



Diagnostic Assessment in Support of Student Learning Policy/Program Memorandum No. 155

Analysis for Principals and Vice-Principals Use

The **purpose** of Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 155, *Diagnostic Assessment in Support of Student Learning*, is to outline how diagnostic assessment tools may be used effectively to inform teaching and learning practices in the classroom in support of student achievement.

PPM 155 states “The Education Act and regulations made under the act, the policy outlined in Growing Success, and related ministry policies and frameworks, such as the Ontario Leadership Framework and the School Effectiveness Framework, **are not altered by the direction given in this memorandum.**” (p.1)

PPM 155 does not apply to the following types of assessment:

- ✓ Special education assessments (Refer to Growing Success Policy Chapter 7 pages 69-74)
- ✓ Large-scale assessments such as:
 - EQAO – Grade 3, 6, 9 and OSSLT
 - Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
 - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)
 - Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRL)
 - Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP)
 - Other Ministry-mandated assessments

PPM 155 also states, “Teachers, principals, and school board staff share a **collective responsibility and accountability** for student achievement “ and “..... successful implementation of policy depends on the **professional judgement of educators at all levels...**” (p.4)

1.0 Collective responsibilities of Boards, Principals and Teachers are outlined in PPM 155 as follows:

1.1 Boards

- Collect through the use of quality diagnostic assessment tools, valid and reliable data and information on student achievement.
- Shall establish and provide a list of approved diagnostic assessment tools that are consistent with their board plans for improving student learning and achievement.
- Will consider the criteria for selection of diagnostic assessment tools
- Continue to periodically review and update, where necessary, the approved list of diagnostic assessment tools.
- Collaborate to develop a common understanding of the planning process and the need for student data and information that can inform actions taken to improve student learning.

(PPM 155, p 3-5)

1.2 Principals

- Ensure a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on student learning.
- Will provide leadership when working in collaboration with teachers to gather information about students' learning in support of school and board improvement plans for student achievement.

(PPM 155, p 5)

1.3 Teachers

Teachers will use their professional judgement, as defined in *Growing Success*, when selecting and using diagnostic assessment tools.

Teachers must utilize diagnostic assessment during the school year, selecting tools from the board's approved list.

In selecting and using diagnostic assessment tools from the board's list, teachers shall determine the following:

- The diagnostic assessment tools that are applicable;
- Which student(s) will be assessed (individual student, small group, or whole class);
- The frequency of use of the diagnostic assessment tools;
- The appropriate timing of the use of the diagnostic assessment tools.

(PPM 155, p 5)

2.0 Professional Judgement

Growing Success, page 152 defines **professional judgment** as follows:

"Judgement 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, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction."

3.0 Diagnostic Assessment

In *Growing Success*, the term **diagnostic assessment** is defined as "assessment that is used to identify a student's needs and abilities and the student's readiness to acquire the knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum expectations. Diagnostic assessment usually takes place at the start of a school year, term, semester, or teaching unit. It is a key tool used by teachers in planning instruction and setting appropriate learning goals". (p. 146).

Diagnostic assessment provides information that is "used by teachers and students to determine what students already know and can do with respect to the knowledge and skills identified in the overall and specific expectations" (p. 31 *Growing Success*).

A list of **TDSB Approved Diagnostic Assessment Tools** in support of student learning that are consistent with TDSB board plans for improving student learning and achievement is attached.

4.0 Contact Information

Tracy Hayhurst Central Coordinating Principal Teaching & Learning – Elementary

tracy.hayhurst@tdsb.on.ca

John Tancredi Central Coordinating Principal Teaching & Learning – FSL, ESL and Mathematics

john.tancredi@tdsb.on.ca

Mary Jane McNamara Central Coordinating Principal Teaching and Learning – Secondary

maryjane.mcnamara@tdsb.on.ca

TDSB Approved List of Diagnostic Assessment Tools

Assessment/Tool	Grades/Division	Purpose	Recommended Timelines
Observation Survey	Early Years	Provides a comprehensive overview of a student's level of literacy development; measures students' skills and understanding of reading and writing.	On-going
Running Records & Reading Conference	Primary	Document student's reading behaviours to determine a student's instructional reading level; to create dynamic guided reading groups; to allow for documentation of progress over time	On-going for all students; more frequently for those students who are experiencing difficulty with text (i.e., at least once every two weeks)
Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA)	Primary K-3 Junior 4-6 Intermediate 7-8	Provides information about individual student's skills in reading (decoding, fluency and comprehension); assists in making instructional decisions when grouping students for modeled, shared, guided, and independent reading	Senior Kindergarten (Spring) only for students demonstrating an understanding of the concepts of print Grade 1 – 8, minimally twice a year especially for students who are at level 2 and below in reading and writing
Comprehension, Attitude, Strategies, Interests (CASI)	Junior 4-6 Intermediate 7-8	Assists teachers in determining students' strengths and learning needs individually, as small groups or whole class profile; also provide information on students' attitudes to reading, reading preferences and interests Assists in making instructional decisions when grouping students for modeled, shared, guided, and independent reading	Grades 4 – 8: Fall and Spring Reading assessment may be administered in the middle of the year with students who require closer monitoring in reading.
Literacy Success Kit	Intermediate 9 - 10	Intended for Grade 9 or Grade 10 English courses or any subject. Assists teachers in determining students' strengths and learning needs individually, as small groups or whole class profile;	Grades 9 – 10: 4 -6 weeks into the course semestered school or 10-12 weeks in a non-semestered school.
Le Sondage d'observations	French Immersion K – Grade 1	Provides a comprehensive overview of a student's level of literacy development; measures students' skills and understanding of reading and writing.	SK – Grade 1: Fall as appropriate
Alpha Jeunes	French Immersion Grade 1 - 3	Provides information about Individual student's skills in reading by completing a miscue analysis of oral reading and assessing a retell of the text in French. The information assists teachers to make instructional decisions when grouping students for modeled, shared, guided, and independent reading.	SK and grade 1 students who demonstrate readiness Grade 1: spring only. Grades 2-3: fall and spring.
Trousse Diagnostique de Lecture	French Immersion Grades 4 - 8	Assists teachers in determining students' strengths and learning needs with respect to reading comprehension and critical thinking skills and to determine appropriate teaching strategies for reading.	Grade 4: Fall and Spring. Grade 5 - 8: once a year in French and CASI administered once a year in English.

		Assists in making instructional decisions when grouping students for modeled, shared, guided, and independent reading	Assessments can be completed in the middle of the year to individual students who require monitoring in either French or English or both.
Nelson Mathematics (version française disponible)	Mathematics K - 12	Allows the teacher to assess prior mathematical concepts and skills and assists teachers in making instructional decisions.	Before beginning a new unit of study.
Pearson Mathematics (version française disponible)	Mathematics K - 12	Allows the teacher to assess prior mathematical concepts and skill and assists teachers in making instructional decisions.	Before beginning a new unit of study
McGraw-Hill (version française disponible)	Mathematics K - 12	Allows the teacher to assess prior mathematical concepts and skills and assists teachers in making instructional decisions.	Before beginning a new unit of study
Leaps and Bounds	Mathematics Grades 3 - 9	Identify significant gaps in understanding to enables teachers to build on what students know to close critical gaps. Assists in making instructional decisions and provide strategies to address gaps	As needed when working with struggling students.
GAP Closing	Mathematics J/I English and French I/S English and French	Help teachers identify more specifically what students know and where difficulties lie. Assists in making instructional decisions to address difficulties	As needed when working with struggling students.
ONAP	Mathematics	Provides data on the achievement of the overall and specific expectations from the previous grade. Allows for: detailed student and class profiles; areas where students require additional support; trends in achievement; planning of learning experiences so that the different needs of students are addressed	ONAP can be administered before the teaching of a strand or a cluster of expectations within strand
Numeracy Nets	Mathematics K-8	An assessment and planning tool comprised of a series of diagnostic tasks that provide teachers with feedback on students' understanding of critical prerequisite math concepts.	Numeracy Nets can be administered formally or informally before and throughout a unit of study.
Canadian Achievement Tests (CAT4)	For Grade 2–9 students in all Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAT4 assessments are used in MSIC schools to gage students' yearly academic progress over time. • The assessments measure students' foundation skills in reading, writing and math. • Test results at the individual, class and school levels provide schools with information that identifies strengths and pinpoints areas for improvement. 	September – October of the school year.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment between the CAT4 questions and the Ontario Curriculum Specific Expectations for each grade level is shared with school staff. • MSIC lead teachers and coaches work with each staff to unpack the results and offer suggestions for next steps. 	
Burns-Roe Reading Inventory	ELD - LEAP	Determine students' levels of literacy in reading vocabulary, comprehension and decoding skills; information taken into account at the yearly LEAP review, April/May.	Twice per year: beginning and near year end
ERGO	ESL – Elementary and Secondary	Initial assessment of oral, reading and writing skills. Elementary assessment enables teachers to provide the appropriate program, resources, modifications and/or adaptations to an ELL's program. Secondary version is aligned with ESL courses of study for secondary school program placement.	The tool is used once as initial assessment
STEPS to English Language Proficiency	ESL	For assessing and monitoring English language learners language acquisition and literacy development across the Ontario curriculum (oral, reading, writing)	K – 12 Initial diagnostic and at reporting intervals.