

Middle School Assessment Policy

Introduction

DAA believes that assessment is an integral part of the learning process. Assessment should be authentic and varied, while encouraging students to showcase the knowledge and skills that they have acquired in the learning process. DAA believes that formative assessment should underpin all other forms of assessment and that feedback plays a fundamental part in the learning process. Assessment should offer students, parents, and other stakeholders a valid and reliable indication of student progress and attainment.

This Policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of assessment, evaluation and reporting at Dubai American Academy Middle School (MS). Assessment complements and assists teaching and learning; it plays an integral part in each teacher's planning and enables the evaluation of current practice as well as student achievement. High quality formative assessment is an essential part of teaching and learning. Quality assessment ensures a whole school approach to the provision of an excellent education for all students, and it enables teachers to deliver education that best suits the needs of their students. Evaluation occurs at the end of each reporting period (semester), and formal reporting occurs through two standardized report cards, one in each semester.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear outline of all assessment, evaluation and reporting techniques in the Middle School, to ensure that assessment is used as a tool to inform planning, to track student progress and to raise standards.

It is the right of every student in the MS to be given an education that builds on their strengths, addresses their individual needs, and ensures progression. Assessment is an essential tool in the delivery of this right.

Roles and Responsibilities

The overall responsibility for assessment belongs with the teachers. Teachers are responsible for regular quality assessment of the students in their care, and the leadership team is responsible for monitoring and ensuring alignment of assessment. Students also play a role in the assessment process. They integrate the feedback they receive from their teachers to improve their work and provide feedback to their peers, based on assignment success criteria. Students also regularly self-assess and reflect on their achievement and progress.

Purpose

Assessment is a daily part of life at school. Descriptive feedback is used by students to ensure that they know their next steps and what they need to do to improve. Teachers use the products of assessment to inform their teaching; specifically, to monitor the acquisition of knowledge and skills and to make corrections to programming, based on student need. More formal methods of assessment provide feedback on student attainment and progress and ensure a rigorous approach to curriculum delivery.

The purposes of assessment are:

- to be formative, providing information for the teacher to plan the next steps in the student's learning and support students with identifying their own next steps;

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- to be diagnostic, providing more detailed information about individual student's strengths and needs;
- to be summative, providing a snapshot of each student's achievement – these can be reported to parents;
- to be evaluative, allowing the school and individual teachers to evaluate how effective their teaching is;
- to inform the students to enable them to develop their learning.

Specific learning intentions, success criteria, and assessment opportunities are identified in semester, unit and lesson plans. All assessment outcomes, including standardized test results, are used to evaluate current practice and to inform future planning.

The two types of classroom assessments are...

- **Summative also called Assessment of Learning (AOL)**
Summative assessment is provided to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period.
- **Formative also called Assessment for Learning (AfL)**
Formative assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers and/or by students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they engage.

Both of these assessment types can be marked, although formative assessment may at times be informal and not assessed formally.

Assessment FOR Learning - Formative Assessment

Assessment for Learning (AFL) is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go next, and how best to get there.

This type of assessment is used to assess knowledge, skills and understanding, and is used to identify gaps and misconceptions. It enables teachers to identify when students are struggling, when they have consolidated learning, and when they are ready to progress. Formative assessment also enables teachers to identify whether students are working at greater depth and may require additional challenge, allowing them to provide appropriate support or extension, as necessary.

Formative assessment is carried out by teachers every day in every lesson, can be marked work or an informal check on learning. It allows teachers to understand student performance on a continuing basis.

AFL is a key part of our approach to teaching and learning at DAA. Staff use learning intentions, success criteria, timely and specific feedback (written and verbal), and peer and self assessment to involve students in their learning and to inform them of their next steps. AFL opportunities are identified in planning. Marking is conducted with reference to the Learning Intention and should identify successes and areas for improvement, based on previously established Success Criteria (SC). Effective questioning, observations and conversations are also used to inform assessments.

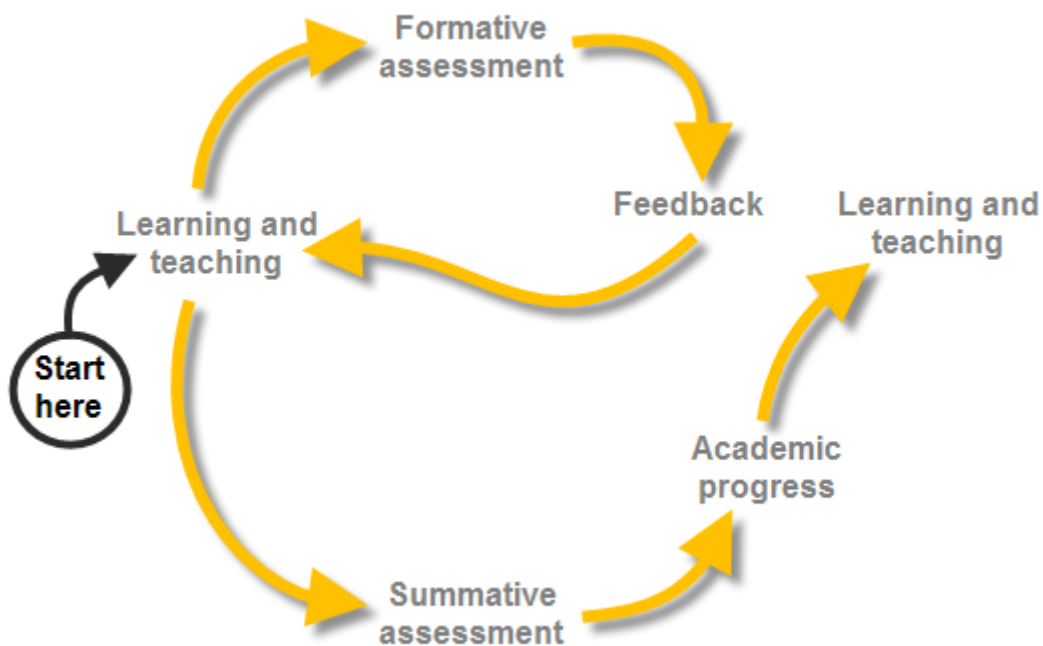
Example methods of formative assessment include:

- Use of pertinent questioning
- Marking of students' work (verbal and written)
- One-on-one and small group conversations or conferencing

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- Observational assessment
- Student self-assessment
- Student peer assessment
- Entrance or Exit Tickets

Formative assessment enables teachers to evaluate how well students have mastered specific curriculum standards and helps them plan future instruction. For students, formative assessment helps them to measure their knowledge and understanding against the learning intention and success criteria, and the feedback they receive helps them understand how they can improve. Formative assessment should allow students to correct and improve their work as they progress through units, as the diagram below depicts.



Guskey, Thomas. *Formative classroom assessment and Benjamin S. Bloom: Theory, research, and implications*. 2005.

Assessment OF Learning - Summative Assessment

Summative assessments enable teachers to evaluate both student learning and the impact of their teaching at the end of a period of time. Summative assessments provide evidence of achievement against the learning intentions of the curricular standards at the end of a unit or the end of specified taught standards. Summative assessments are useful in informing teaching and learning in subsequent lessons and/or units. This type of assessment is shared with parents at parent/teacher conferences and enables families to support their child's future learning.

All summative assessments are reported using the school's digital grade book and forms part of the students final grade. All summative assessments should be assessed and feedback given to the student within a reasonable time and the online gradebook should be updated with the grade within 2 weeks of the assessment taking place. We recognise that there are significant pieces of work that may require more than this to mark and

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give feedback, the teacher must liaise with their HOD/MS admin about an appropriate feedback timeline if it exceeds 10 days.

Students who miss a summative with a legitimate excuse (Medical, MUN, MESAC etc.) will be asked to make it up with the class teacher at an agreed upon time or in an academic support session. Students who know in advance that they are going to miss class are required to discuss the work they will miss with their teacher before they are absent. In general, the middle school does not accept graded assignments that are completed outside of school hours, unless otherwise agreed, so that the authenticity of the work can be assured.

Common Assessment Language at DAA and Assessment Timeline

Each Achievement Standard will be assessed at least 3 times per academic year, appropriate to the subject being taught.

Indicators are derived from common core standards. Department teams, and in turn co-teachers, will go through a process of prioritizing the common core standards into manageable indicators that can be assessed, formatively and summatively. Indicators are instrumental in the formation of rubrics for end of unit summative assessments. Such rubrics can then be sliced into smaller sections for formative assessments throughout the units and subsequent lessons, and can also be adjusted to cater for student familiar language.

Each assessment provided to students should be checked for Authenticity, Timeliness, Reliability, and Sustainability.

Standards Based Grading and Reporting

The DAA Middle School is a standards-based school. Each subject has an adopted set of standards which teachers report on throughout the year. Grading procedures are related directly to stated learning goals, i.e. the relevant curriculum standards or any other learning goal communicated by the teacher at the start of the course/unit.

Students are assessed on their progress towards meeting the curriculum standards. Students should always know what they have to do/show to achieve each available grade for an assignment.

Departments use a UBD approach, starting with the standards for their subject, based on Connecticut or MOE as DAA is aligned with these, and from there decide how to group them into units, and break them down into learning intentions that lead to practical success criteria for each lesson. We follow an understanding by design method, created by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, that starts with the end in mind.

Grading and Level Descriptors

Each subject uses Achievement Standards to report student progress towards proficiency in the curricular standard (s) using the 4 point scale as follows:

Level	Descriptor
MASTERING 4-MST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner provides compelling evidence demonstrating the transfer of concepts, knowledge and skills as indicated by the stated learning outcome (standard). • Observable evidence of this level will include skills such as evaluating, justifying, synthesizing, proposing, and defending. • Learning is profound and students work interdependently.
ACHIEVING 3-ACH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner provides sufficient evidence to securely demonstrate the concepts, knowledge and skills as indicated by the stated learning outcome (standard). • Observable evidence of this level will include skills such as applying, analyzing, explaining, comparing, contrasting, organizing, and connecting. • Learning is deep and students work independently.
APPROACHING 2-APP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner provides partial evidence to demonstrate the concepts, knowledge and skills as indicated by the stated learning outcome (standard). Additional focus and practice is needed to develop and solidify the learning outcome. • Observable evidence of this level will include skills such as identifying, using/employing, classifying, completing, re-phrasing, summarizing, and describing. • Learning is appropriate to level and students are starting to work independently.
DEVELOPING 1-DEV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence provided by the learner has just begun to demonstrate the concepts, knowledge and skills as indicated by the stated learning outcome (standard). • Observable evidence of this level will include skills such as recalling, identifying and repeating. • Students are dependent on the teacher at this level.

In order for the mark to reflect the student's progress best, teachers **simultaneously consider both the most recent and most frequent** performances. This is why completing all assessments is integral in order for teachers to give an accurate reflection in the form of a mark on a report card. If not all assessments are handed in or completed, there is not enough evidence to give an accurate reading. By considering multiple pieces of work over time, teachers can honor both the growth students are showing while ensuring that one strong or weak performance doesn't overly influence a final determination and the overall result is the most accurate representation of their performance.

Recording

Records of end of unit assessments, formative assessments, MAP and CAT4 results, and teacher assessments are stored on the school's drive and on the student online data trackers (i.e. PowerSchool / Unified Classroom).

Online student data tracker documents are used as an aid to effective planning. The progress of students receiving extra support is monitored by the member of staff delivering the support.

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The above records enable classroom teachers to assess the progress made by each child and are an important part of the formative assessment needed for future planning. The student end-of-year report is filed on the server and is available for future reference.

Reporting

DAA has two semester reporting periods per year, Semester 1 runs from September to the end of January, Semester 2 runs from February to June. Reports are sent home to families at the end of each of these marking periods. The reports contain a number grade for each class, the Approaches to Learning (ATL) grades and comments are provided by staff. During the semester all summative assessments are recorded in the schools online gradebook (i.e. PowerSchool /Unified Classroom). This is live and enables parents and students to monitor student progress throughout the semester. Formative assessments may be recorded in the schools online grade book at the discretion of the teacher. There are two parent teacher conferences during the year which enables teachers to have a discussion with families about areas of strength and concern.

Late/missing work

Students who have a valid reason for the missed test or deadline will be allowed to make up the assessment at the teacher's convenience and within a reasonable timeline set by the department- usually no more than 10 school days in order for the learning and standard/skill acquisition to be relevant. Students who do not have a valid reason may be allowed to make up the test/assignment, however, this is at the individual teacher's discretion. These sanctions may include after school support sessions, meetings with parents or alternative assessments. If the issue persists then the following must occur:

- Students and parents must be contacted (in person or via email) about each late/missing assignment if it still has that status when you enter the class marks (7-10 days later).
- The student will be discussed in pod meetings to see if the behaviour is consistent in other classes.
- There will be no grading penalties associated with late/missing work. This will be reported to the Head of Grade or grade level counselor and in their ATL's.
- After 2 weeks there is no opportunity to retake or submit and the assessment will be entered as IE - insufficient evidence.

Teachers do discuss deadlines with the students when setting assessments so that a realistic/fair timeline for completion of assessments can be determined so all students can produce their best work. The deadlines are at the discretion of the teacher. Students with accommodations or an IEP may need to have their deadlines modified, in conjunction with the student and Inclusion team so they can finish their work to the best of their abilities. This should be discussed with the student when the assessment is set. If the student misses these modified deadlines then they must have the same consequences as the rest of the class.

In order for a student to be successful, **they must attend school when assessments are taking place.** The Administration realizes there may be exigent circumstances from time to time, and encourages parents and students to contact their teacher as early as possible in order to apply for a waiver of this policy.

Retakes

Retakes are an integral part of Standards Based Grading as it allows students to show improvement to their skills and competencies. Learning is never considered "finished" in this model, but a constant process of improvement.

A retake may be attempted once on formative assessments after it is agreed upon with the teacher and that work preceding the assessment has been adequately completed, within an established timeline of the original assessment (as a rule, not more than 2 weeks since the original so the skills being assessed are still relevant). The student must apply to retake the assessment by filling in the Retake Request Form and explaining their current mark on the assessment, their reasoning of why they want to retake, and how they have prepared for the retake. This process ensures a productive and reflective process for the student.

Retakes are not permitted on summative assessments as it is the culmination of the learning process.

Equal Opportunities

As outlined above, assessment plays an integral part in identifying the individual needs of all students. It enables students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Inclusion), students who excel, Emirate students, and students for whom English is an additional language to be given a differentiated curriculum which meets their needs. In addition, the assessment policy at DAA's MS ensures that identification of these students is systematic and effective.

Special Educational Needs

When assessment indicates a child may have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, the Inclusion Team is informed, and the child's progress is carefully monitored. Further assessment then takes place, as outlined in the Inclusion policy. For all students at the Tier 2 or Tier 3 stage, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed and implemented. When teachers assess a child with Inclusion, they will draw upon ongoing formative and summative assessment. Where necessary, they will gain insights from parents, the student and any external specialists or assessments involved in their child's care.

Assessment accommodations are offered to those students who have official reports stating that these are required. These accommodations are stated on the students' IEP.

Moderation

Moderation allows the school to make consistent, reliable and valid decisions about student learning and progress. Moderation is an essential part of any assessment as it ensures that all pieces of work are set and marked fairly and to the correct level in line with the standards being assessed. The conversations that occur during the moderation process are as valuable as the outcome of the process and the different steps are designed to increase these academic conversations.

Here at DAA there are three stages to the moderation process that all major summative assessments/exams should follow:

1. **Collaboration** - all major summative assessments must be created collaboratively with all members of the subject team having a voice. If multiple versions of the same test are needed, these are created collaboratively with all members of the team.
2. **Calibration** - needs to occur between all staff within a subject/grade level at the start of the marking process. Teachers should calibrate their marking with each other after they have assessed 1 or 2 pieces of work so they are all marking to the same standards.
3. **Double-blind marking** - should occur once all staff have finished marking their scripts. Each teacher should regrade another teacher's assessment to make sure that they reach the same grade.

Any issues in the grades/curve being awarded need to be rectified before grades and or assessments are released to students. All staff within a particular subject need to agree on the grades/curve before it is released to students. Please refer to the [moderation protocol document](#) for further information about the process.

Feedback and reflection

Feedback is one of the most powerful influencers for improving student achievement. For feedback to function effectively it must follow the following criteria:

- Timely
 - Progress during a lesson: feedback should be given within the lesson to ensure adequate progress against learning intentions.
 - Assignment/assessment feedback- should be given within one 7-10 school days
- Focus on improving the students' understanding - How can students improve?
- Allow for student reflection - What do the students need to do with the feedback?

Making sure that the student reads and uses the feedback for improvement can be aided through the use of feedback/reflection templates that guide the students through the reflection process and helps them identify what they can do better next time.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is the responsibility of all staff and students. If a teacher suspects academic dishonesty they are obligated to report it. Any and all academic honesty issues should be dealt with within the classroom, but may be brought to the attention of the HOD if the issue persists. If it is consistent within multiple classes, the pod may escalate the issue to the HOG as a behavior issue. This will then be treated in accordance with the MS Handbook.

Internal assessments

All assessment that is completed at DAA and not sent off for external marking is considered internal assessment. These consist of formative and summative assessments and help inform teaching and learning, they also allow the school to communicate to parents student progress and attainment.

External assessments

CAT4

The Cognitive Abilities Test, 4th version (CAT4) is given every three years and to each new student in grades 9-12. CAT4 assesses students' learning preference and their potential. Data reports provide insight into students learning styles and possible IB scores at the standard level for a variety of courses. Data is shared with students, teachers and counselors. Counselors review the data with the students and review IB pointers as possible course selection choices. The Inclusion department uses the data at an individual level to identify students strengths, areas for development, learning styles and academic potential. The Inclusion department also uses this data as one data point in the identification of Gifted and Talented students.

MAP

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is given in grades 6, 7 and 8 in Language, Reading, Math and Science. Assessment results are reviewed in departments at the individual, class, grade and division level by teachers,

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HODs and administrators. Teachers and leaders review data to inform their instructional planning to best support student learning and track student progress and attainment. The Inclusion department uses the data at an individual level to track student progress and attainment using the learning continuum.