



## Focus on

# Assessment

## Details

### Issue

This edition of the Education Change Bulletin will focus on assessment at the provincial, district, and classroom level.

### Provincial Level Assessments

Due to the failure of the government to agree to the Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment's recommendation that Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) school and student data be protected from misuse by third parties, the BCTF is not participating in the development or piloting of the FSAs, and is opposed to their use in the current context.

In addition, the Federation is not participating in the development or piloting of the graduation replacement provincial exams. Please remind members not to put forward their names for the FSA or provincial exam development teams.

Due to the limitations and harm caused by standardized tests, members are encouraged not to use any Provincial Student Assessment Program data at the school level.

### Elementary Foundation Skills Assessment

The provincial government has been administering the FSA tests to all students in Grades 4 and 7 since 2000. This exam in its current state, however, does not align with the K–9 curriculum revisions.

The discussion around an FSA replacement exam began in 2013. The Federation participated in these discussions on the premise that school and student data must be

protected and not misused by third parties. However, due to the government failure to adhere to this recommendation made by the Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment, the Federation has withdrawn from participation.

The FSA replacement is being piloted at the same time that the current FSA is being administered. The Federation maintains that administering both FSA tools this year is wasting valuable and much needed resource funds.

The Federation's position is that the purpose of a provincial assessment tool should be a system-wide check. This is especially relevant this year with system-wide curriculum revisions. The FSA is not a tool to measure individual student achievement. The classroom teacher is the best source for information on individual student achievement, not a provincial standardized assessment tool.

Teachers want to be sharing reliable information with parents about their child's progress. This test does not help students learn or teachers teach. It takes valuable time and resources away from the classroom learning and undermines the ability to provide meaningful learning experiences for all students.

The FSA results are misused by a private organization to rank schools based on a very narrow measure. The FSA tests do not result in any additional funding or support for students.

## **Provincial Exams 10–12**

The system is currently transitioning toward the elimination of the current provincial exam structure related to the 10–12 curriculum implementation. The current exam structure will be replaced with a numeracy and literacy exam.

The proposal is that the new numeracy and literacy exams not be tied to a specific course, as they are broad-based measures.

Students will need to write the exam prior to graduation. Students will be able to rewrite these exams.

The new numeracy exam will be implemented in the 2017–18 school year. The Initial administration is proposed for January 2018.

The Language Arts 12 group of exams (EN 12, EFP 12, COM 12) will not be replaced until after the new curriculum is implemented in 2018–19, and the new provincial literacy exam is implemented. The initial literacy exam administration is proposed for January 2019.

Current Grade 10–11 provincial exams will continue to be available until June 2017 for students who have completed associated course work by June 30, 2016.

By January 2019, all previous provincial exams will be replaced with the numeracy and literacy exams.

The Ministry has recently communicated to superintendents that the numeracy and literacy results will appear on a student's transcript. This was never discussed at the assessment meetings. The BCTF takes exception to this Ministry recommendation, as these results now become high-stakes. The Federation is following up with the Ministry on their recommendation regarding this practice.

See the [December 14, 2016](#) edition of the Education Change Bulletin for a more detailed description for this school year.

## **District Level Assessment**

The elimination of many provincial assessments should not be used as a reason to increase the number of district-mandated assessment tools. Across the province, districts require teachers to administer a wide range and growing number of assessments. Members are encouraged to be vocal and question the rationale for the number and variety of district-mandated assessment tools, as well as maintaining that results must be linked to improved funding to support identified areas.

Additionally, release time and funding for mandated curriculum-related assessment tools are the responsibility of the school district and the Ministry of Education. Teachers are reminded not to use their professional development funds or days in regards to district- or government-mandated initiatives. The responsibility rests with government or the employer to provide the necessary time, training, and supports.

Teachers shouldn't need to forfeit their professional development days for this purpose, nor feel pressured to do so. Teachers must always be mindful that the tools do not impact their professional autonomy.

## **Classroom-Based Assessment**

Classroom assessments developed by teachers for the purposes of supporting student learning continue to be superior to any tool introduced from the outside.

The Ministry stated, "There will be a greater focus on classroom assessment that is flexible and personalized, and give educators greater flexibility to decide how and when students are assessed."

There will be information coming from both the district and the Ministry around classroom assessment. This information should be considered as guidelines, as teachers have professional autonomy over classroom-based assessment decisions.

## **Core Competency: Student Self-Assessment**

Self-assessments for students of the intellectual, personal, social, and emotional core competency proficiencies is not an evaluation done by the teacher. It is, however, teacher-supported. The Student Progress Report Order states that written reports for K–9 students must include a student self-assessment on core competencies at the end of the school year.

It must be a meaningful process and not reduced to a template or checklist exercise by the teacher. The self-assessment process will require varying levels of teacher support in assisting the students with effective self-assessment. Student choice in the format will be an important consideration. The Ministry will be sending out information shortly regarding some suggestions around the process. School districts set

procedures around the documentation of these year-end self-assessments.

It is not reasonable to expect that students will successfully assess all the core competencies at year-end. It is more important that one or two core competencies be focused on for self-assessment purposes. At these early stages, it is critical that teachers discuss how to support student self-assessment if the process is to be authentic and not one that is reduced to a bureaucratic paperwork requirement. This recommendation has been communicated to the Ministry. The student profiles on the Ministry website can be used in shaping the self-assessment of core competencies. It is important to note, however, that numerical organization of the core competency student profiles do not equate to grade levels, and should not be interpreted as such.

## **BCTF Advice**

Teachers are reminded that teacher engagement in education change is guided and supported by the following principles:

1. Education change must:

- **be fully resourced in release time, in-service, funding, technology, and support materials**
- be recognized as a process that unfolds over time
- **consider and respect reasonable teacher workload boundaries**
- **adopt clear guidelines for communication of student progress and focus on teacher-selected reporting tools that are timely, reasonable, and sustainable**
- respect teachers as professionals whose knowledge and input is actively sought and integrated
- **preserve teacher autonomy in selecting pedagogical, instructional, and assessment approaches and tools**

- support and advance equity in our schools and among students
- support students with special needs
- support the infusion of Aboriginal content and understandings throughout the curriculum.

2. Ensure that the school staff curriculum committee is addressing the related issues of assessment and reporting.
3. Communicate with your local regarding specific concerns and issues you have about any assessment-related concerns. Local Presidents in turn relay concerns to the BCTF.
4. Send your feedback directly to the BCTF at [curriculumfeedback@bctf.ca](mailto:curriculumfeedback@bctf.ca).
5. [Send the Ministry your feedback.](#)

## Links

### BCTF documents

- [Guiding Principles for Educational Change](#)
  - [BCTF Full-time table officers update on implementation of the restored working and learning conditions](#)
- updated curriculum information on the at [this BCTF website](#)
  - Curriculum resources on [TeachBC](#).