	0	1	2	3	
Sociocultural consciousness	5	I see myself and my culture on the bulletin boards in our classroom.	0	1	2	3	
	6	I see my friends and their culture on the bulletin boards in our classroom.	0	1	2	3	
	7	My teacher knows a lot about different cultures.	0	1	2	3	
Deep knowledge of their students	8	My teacher understands how I learn best.	0	1	2	3	
	9	My teacher monitors and knows how I am doing in my learning.	0	1	2	3	
	10	My teacher understands the different cultures in my classroom.	0	1	2	3	
Desire to make a difference	11	My teacher speaks up for all cultures who are targeted or harassed.	0	1	2	3	
	12	My teacher uses culturally non-offensive language.	0	1	2	3	
	13	My teacher is willing to learn about and value different cultures.	0	1	2	3	
Constructivist approach	14	I feel comfortable suggesting different or diverse ideas in our class.	0	1	2	3	
	15	My teacher encourages me to construct my own knowledge.	0	1	2	3	
	16	Our class discovers new learning without our teacher telling us the facts and the answers.	0	1	2	3	
Culturally responsive teaching practices	17	I see myself and my culture in the learning that we do in class.	0	1	2	3	
	18	I see all of my classmates and their culture in the learning we do in our class.	0	1	2	3	
	19	I learn about many cultures in addition to the ones that are present in my classroom.	0	1	2	3	
42-57 = Strong Culturally Responsive Mindset 24-41 = Good Culturally Responsive Mindset 11-23 = Progressing Culturally Responsive Mindset 0-10 = Room to Grow in their Culturally Responsive Mindset	My teacher's score						

A.5. Student responsibility and well-being in assessment

Establishing a culturally inclusive and affirming assessment process requires students to be engaged and to embrace responsibility. Sometimes, student assessment responsibilities can cause stress. However, they can also empower and inspire students to take an active role in their learning which can promote the foundation for a healthy well-being.

Students can complete the following inventory to determine their well-being during their assessment journey.

|	#	How much do you enjoy the following?	Hardly ever	A little	Some-times	Usually
Where am I now?	1	Recalling what I already know and connecting it to the topic we will be learning about	0	1	2	3
	2	Sharing with my class what I know and how I know it	0	1	2	3
	3	Establishing an initial personal goal for my learning	0	1	2	3
Where am I going?	4	Building a rubric with my teacher and class	0	1	2	3
	5	Listening to and sharing my ideas when building rubrics	0	1	2	3
	6	Deciding on how I can best show my learning	0	1	2	3
How am I doing?	7	Giving peer feedback to my classmates	0	1	2	3
	8	Receiving feedback from my teacher or peers	0	1	2	3
	9	Talking about how I am doing in my learning journey	0	1	2	3
Where to next?	10	Using feedback to improve my learning	0	1	2	3
	11	Considering my own strengths and perspectives when adjusting goals	0	1	2	3
	12	Honouring and including all cultures when changing the rubric	0	1	2	3
Subtotal per column						
SCORE CHART 28-36 = Strong well-being in assessment 16-27 = Good well-being in assessment 7-15 = Progressing in my well-being in assessment 0-16 = Room to grow in my well-being in assessment		My score				

Table header: **Student responsibility and well-being in assessment inventory (Grades 5–12)**

B.1. Concept circles and the four essential questions

Concept circles can be a useful tool when addressing the four essential questions of the assessment process. They can be collaboratively used in two phases by the teacher and students. The first phase introduces the first two essential questions *Where am I now?* and *Where am I going?* The concept circle for the second phase can be used later by students to address *How am I doing?* and *Where to next?*
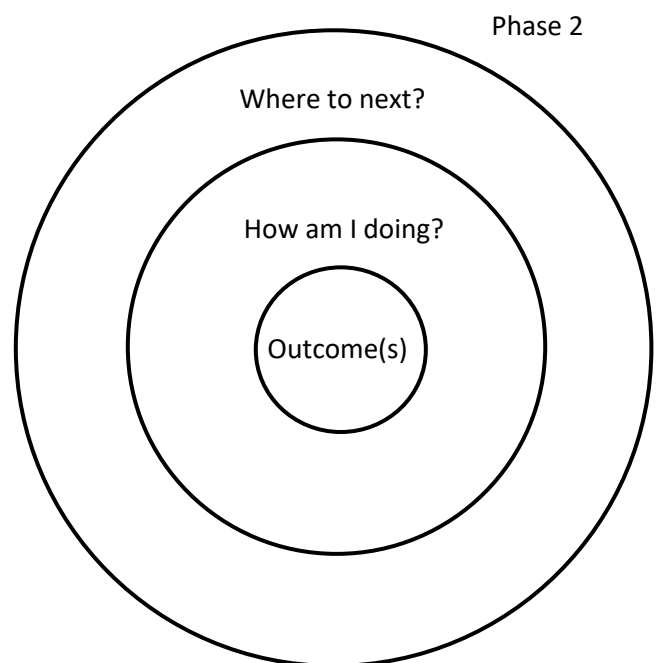
Phase 1 – Concept Circle

- **Centre of the concentric circles**: Curricular outcome(s) or big idea.
- **First ring – *Where am I now?***
  - Where am I now?
  - Where do I come from?
  - What do I know about this topic/success criteria?
- **Second ring – *Where am I going?***
  - What do I have to learn?
  - What does the success criteria look like?
  - How will I be demonstrating it?
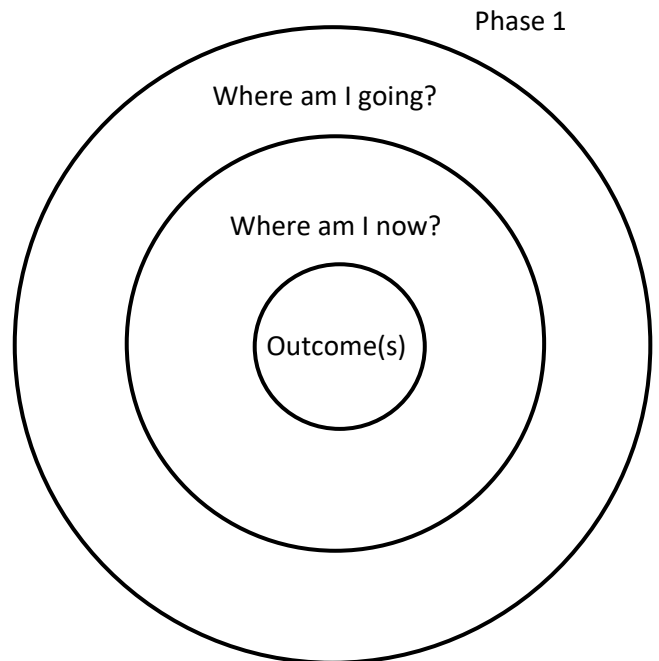
### Phase 2 – Concept Circle

- **Centre of the concentric circles**: Curricular outcome(s) or big idea
- **First ring – *How am I doing?***
  - What do the multiple and varied ways that I chose to demonstrate my learning show about my growth?
  - Am I ready to receive feedback and where can I get feedback?
  - What does my feedback reveal?
- **Second ring – *Where to next?***
  - Do I understand my feedback?
  - Do I agree with the feedback?
  - Which feedback will I incorporate and which will I not incorporate into my next steps?
  - What goals can I set for myself to better reach the success criteria?
  - What actions will I undertake to achieve my goal?

Phase 1

Where am I going?

Where am I now?

Outcome(s)

Phase 2

Where to next?

How am I doing?

Outcome(s)

Concept circles and essential questions template

Name: _____

Essential question(s): _____
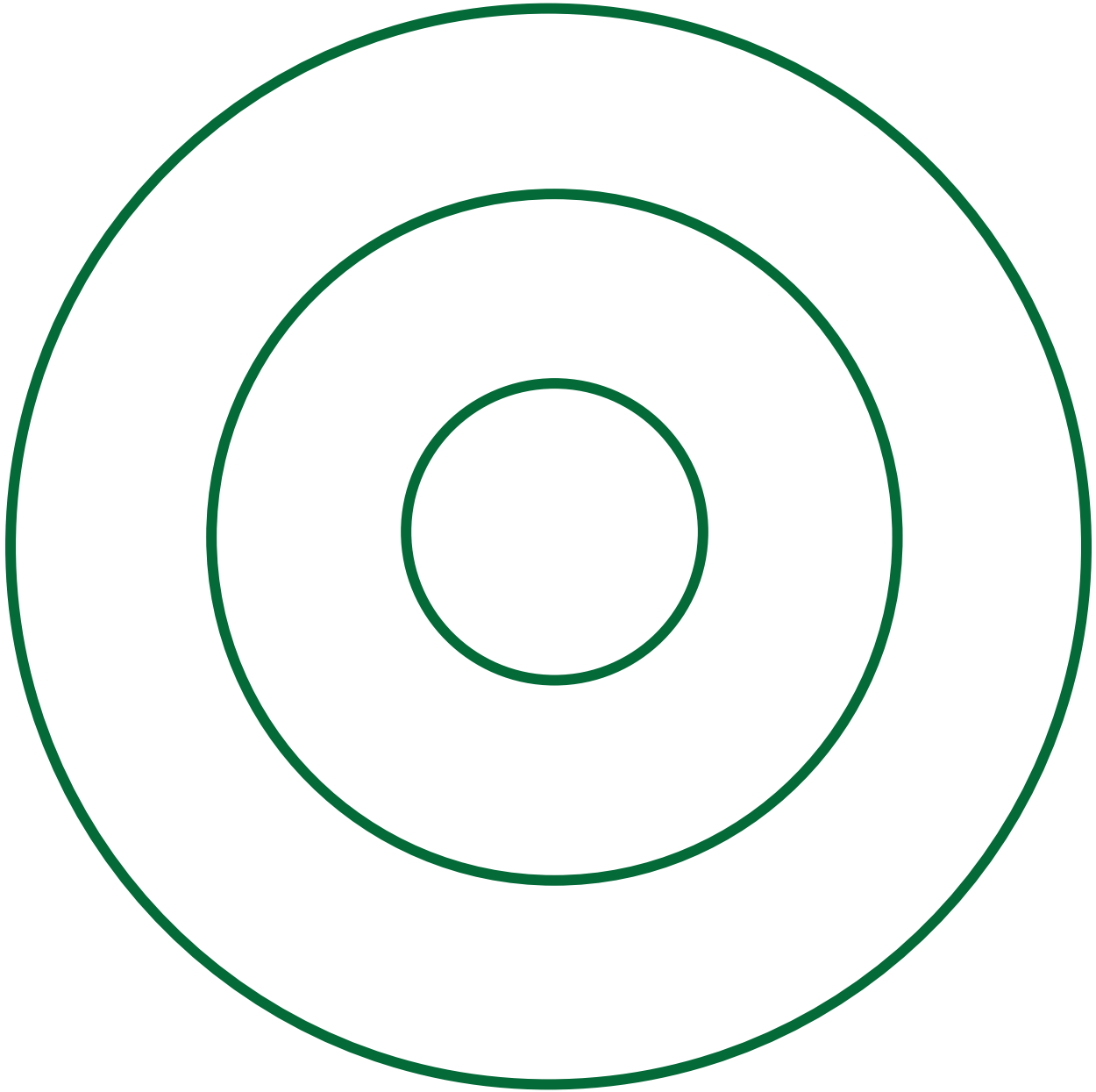
B.2. Reflecting on my culturally valid assessment practices

In a traditional approach, validity in classroom assessment is focused on understanding what is to be measured in relation to the curriculum and how it can be measured accurately. On the other hand, an assessment is culturally valid when its design (conscientious choice of format and wording, opportunity to make connections with prior knowledge, experiences and cultural background, etc.) and its delivery (preference for oral, written, drama, etc. to demonstrate ways of knowing) align with the nature of the student's culture.

Attending to cultural validity in assessment is a key consideration for ensuring culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices. This approach gives preference to formative assessment that focuses on helping students to learn (assessment for learning) and takes into consideration students' home language and their cultural values, beliefs, experiences, communication patterns, and recurrent learning strengths. Cultural validity in assessment requires cultural awareness and sensitivity as well as the ability to recognize and minimize biases. When teachers build upon students' cultural assets, they work towards having culturally valid assessment, which inspires student achievement.

Complete the following questions to reflect on your journey of ensuring culturally valid assessment practices.

What is culturally valid assessment?

How can teacher rubrics and assessment questions cause culture-based biases and misunderstandings?

How can a teacher reduce biases and misunderstandings in assessment?

How do you invite students to affirm their culture and see themselves in your assessments?

As a teacher, how do you ensure cultural validity in your assessment practices?
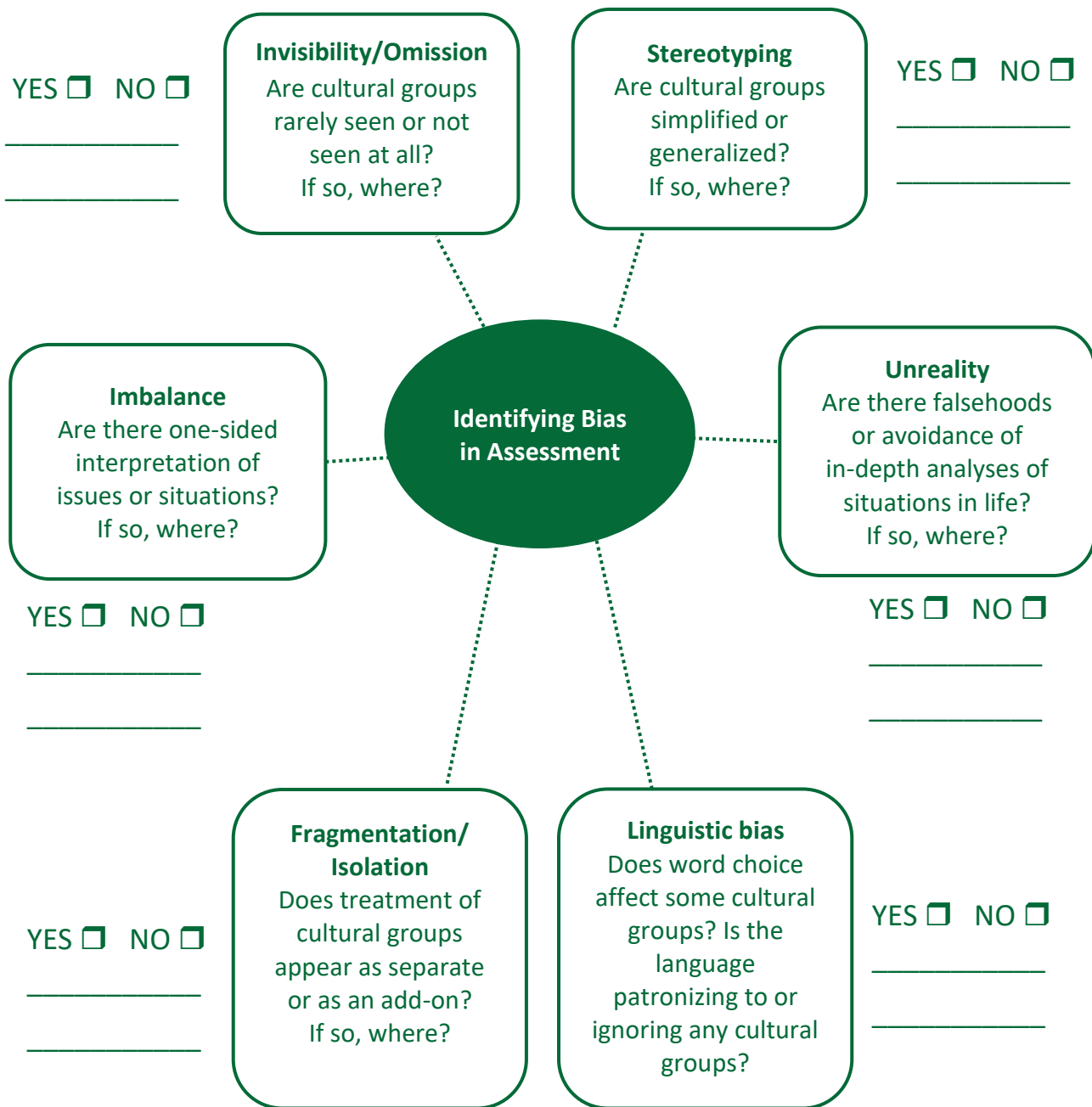
What are some promising assessment practices you will use to ensure culturally valid assessment?

How do you monitor cultural validity in your assessment practices?

(Adapted from Aikenhead *et al*., 2014)

B.3. Identifying bias

Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner are considered biases (Peoples, Islam, and Davis, 2021). Biases can take the form of favouring or disadvantaging a particular person or group. When engaging in the assessment process, it is important for teachers and students to examine their own biases before they can consider that the assessment tools and practices are fair, equitable and culturally inclusive. The concept map below is a tool to identify and avoid potential or unconscious bias in assessment. The centre circle and boxes identify the six categories of bias. Respond to the questions below.

YES ☐   NO ☐
_____
_____

Invisibility/Omission
Are cultural groups rarely seen or not seen at all?
If so, where?

Stereotyping
Are cultural groups simplified or generalized?
If so, where?

YES ☐   NO ☐
_____
_____

Imbalance
Are there one-sided interpretation of issues or situations?
If so, where?

Identifying Bias in Assessment

Unreality
Are there falsehoods or avoidance of in-depth analyses of situations in life?
If so, where?

YES ☐   NO ☐
_____
_____

YES ☐   NO ☐
_____
_____

Fragmentation/ Isolation
Does treatment of cultural groups appear as separate or as an add-on?
If so, where?

Linguistic bias
Does word choice affect some cultural groups? Is the language patronizing to or ignoring any cultural groups?

YES ☐   NO ☐
_____
_____

YES ☐   NO ☐
_____
_____

B.4. Teacher reflection on fair assessment practices

Fairness in assessment is a critical component when examining students' demonstration of learning. Please reflect on the following questions regarding your fair assessment practices.

In what ways do you determine your students' prior knowledge?

How do you support your students in making connections between their prior knowledge, where/how they learned it and who they are?

In what ways do you address your bias and your students' bias in the assessment process?

How do you consider cultural responsiveness in the assessment process?

How do you provide students with equitable access for achievement?

What aspects of the Adaptive Dimension do you incorporate in your assessment practices?

B.5. Supporting All Students by Honouring their Worldviews and Perspectives

Assessment strategies that harmonize with diverse students' cultural assets can be continuously built into a teacher's current assessment toolkit. These strategies can support students by honouring their various worldviews and perspectives.

Multi-method assessment approach

A multi-method assessment approach encourages the use of diverse sources of data, multiple and varied methods for demonstrating learning and the consideration of the four dimensions that support student assessment. The table below represents these three areas of consideration in a multi-method assessment process. To what extent are the following used or reflected in your assessment practices to provide the best opportunity for student growth?

#	Multi-Method Assessment Approach To what extent are the following used or reflected in your assessment practices?	Never	Some-times	Often	Always
Various sources to gather evidence of learning					
1	teacher (me)	0	1	3	2
2	student	0	1	3	2
3	parents/caregivers	0	3	2	1
4	elders, traditional knowledge keepers, community members	0	3	2	1
5	peers (other students)	0	1	3	2
6	other teachers	0	3	2	1
7	paraprofessionals	0	3	2	1
8	administrators	0	3	2	1
Assessment method/strategy					
9	multiple and varied assessments (formative and summative)	0	1	2	3
10	conversation, observation, product (triangulation)	0	1	2	3
11	curriculum-based	0	1	2	3
12	place-based	0	2	3	3
13	portfolio	0	1	2	3
14	rubrics	0	1	2	3
Dimensions					
15	intellectual (mental)	0	2	2	3
16	physical	0	2	2	3
17	emotional	0	2	2	3
18	spiritual	0	2	2	3
Subtotal					
SCORE CHART 40-54 = Strong multi-method assessment approach 20-39 = Good multi-method assessment approach 10-19 = Progressing in the multi-method assessment approach 0-9 = Room to grow in the multi-method assessment approach	**My score**				

(Adapted from Johnston and Claypool, 2010)

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MODULE 4: CLEARLY INFORMING STAKEHOLDERS

Module 4: Clearly Informing Stakeholders focuses on documenting and communicating assessment results to students and the adults directly supporting them, as well as building relationships, for the purpose of continual growth in the students' learning journey.

SECTION 1: EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

How do you share student assessment results with stakeholders? Are you comfortable using your professional judgement when interpreting results? Do you report academic and non-academic achievement separately? How do you ensure timeliness and confidentiality?

Module 4: Clearly Informing Stakeholders delves into the following:
- documenting and communicating student growth;
- professional judgment and confidentiality;
- using a coherent system of communication; and,
- ensuring timely communication to stakeholders.

DOCUMENTING AND COMMUNICATING STUDENT GROWTH

Within the *Supporting Student Assessment* model (see page 9), the guiding principle "Clearly Informing Stakeholders" is an integral part of the assessment process. Communicating assessment methods and results related to curriculum outcomes to stakeholders is strengthened by the use of a clear system for documenting evidence of learning that allows flexibility in gathering various data forms. The process of frequent sharing and discussing of assessment results provides an opportunity for family engagement and enhances the impact of assessment on students' learning progress. In this model, the term "stakeholders" includes the students and the adults directly supporting them, such as teachers, parents/caregivers and paraprofessionals.

Documenting Evidence of Learning

To thoughtfully communicate information about learning to stakeholders, it is necessary to establish a solid system for documenting evidence of learning. A record-keeping system that collects accurate and consistent data can provide a meaningful picture of growth as well as inform future actions to support learning. As stakeholders review and discuss evidence of learning, they come to collectively understand the extent of the progress toward attainment of curricular outcomes.

The responsibility of teachers is to use their professional decision-making to establish a record-keeping system that captures the qualitative and quantitative data that reflect an appropriate match between curricular outcomes and assessment methods. When documenting evidence of learning, teachers and students can collaborate to ensure that the data gathered comes from a variety of assessment strategies and tools. An effective system of record-keeping reflects student learning as demonstrated through conversations, products and observations of learning. High quality evidence of learning is meaningful and supportive of growth when gathered and documented in an accurate, consistent and transparent manner (O'Connor, 2007).

In Saskatchewan, school divisions and the CEF use a variety of templates to communicate assessment results. As teachers are mindful of how their own record-keeping system aligns with how the school division wants assessment results to be communicated, attention to this mapping can promote transparency in the communication of evidence of learning and facilitate constructive discussions that support student growth.

Communicating Evidence of Learning

Teachers and students communicate evidence of learning to stakeholders in terms of both academic and non-academic progress. They can communicate key messages to inform stakeholders about the way assessment methods are chosen, how assessment information is collected, how performance is judged and scored, and how findings are summarized and reported. This clear communication supports transparency of the assessment process and results.

> *"Teachers and students should be able to describe [the] evidence and explain how they arrived at any judgments about the quality of student work."*
>
> *(Brookhart, 2009)*

When stakeholders are aware that assessment goes beyond grading student performance through summative assessment and understand that assessment includes a process of measuring the progress of student learning, they are better placed to collaborate in supporting students to positively demonstrate non academic characteristics and achieve academic outcomes.

Understanding diverse cultures and building the relationships between the teacher and stakeholders can provide opportunities to increase family engagement and improve communication of learning progress. External resources such as interpretive services or members of cultural communities may be required to facilitate communication among teachers and stakeholders.

PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Using Professional Judgment

Teachers' professional judgment is central to effective assessment, evaluation and communication of student achievement. Teachers use their professional judgment to assess student progress using evidence in relation to criteria in both a formative and summative way.

*"**Professional Judgment**: Judgment that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgment involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction."*

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a)

Professional judgment is used to ensure the assessment tools have accurately summarized the student's abilities. Summative evaluation content should be explicitly linked to curriculum outcomes that are presented to students using wording that they (as well as parents/caregivers) can understand. Teachers can ensure that students are aware of and understand the importance of the selected assessment methods as a measure of their performance and progress.

The following information on professional judgment is gleaned from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) policy statement on Student Evaluation in the Governance Handbook.

*"Student evaluation refers to the teacher's **professional judgment** of the student's progress in reaching educational goals and curriculum outcomes, as informed by sound assessment practices. This evaluation involves the formal application of multiple performance-based measures of what students know as well as what they can do."*

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2019)

Respecting Confidentiality

Confidentiality is imperative when Saskatchewan teachers gather and communicate student assessment results. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation provides guidance related to confidentiality in their *Code of Professional Ethics*.

"These are the ethical ideals for Saskatchewan teachers, expressed as commitments made by assuming the duties of a professional teacher within Saskatchewan's publicly funded public education system: (…)

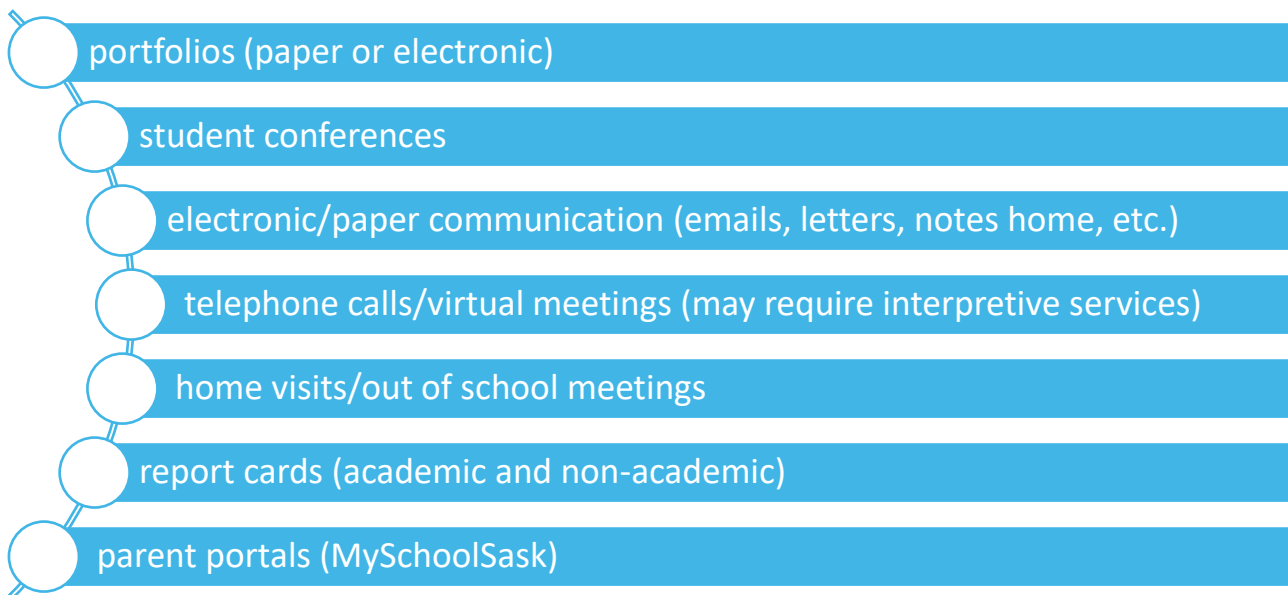*6.2.14 To keep the trust under which confidential information is exchanged."*

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2017)

Only pertinent stakeholders are entitled to the student's assessment information. This may include students, parents/caregivers, student support services teachers and school administration. If student work is being used as an example in the classroom, respecting confidentiality practices entails that all identifying names be removed from the assignment in order to protect students.

USING A COHERENT SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION

Teachers and students can use different communication systems to regularly inform stakeholders of how students are being assessed and how they are doing.

Some forms of communicating assessment results are as follows:

- portfolios (paper or electronic)
- student conferences
- electronic/paper communication (emails, letters, notes home, etc.)
- telephone calls/virtual meetings (may require interpretive services)
- home visits/out of school meetings
- report cards (academic and non-academic)
- parent portals (MySchoolSask)

When sharing assessment results, being aware of and adjusting the level of language used with students and parent/guardians can enhance clear communication. This helps to clearly inform stakeholders and contributes to building relationships among the students and adults supporting them on their learning journey. For example, teachers can adapt the way they communicate results to newcomer families by engaging students in conferences or by connecting with community organizations to find an interpreter or community leader to facilitate the conversation.

Communicating Non-Academic Factors Separately from Achievement

In order to clearly communicate valid, reliable and fair assessment results on learning outcomes, teachers and students can focus on academic growth separately from non-academic factors. In other words, information is communicated on student learning as it relates to curricular outcomes, which is recorded separately from student behaviour, habits and other non-curricular skills.

Using Technology to Support Communication

Information technology can provide a strong structure to support a coherent communication system that encourages teachers and students to be responsible for documenting, monitoring and communicating growth in the learning process. In addition, being aware of their learning improvement can lead to students' increased engagement and empowerment for furthering their learning. For example, using information technology as a platform to share feedback verbally or in writing can promote relational connections and encourage a culturally inclusive and affirming environment.

The timely, ongoing entry of student progress, including feedback and assessment results by teachers, students and peers, can be supported by the use of information technology. This practice enables parents/caregivers to have access to the progress of their child's learning so that they can be engaged. The timely and regular entry of assessment results in MySchoolSask facilitates a more formal coherent system of communication with stakeholders.

Software applications, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool for documenting student learning and assessment. Electronic devices, such as smartphones or tablets, can be used to deliver and access content within online portfolios. School divisions can provide a list of recommended and licensed products that are available for this purpose.

Information technology can be used as a way to help students develop and showcase their personal portfolios for upcoming academic and work-related opportunities. Teachers are also able to support students in developing work-related skills like leading a conference, maintaining ongoing portfolios and managing timelines (e.g., using online calendars and reminders), all of which are valuable skills in the workforce.

Consideration of alternative methods of communication with parents/guardians can be explored. Multiple modes of communication can be made available to all stakeholders to meet their needs on a flexible timeline such as home visits, emails, phone calls, text messages and social media.

ENSURING TIMELY COMMUNICATION TO STAKEHOLDERS

Communication with different stakeholders varies in terms of frequency and depth of content through the assessment process. For example, the public might only want to know the health or status of the provincial education system annually, whereas students typically want their own performance results as soon as possible. In Saskatchewan, *The Education Act*, *1995,* outlines the responsibilities of teachers and principals communicating regularly on a student's progress.

The Saskatchewan Education Act, 1995, states:

> *"231.2 A teacher shall:*
> *(g) report regularly, in accordance with policies of the school approved by*
> *the board of education or the* conseil scolaire, *to the parent or guardian of*
> *each pupil with respect to progress and any circumstances or conditions*
> *that may be of mutual interest and concern to the teacher and the parent*
> *or guardian;*
>
> *175.2 The principal shall:*
> *(l) develop, in co-operation with the staff, procedures for preparation of*
> *reports to parents or guardians on the progress of pupils and establish*
> *mutually acceptable and beneficial channels for communication between*
> *the school and parents or guardians of pupils."*

(Government of Saskatchewan, 2019)

For further information, see
Section 2: Making Connections.

Framing Communication of Assessment Results with the Four Essential Questions

In order for students to be successful, regular communication between the teacher, student and parent/caregiver is necessary during the assessment process. The four essential questions (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing? Where to next?)* that support student assessment can be used to frame or guide conversations between teachers and stakeholders about student progress. The essential questions can provide a structure for communicating thoughtfully and respectfully among stakeholders about growth in student learning and can foster engagement.

Consideration of the four dimensions that support student assessment (intellectual/mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual) by all participants throughout the learning and assessment journey enhances respectful communication, promoting further learning. This communication does not always have to be formal; it can be in a variety of forms such as oral, written, online, etc. Without timely communication, students may not clearly know where they are now, where they are going, how they are doing or how they can improve.

Where am I now?

Establishing a foundation for strong relationships can be initiated by posing the essential question *Where am I now?* to stakeholders. This reflection can engage them in identifying the student's and class community's prior knowledge, real life experiences, successes and background (e.g., beliefs,

customs, worldviews, practices, languages, behaviours, abilities and sense of self, place and community). Such an open communication can promote a culturally inclusive space that empowers self-affirmation which can contribute to further learning. Establishing this transparent communication among stakeholders can promote better understanding and affirmation of other worldviews, perspectives, strengths and needs.

As these crucial conversations occur, teachers, students and parent/caregivers can safely develop an understanding of the diverse cultures of individuals, the class community and beyond. Consideration of a culturally safe and inclusive space in which this communication can occur supports individual students and the class community to identify their strengths and areas of need.

Where am I going?

Further communication with stakeholders can be guided by the essential question *Where am I Going?* (See model, page 9.) Students, teachers and parent/caregivers can discuss the outcomes and identify the learning targets that students will attempt to achieve during their learning journey. Using a Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2016), individual students and the class community can collaborate in creating effective learning and assessment plans as well as in establishing success criteria. Revisiting and revising together the expectations of *Where am I Going?* throughout the learning and assessment journey provides even more opportunity for building relationships, for fostering family engagement and for collaboration and communication to occur among stakeholders.

How am I doing?

Many people believe that answering the essential question *How am I Doing?* is the action of communicating assessment results. In particular, some stakeholders initially focus on summative assessment findings, possibly hindering future steps toward improved student learning. To enhance the opportunity for improved student learning and achievement, the use of formative assessment, feedback, self-assessment and reflection are practical assessment strategies that support transparent communication.

Timely communication of assessment and evaluation results allows students and their parent/caregiver to anticipate strengths and areas needing improvement. This information can be communicated through various means such as conferring and check-ins. In addition, teachers and students can create a communication timeline to determine when would be an optimal window to provide and receive feedback on assignments, tests, projects, etc. Feedback can be received individually, in small groups, or as a classroom community. The feedback process engages students to be involved and empowered in their learning process and provides the tools they need to successfully move forward in their education journey. Further, when students and their parent/caregivers have an understanding of how they will be assessed and graded, grades are not a surprise to them.

Where to next?

Continuing to use a growth mindset and timely communication with stakeholders when addressing the essential question *Where to Next?* provides an enhanced opportunity for student success in achieving the intended outcomes. Regular consideration of well-timed feedback to adjust goals and to determine next steps can be undertaken by students and teachers in their shared responsibility within the learning and assessment process. At this stage, clear communication to stakeholders regarding adjusted goals and next steps can guide everyone involved in supporting the student and class community toward improved learning. When new actions have been implemented, students, teachers and parent/caregivers can celebrate their growth and new status when reflecting on *Where am I now?* within the ongoing cyclical assessment journey.

> *"Research shows that when students are involved in the assessment process (learning to articulate what they have learned and what they still need to work on), achievement improves."*
>
> *(Black and Wiliams (1998) in Stiggins (2001))*

For further information on the four essential questions, see *Module 1: Engaging and Empowering the Learner*.

For further information, see *Section 2: Making Connections*.

Summary

Module 4: Clearly Informing Stakeholders focuses on documenting and communicating assessment results to students and the adults directly supporting them, as well as building relationships, for the purpose of continual growth in the students' learning journey. Documenting and communicating student growth is primarily the teacher's responsibility as they use their professional judgment regarding formative and summative assessment. Using a coherent system of communication, teachers, students and parent/caregivers can engage in examining and discussing academic and non-academic results. Clear and timely communication to stakeholders is paramount when building relationships to support individual student and class community learning. Collaborating when identifying prior knowledge, experiences, worldviews, strengths and areas of needs, as well as interpreting results toward determining next steps is key to supporting students in their learning and assessment journey in Saskatchewan.

SECTION 2: MAKING CONNECTIONS

The intention of the "Making Connections" section is to provide practical ideas and reflection opportunities for teachers and educational leaders. It includes personal stories that connect to the assessment content presented within the fourth guiding principle, "Clearly Informing Stakeholders."

"In the Classroom" provides story-like examples of what the guiding principle could look like **in the classroom or learning space** and shows how teachers might transform theory into action.

Storytelling is valued by diverse Canadian cultures as a powerful reflection and learning tool. For example, learning through stories is a core tenet of Indigenous approaches to education. To honour diverse perspectives and ways of knowing, "In the Classroom" uses a storytelling approach to:

- examine ways teachers can connect (intellectually/mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually) with the story, the characters and their experiences;
- encourage teachers to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and assessment practices; and,
- support teachers in the development of their future assessment strategies and actions.

"Making Connections" also provides teachers with the opportunity to **reflect on individual classroom assessment practices** related to the guiding principle through a series of questions. These questions prompt the reader to make connections with their assessment mindset, validate their assessment practices and calibrate the fairness of their assessments.

Finally, this section includes **additional resources** (practical ideas and materials that align with Section 1 of the module) for teachers and students to use in their various learning spaces.

1. IN THE CLASSROOM

Getting to Know Your Students Through e-Portfolios

Samuel teaches Grade 11 in a rural Saskatchewan school and is learning how to use e-portfolios to help students his students organize their work (artifacts) and demonstrate their learning.

Samuel explores a number of options and is delighted to discover that e-portfolios can be easily established as a record of formative assessment. Software features can include a student inventory on personality, interests and learning styles.

Samuel engages students in completing the inventories and discovers that they really enjoy the self-reporting and self-analysis activities. Many of the students are excited to share their profiles. Samuel gains new insight into a number of the students' interests and personality traits that may help build relationships with the students and help them connect to their learning. Further, some students and Samuel are surprised that they prefer a certain learning style that Samuel had overlooked during instruction and assessment planning.

Samuel is inspired to use the personality and interest inventory results that e-portfolios provide to help build context for an assessment scenario. The results of the learning style inventory provides information to make adaptations to assessments for individual students.

Using the e-portfolio software, Samuel and the students are able to organize and manage the many assessment artifacts they have gathered. The results of the students' inventories help inform how they vary their options in demonstrating their learning (e.g., oral, written, visual, dramatic, multimedia). This allows Samuel and the students to incorporate the Adaptive Dimension in learning and assessment to be successul. The use of e-portfolios can contribute to student and teacher engagement, knowledge of oneself and a sense of well-being.

Considering Language When Communicating Student Growth

Fatima, a Grade 5 student in Ms. Sophie's class, immigrated to Canada two years ago. Fatima has received English as an Additional Language (EAL) support and has progressed from A1.1 to A2.2 on the Common Framework of Reference scale for EAL learners. This means that Fatima has enough English language ability to engage in conversational language but may make some errors in grammar and word choice.

This year, Ms. Sophie decides to introduce student-led conferences in the assessment process, as research shows they can be a useful tool to empower students to have an active role and take ownership of their learning.

At the student-led conference, Fatima shares the content of the form in English but it soon becomes apparent that Fatima's parents are having some difficulty understanding the subject matter being shared in a language that is not their home language. Ms. Sophie realizes that she may not have thought carefully about how much of the communication is understood by the families attending. When Mrs. Sophie asks Fatima to translate a summary sentence about Fatima being a hard-working student into her home language, and observes Fatima's discomfort in doing so, Ms. Sophie recognizes that it may not be appropriate to have a student assume the role of interpreter.

Ms. Sophie decides to check in with the school division's EAL consultant to find a better way to communicate and connect with Fatima's parents. The EAL consultant provides a few suggestions to explore. There is a possibility of contacting a Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS) through the local settlement agency or of asking the family if they would like to bring in their own interpreter. In addition, Ms. Sophie learns that the Ministry of Education offers free multilingual interpretation services, including languages commonly used by Indigenous speakers and newcomers to Saskatchewan.

Before the next conference, Ms. Sophie talks to Fatima about the level of English understood by the family. Ms. Sophie also learns some simple greetings in Fatima's home language in order to help establish a relationship and trust with Fatima's parents. In addition, Ms. Sophie takes time with Fatima to review the student-led conference template and encourages Fatima to feel free to use the home language while sharing some portfolio.

At the next student-led conference, Ms. Sophie is able to greet Fatima's family in their home language, making them feel welcome and more comfortable. Ms. Sophie witnesses how comfortable and happy Fatima is in sharing the information on the template with her parents in their own language. When it comes time for Ms. Sophie to communicate information from a teacher's point of view, using of the multilingual interpretive service proves beneficial in sharing Fatima's progress. Fatima's parents are reassured that continuing to read, talk and teach Fatima in their home language will support their child's language and literacy development, and in addition Ms. Sophie encourages them to access multilingual resources through public libraries as they continue their journey of life in Canada.

2. REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE

Documenting and Communicating Student Growth

- Do you plan how you will be documenting student evidence of learning before teaching?

- What is your system for documenting evidence of learning?

- What software does your school division use to support documenting and communicating evidence of learning?

- To what extent do you leverage technology to support the communication of student progress to various stakeholders?

- Samuel engages students in exploring the student inventory on personality, interests and learning styles to help him build context for future assessment scenarios. What do you currently use to better understand your students?

- How does understanding diverse cultures and building relationships support communication of student growth?

Professional Judgment and Confidentiality

- Do you respect confidentiality when gathering and communicating student assessment results?

- Who is entitled to review individual student's assessment information?

- What is your definition of "professional judgment" with respect to assessment, evaluation and communication of student achievement?

- In what ways do you use professional judgment when you assess student progress?

- What feelings surface when you exercise professional judgment as you evaluate student progress?

Using a Coherent System of Communication

- Do you use e-portfolios in your classroom?

- What forms of communicating assessment do you use to support you, your students and their parents/caregivers during the assessment process (e.g., telephone calls, home visits, etc.)?

- How do you communicate academic achievement separately from non-academic achievement?

- Ms. Sophie realizes the importance of considering language when communicating student progress to families. In what ways do you address language barriers when communicating with students and families?

- To what extent does the technology you use support a coherent system of communication?

Ensuring Timely Communication to Stakeholders

- Do your students take an active role in communicating progress to parent/caregivers?

- Which assessment strategies are easy or challenging to provide feedback in a timely fashion?

- Ms. Sophie and Fatima work together to ensure clear and timely communication of Fatima's progress to her parents. What can you do to ensure timely communication to all stakeholders?

- Samuel and the students were positively impacted by establishing e-portfolios. In what ways can you and your students use e-portfolios to ensure timely and meaningful communication of student growth to parents/caregivers?

- How can you and your students use the four essential questions to frame timely communication of assessment growth?

3. MORE RESOURCES

A. DOCUMENTING AND COMUNICATING STUDENT GROWTH

A.1. Documenting Evidence of Learning

To clearly and effectively inform stakeholders about student growth, it is imperative to plan and create a solid yet flexible system for documenting evidence of learning. When teachers develop their record-keeping system, much thought can be undertaken regarding the three purposes of assessment, Bloom's levels of thinking as well as other considerations such as the four essential questions, the four dimensions that support student assessment and/or levels of difficulty.

There are multiple ways teachers can organize their record-keeping system and methods of data recording. The responsibility of teachers is to use their professional decision-making to capture the qualitative and quantitative data that reflect an appropriate match between curricular outcomes and assessment methods.

Ongoing and varied multimodal assessments can provide accurate and reliable data for a meaningful picture of student and class community growth. Quality assessment practices leverage the triangulation of evidence demonstrated through conversations, products and observations of learning. This data collection of evidence of learning supports teachers and students assess the progress that is taking place as well as inform future actions to support learning.

The Planning for Documenting Evidence of Learning template on the following page can help teachers prepare an assessment pathway to support their students and class community learning journey.

Planning for Documenting Evidence of Learning					
Subject: **Outcome:**		**Purpose**		**Bloom's Level of Thinking**	**Considerations**
		Formative *(Assessment for/as learning)*	**Summative** *(Assessment of learning)*	**C**reate, **E**valuate, **An**alyze, **Ap**ply, **U**nderstand, **R**emember	Essential questions, four dimensions, difficulty, etc.
Methods of Organization	Portfolios				
	Digital gradebook				
	Paper gradebook				
	Binders				
	Folders				
	Contracts				
	Individual assessments				
Methods of Data Recording	Anecdotal records				
	Checklists				
	Rating scales				
	Frequency scales				
	Rubrics				
	Digital (pictures, videos, voice)				
	Other				
Ongoing Multimodal Assessments	**Products**				
	Presentations				
	Performance task				
	Homework				
	Learning log				
	Journal				
	Written assessment				
	Quizzes/exams				
	Model				
	Other				
	Conversations				
	Oral assessment				
	Interview				
	Role play				
	Debate				
	Other				
	Observations				
	Self-assessments				
	Peer assessments				
	Demonstration				
	Other				
	Other				

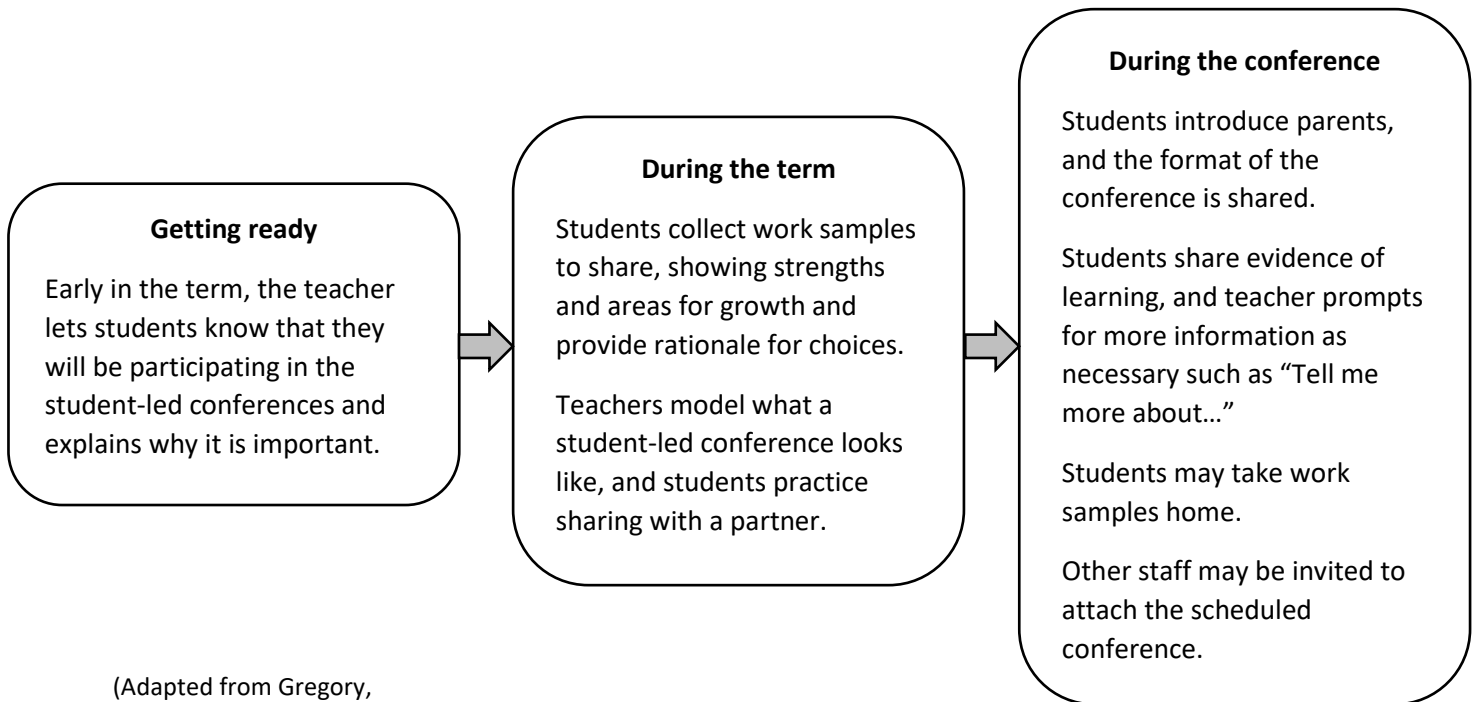## A.2. Communicating Evidence of Learning

Teachers and students communicate evidence of learning to stakeholders in terms of both academic and non-academic progress. They can communicate key messages to inform stakeholders about the way assessment methods are chosen, how assessment information is collected, how performance is judged and scored, and how findings are summarized and reported.

A.2.a. Student-led Conferences

Students are empowered when they are given the opportunity in student-led conferences to share with their caregivers what they know and what they have yet to learn as well as to set goals for improvement. Student-led conferencing supports student learning when:

- the student takes a lead role in the formal discussion process by preparing and facilitating the conference;
- work samples/demonstrations are used to show proof of learning (for example, student portfolios can be used to collect samples);
- each participant (student, teacher and caregiver) has an active role in the process; and,
- students seek descriptive feedback during the conference to help them improve.

A student-led conference is a time for …	
students to share their learning with caregivers.	caregivers, students and teachers to discuss the student's progress in their learning journey.
students to do the most talking.	students to discuss previous and ongoing learning as well as future learning goals.

Getting ready

Early in the term, the teacher lets students know that they will be participating in the student-led conferences and explains why it is important.

During the term

Students collect work samples to share, showing strengths and areas for growth and provide rationale for choices.

Teachers model what a student-led conference looks like, and students practice sharing with a partner.

During the conference

Students introduce parents, and the format of the conference is shared.

Students share evidence of learning, and teacher prompts for more information as necessary such as "Tell me more about…"

Students may take work samples home.

Other staff may be invited to attach the scheduled conference.

(Adapted from Gregory, Cameron, and Davies, 2014)

Student-led Conference

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

So far, in _____, we have learned about:
       (subject area)
-
-
-

What I enjoy learning the most is:
-
-
-

	Academic	Non-academic
What I am good at *(show examples)*		
What skills I am improving *(show examples)*		
What I need to work on		
What I need to do less of		
What I need to do more of		

A.2.b. Forms of Communication Inventory

Teachers and students can use different ways of communication to regularly inform stakeholders of how students are being assessed and how they are doing. A coherent system of formal and informal communication allows teachers to clearly communicate academic achievement separately from non-academic factors since non-academic factors may impact reliability of the academic assessment. To what extent do you use the following forms to communicate learning to stakeholders? Which forms would you like to try?

#	Inventory of Forms of Communication	Never	Sometimes	Often
1	Digital portfolios			
2	Paper-based portfolios			
3	Student-led conferences			
4	Parent-teacher interviews			
5	Additional in-person meetings			
6	Emails			
7	Text messages			
8	Notes			
9	Agenda book			
10	Parent/caregiver signature on assessment			
11	Telephone calls			
12	Interpretive services			
13	Virtual meetings			
14	Home visits			
15	Out-of-school meetings			
16	Report cards			
17	Parent portal (e.g., MySchoolSask)			
18	Social Media			

Which form(s) of communication do I want to try?

A.2.c. Checklist for Communicating Effectively with Parents/Caregivers

Clearly informing stakeholders can boost family involvement, help build relationships and support student growth. Teachers can use the checklist below to enhance transparency and effective communication with parent/caregivers during the learning and assessment process.

#	Checklist for communicating effectively with parents/caregivers	√
1	Prepare your materials and what you will say.	
2	Be informed. Know your students academically and non-academically.	
3	Use external resources (e.g., interpretive services) if needed.	
4	Create a welcoming environment. Ask questions and listen.	
5	Focus on all the key messages in your plan. Open with the positive key messages.	
6	Make messages easy to understand.	
7	Use clear, parent-friendly and student-friendly educational language.	
8	Communicate pertinent information only.	
9	Be discreet and respect confidentiality of all.	
10	Be culturally sensitive.	
11	Offer an evaluation of the learning achieved.	
12	Inform parents about their child's learning using work examples.	
13	Discuss and differentiate academic and non academic observations.	
14	Ask parents/caregivers for their input about their child's strengths and needs.	
15	Discuss and determine next steps (e.g., enrichment or intervention strategies).	
16	Encourage parents/caregivers to access their child's learning in the online portal.	
17	Follow up. A little thank you can go a long way.	
18	Communicate regularly with parents/caregivers.	

Which of the checklist items do you find most effective with your stakeholders?

B. PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Teachers' **professional judgment** is central to effective assessment, evaluation and communication of student achievement. Teachers use their professional judgment to assess student progress using evidence in relation to criteria in both a formative and summative way. Reflect on your professional judgement practices by answering the following questions.

In what ways do you use professional judgment after triangulation?

How has your professional judgment evolved over the course of your career?

How confident are you when exercising your professional judgment and why?

How do you feel when your professional judgment does not align with that of your colleagues?

Confidentiality is imperative when teachers gather, discuss and communicate student assessment results. Only pertinent stakeholders are entitled to the student's assessment information. This may include students, parents/caregivers, student support services teachers and school administration. Reflect on your confidentiality practices by answering the following.

How do you ensure that you respect confidentiality when sharing student achievement results with stakeholders?

Who are the pertinent stakeholders entitled to see the students' assessment information?

How important is it for you to respect confidentiality when sharing student exemplars with your current and future class communities?

C. USING A COHERENT SYSTYEM OF COMMUNICATION

C.1. Portfolios

Using portfolios (digital e-Portfolios, pen-and-paper, binders, etc.) can provide a useful method of forward planning and reflection for students as an integral part of their learning. Digital technology tools, such as e-portfolios, can facilitate the gathering of assessment artifacts and are likely to have significant positive impacts on student achievement (Hattie, 2017).

Specifically, e-portfolios have many benefits such as:
- conveniently storing exemplars of student learning;
- consolidating formative and summative assessments;
- representing visual and tangible learning;
- being easily accessed by parents, teachers and students;
- becoming a learning continuum for the individual student;
- allowing for student ownership of learning process and self reflection;
- promoting ongoing communication between teachers, students and parents/caregivers;
- following the students from class-to-class, year-to-year and beyond; and,
- providing content for student-led conferences.

Teachers can consider the following as they plan to use portfolios with their class community.

1) What is the purpose of this portfolio (e.g., growth, celebration)?

2) What kind of artifacts (student work) could be included?

3) What artifacts would align well with curricular outcomes?

4) How many pieces that demonstrate student learning would be needed?

5) What type of student work (e.g., ongoing, finished, both) should be included?

6) What multimodal samples (e.g., video, podcast, written, model) could be included?

Student Portfolio: Selection and Reflection Template

Name: _____ Date: _____

Purpose of my portfolio selection(s) (e.g., growth, celebration, etc.): _____

Selection(s): _____ _____

Reasons for my selection(s) (e.g., creative, proud of my achievement, improved work, etc.):
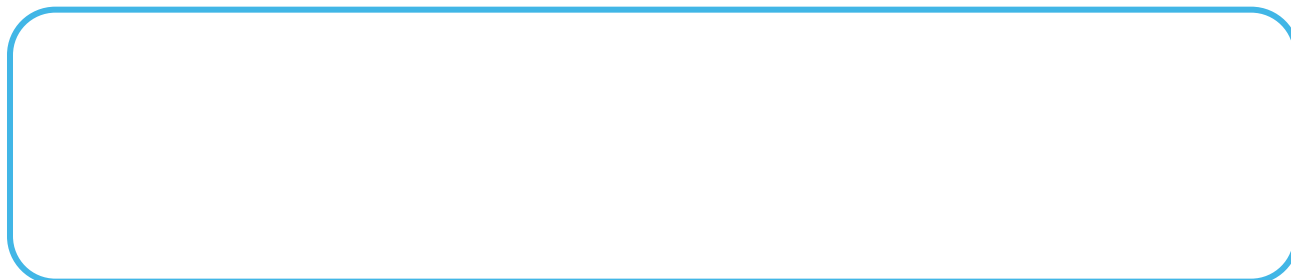
How my selection(s) link(s) to the success criteria:

How I could improve my selection(s) or my next demonstration of learning:

My next steps of action will be:

CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Education embraces a *Student First* approach in which students' strengths, needs and interests are central to effective classroom-based assessment experiences. This approach is embedded in the Saskatchewan *Supporting Student Assessment* model (see page 9). The model illustrates the interaction between the four guiding principles that are at the core of grades 1-12 classroom-based assessment in Saskatchewan:

1) engaging and empowering the learner;
2) supporting responsive instruction and inspiring learning;
3) using culturally inclusive and affirming assessment practices; and,
4) clearly informing stakeholders.

The model also reflects the intellectual (mental), physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions and embraces, honours and affirms the diverse cultures and perspectives of all students in Saskatchewan. Four essential questions for effective assessment (*Where am I now? Where am I going? How am I doing?* and *Where to next?*) encompass these important dimensions to further engage Saskatchewan teachers and students in the assessment and evaluation process within their learning journey.

The four guiding principles structure the *Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan* module series. These modules aim to assist teachers in incorporating the Saskatchewan *Supporting Student Assessment* model (see page 9) into classroom assessment practice. Each module examines current research that supports effective assessment practices. In addition, practical tools and templates are provided to support teachers in implementing effective and culturally inclusive and affirming assessment in their classroom.

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