

Assessment at Ramallah Friends School – Lower School

Assessment is a cornerstone in the teaching and learning process. It defines the roadmap for teachers to better understand their students' needs by collecting and analyzing information about students' knowledge, understanding, and abilities throughout the learning process.

Assessment at the Ramallah Friends School is mainly focused on the enhancement of individual student's learning according to their individual learning styles. We believe that assessment is an ongoing and developmental process that is driven by students' needs and directed by the clarity of teachers' understanding of what students should know according to the overall expectations that present the developmental continuums, which are in turn used as diagnostic tools. We use these expectations for different subjects in a meaningful way. We believe that well planned assessment will guide us to in the evaluation of our program and how our students are benefiting from it while keeping in mind their individual interests and learning styles.

Prior to 2013, the school's assessment policy was based on traditional examination methods. However, after the decision was taken to transition to the PYP and teachers attended PYP workshops, teachers started to include formative as well as summative assessment of learning in their planners, and using different assessment strategies and tools.

In the course of obtaining the PYP authorization, we utilized the requirements stated in *Section C: Curriculum: Standard C4: Assessment: Assessment at the school reflects the IB assessment philosophy*; to evaluate our assessment process, how we gather information about our students' performance, and how we use this information in the learning process. In August 2015 the school's teachers and administrators revised our standards relating to the different subjects guided by the PYP scope and sequence documents. The findings were compared with the PYP perspective on assessment and Section C in the standards and practices document. We started reflecting on our assessment practices and replacing the school's Report Cards with new ones that meet the program's requirements. Moreover, we replaced the grading scale twice to measure individual student's progress towards the overall expectations using different assessment strategies and tools and with the help and support of the learning support department necessary modifications and amendments are made to the assessment tasks to address different students' needs. This provided our teachers with a better tool to record students' achievements and convey them to parents and school administration.

This assessment policy is developed to realize the above mentioned objectives and also to meet PYP requirements on assessment.

At RFS we believe that effective assessment:

- Contributes to the enhancement of student learning through diverse strategies and tools.
- Provides guidance and feedback for teachers, learners, parents, and administrators to advance learners' performance and address their needs.
- Allows the school to monitor efficiency of the program.
- Takes into consideration different learning styles and developmental abilities through educating teachers about the different learning styles of the students, with the support and supervision of the learning support department.
- Determines the level of current student knowledge and experience before moving onto new learning.
- Allows students to demonstrate and share their learning and understanding with peers, teachers and parents through the different opportunities given to them throughout the teaching-learning process.
- Provides guidance for further learning planning and curriculum development.
- Shows what students know, understand, and are able to apply.

Assessment in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) at RFS:

- Answers the question on the third component of the PYP of curriculum (How will we know what we have learned?)
- Is subdivided into three components: Assessing, Recording, and Reporting.
- Is the gathering and analysis of information about a learner's performance through identifying what they know, understand, and are able to do and feel at different stages in the learning process.
- Is fundamental to the PYP's goal of effectively guiding learners through the five essential elements of curriculum: understanding concepts, acquisition of knowledge, mastering transdisciplinary skills, developing attitudes, and decision to take appropriate action.
- Uses a variety of assessment strategies and tools: Observations, performance assessments, process-focused assessments, selected responses, and open-ended tasks and portfolios.

Assessment components at RFS

Assessing: How do we identify what students have learned?

- **Assessing learner's prior knowledge and experiences:**
Assessing prior knowledge and experiences is a vehicle for both formative and summative assessments. This involves making judgments on how a learner is performing along a predetermined set of criteria that enables teachers to plan and refine their teaching accordingly through modifications that are required to meet the needs of individuals or the group of learners.

Formative Assessment

- Provides information that is used to plan the next stage in learning to ensure a direct link between the teaching and the learning process.
- Allows both the teacher and the learner to guide instruction and gives an idea about the effectiveness and enthusiasm on what is being learned.

Examples of formative assessments in an IB classroom:

- Class observations and spontaneous responses from learners
- Group discussions
- Learners' projects, drawings and journals
- Quizzes and tests
- Peer assessments
- Venn Diagrams and other graphic organizers
- Self-evaluations

Summative Assessment

- Takes place at the end of the teaching and learning process and aims at giving teachers and learners a clear idea about learners' understanding by allowing learners to show what they have learned at the culmination of the teaching and learning process.
- Gives learners an opportunity to demonstrate what has been learned through inquiry and allows them to show their deep understanding of the central idea.
- May include any or a combination of the following: acquisition of data, combination of information, and application of knowledge.
- Assessment tasks will reflect the PYP program objectives and assessment criteria. They should be assessing and demonstrating the knowledge and deeper understanding the learners has gained when answering the guiding question of the unit. This assessment should not just be a repetition of an activity done in class time, but should be a separate activity.
- When designing the assessment form, teachers need to decide on the criteria they will use to assess learners. Teachers will amend and modify the assessment task and rubric to address the different leaning needs of learners. The students should receive this rubric along with the assigned task.

Examples of summative assessments in a PYP classroom:

- Multimedia presentation
 - Creating a model
 - Oral presentation to the class
 - Written report
 - Making a debate
 - Writing a persuasive essay
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- At the end of a unit, learners will often be involved in **peer assessment** where they can share their opinions about the work done by their classmate and **self-assessment** where they will have the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and the knowledge they have gained.

Recording

Assessment Strategies: How do we collect data we need?

Collecting and analyzing data needs a range of different strategies and tools that can help teachers gather and record information about their students' learning. Choosing the appropriate strategy and taking into consideration the most applicable and relevant tool to record the information will help us ensure effective assessment of the learning process. Strategies will provide us with methods to gather information, where tools are used to collect the needed data.

Observations

Observation is our main strategy for gathering information. It is used at all times, as it is quick, easy and very effective, especially when it is done intentionally. Observation is ongoing and it includes making anecdotal records regularly.

We have two forms of observation:

- **Incidental observations:** these are informal and take place while the teacher goes through the classroom as learners are engaged in classroom tasks and activities.
- **Planned observations:** these take place when teachers watch students' performance in specific tasks and activities. Regular notes are kept, and over time show growth and development.

Selected Responses

This is a pre-determined information gathering strategy that involves one-dimensional exercise of measurement tasks such as quizzes and tests.

Performance Assessments

This assessment strategy is goal-oriented with recognized criteria, these tasks provide authentic and important challenges and problems. Such tasks include many methods to solve a problem and no one correct answer. At the same time they are usually multimodal and involve the use of many skills. The relevant tools to collect and record data from this strategy are the RAFTs technique, videos, narrative records and audios.

Open-Ended Tasks

In this assessment strategy, students are presented with an incentive and asked to present an original response. The response might be a drawing, chart or a display of clear assessment criteria, which will be attached to the different responses. Learners are free to produce varied responses, which allows individual learners to respond in ways that suit their learning style.

Portfolios

Portfolios are more than a collection of learners' work. It is a strategy and a tool to record the learners' involvement in the learning process and their active mind work. It provides us with a clear picture of learners' progress and growth over a period of time. A portfolio will enable the learner along with the teacher, peers and parents to identify their strength and progress as well as the areas that they need to work on.

Recording (How do we collect and analyze the data?)

Assessment Tools: How will we evaluate the evidence?

Rubrics: an established set of criteria for rating learners in all areas. The descriptions of the outcomes will tell the assessor what characteristics to look for in the learners' work, and how to rate this work on a predetermined scale.

Exemplars: sample pieces of learner's work that serve as a concrete standard against which other samples are judged.

Checklists: are lists of information, data, attributes, and criteria that are either present or met in the presented work.

Anecdotal records: are brief written notes based on observation of learners.

Continuums: are visual representations of development stages of learning. They show a progression of achievement to identify where learners are in a process. *Example:* Scope and sequence documents.

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Reporting

How do we choose to communicate information about assessment?

Reporting at the RFS will:

- Involve parents, students, and teachers as partners.
- Reflect what the school community values.
- Be comprehensive, honest, fair, and credible.
- Be clear and use language liaisons;
- Allow teachers to incorporate what they acquire during the reporting process in their future teaching.

Types of Reporting at the RFS

Written Reports

- At the end of each trimester grades are forwarded to respective parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student(s).
- Report cards are designed to highlight the extent to which we included the five essential elements of the PYP curriculum.
- Digital copies of individual report cards are kept on the school's Edunation platform.
- Report cards' format is designed to inform teachers and administrators of the vertical articulation of the curriculum across the school.
- Report cards are designed to better reflect the learner profile.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

- Parent/Teacher: One hour allocated on teachers' weekly schedule to allow for one-on-one meetings with individual teachers to discuss learners' performance and progress.
- Parent/Teacher: Meetings with individual teachers to discuss student performance and progress are scheduled by the end of each trimester after reports are sent home.
- Parent/Teacher: Individual meetings by appointment at any time during the school year to discuss urgent matters if needed.

Student –Led conferences

- Student led: At the end of each unit of inquiry, students take responsibility for their learning and celebrate it through various models of conferences. Learners will have the chance to present samples of their work through group presentations or by individually going through their portfolios with their parents.

Community Involvement

Community involvement increases the understanding of the programmes followed at the RFS.

This is done through:

- Parent information evenings scheduled for September and after each trimester.
- Course literature is available to learners and parents on the school's communication platform (Edunation)
- Curriculum information evenings given by the PYP coordinators.

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