

# Mark Twain Elementary School

## Assessment Philosophy and Agreements

This document outlines the understanding and implementation of assessment at our school. It aims to articulate our beliefs, define our acting principles, and identify our practices, strategies and tools. The philosophy underpinning this document correlates to Mark Twain’s Mission Statement:

*Mark Twain is a community of life-long learners, built upon a collaborative spirit that fosters inquiry-based learning. Our purpose is to promote and develop responsible, active, and reflective citizens of the world.*

<b>Principles</b> <b>Why</b> do we assess the way we do at Mark Twain?	<b>Practices</b> <b>What</b> actions do we take to assess?	<b>Strategies &amp; Tools</b> <b>How</b> is assessment implemented at Mark Twain?
<p>We believe that assessment provides information about the growth of our students’ learning and the effectiveness of our teaching. It guides our planning and instruction, informing our work and motivating learners.</p> <p>We define assessment “as the act of gathering information about student learning that informs our teaching,” whereas “evaluation involves making a judgment about how much and how well a student has learned.”</p>	<p>We plan, implement, observe, revise – continually replaying the Action Cycle of choose, act, reflect - developing a dialogue with our learners.</p>	<p>We assess with pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments which can take the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily observations</li> <li>• Anecdotal records</li> <li>• Class discussions</li> <li>• Peer discussions</li> <li>• Checklists</li> <li>• Class made rubrics</li> <li>• Running Records</li> <li>• Benchmarks</li> <li>• District snapshots</li> <li>• Unit selected response</li> <li>• Performance assessments</li> <li>• Process assessments</li> </ul>
<p>We believe assessing <i>for</i> learning is the backbone of teaching and learning; whereas assessment <i>of</i> learning is a data point for the formal evaluation of student growth.</p>	<p>We assess continually throughout the learning process and use a variety of strategies to best capture the level of student learning and diagnose students’ misconceptions.</p>	<p>Formative assessments            Class created checklists and rubrics            Student conferences            Oral and written feedback            Peer assessment            Performance assessments</p>
<p>We believe that assessment initiates the planning and teaching process. We begin by knowing what students need to master, our next step is to take into account their current level of understanding.</p>	<p>After pre-assessing our students’ level of understanding, we analyze, diagnose and create learning experiences to match their level of understanding.</p>	<p>Pre-assessments can include class discussions, versions of KWL, focused selective response through multiple digital formats such as Renaissance 360, Imagine Learning.</p>

Principles - Why	Practices - What	Strategies - How
We believe that differentiation is a necessary component of effective instruction and assessment.	To reach the needs of our students, we differentiate content, processes, and products. Additionally, we provide students with choices on how they will present their learning.	We do this by providing a range of instructional and management strategies: varied texts, relevant tasks, flexible grouping, tiered assignments, independent study, to name a few.
We believe in a developing, implementing and therefore assessing a balanced curriculum that includes the PYP's essential elements – the understanding of concepts, acquisition of knowledge, mastering of skills, development of attitudes, and the decision to take responsible action.	By clearly defining what our students are expected to achieve, we can recognize proficiency and also diagnose a student's needs.	Targeted assessments for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content knowledge – short answers, essays, multiple choice, class discussions</li> <li>• Reasoning – classroom talk, problem solving, small group work, conferences</li> <li>• Performance skills – read alouds, research, classroom participation, presentations, projects</li> <li>• Products – research papers, brochures, one pagers, graphic organizers</li> <li>• Attitudes and Learner Profile – self assessments, reflections</li> </ul>
In keeping with our Mission Statement's purpose of developing citizen's of the world, we believe that reflection plays an integral role in promoting international-mindedness.	We ask students to reflect on their growth and development of the IB Learner Profile. They formally document their thoughts at least twice annually for the Student Led Conferences.	Classroom agreements Class discussions Classroom environment Classroom observations Student reflections Student Led Conferences
We believe that students are empowered when they take responsibility for their learning.	We articulate clear student expectations and help students monitor their progress.	Class created checklists, rubrics Peer and self-assessments Student reflections
We believe that clear and consistent communication is an integral part of successful school relationships among students, parents, teachers.	We encourage an open dialogue among all partners. Our "open door policy" allows parents access to their children's classrooms during arrival and dismissal, thus maintaining daily, informal contact between home and school.	Open House Principal's Coffees Student Led Conferences Parent-Teacher conferences Weekly newsletters Digital Gradebook Progress reports Quarterly report cards

## Essential Agreements on assessing, recording and reporting of student learning with:

**Units of Inquiry**  
**Learner Profile**  
**Student Portfolios**  
**Conferences**  
**Progress Reports and Report Cards**  
**District/State Assessments**

**Units of Inquiry.** Our Units of Inquiry are the primary means of delivering our curriculum. We plan both formative and summative assessments in each Unit with the end in mind. We design a summative assessment to check students' understanding of the Central Idea. The formative assessments are interval reviews and checks to gauge the students' understanding of the Lines of Inquiry – stepping stones to the larger conceptual idea embedded in the Central Idea. In keeping with our balanced approach, we assess the PYP essential elements - knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes, and action – which are interwoven throughout the Unit.

- **Formative Assessments.** We use a range of strategies to analyze students' learning processes, including teacher observations, performance and process tasks, selected response and open-ended tasks. Tools used are teacher and class created rubrics and checklists, exemplars, and anecdotal records.
- **Summative Assessments.** The goal of summative assessments is to measure a student's conceptual level of understanding embedded in the Central Idea - hopefully arrived by synthesizing the array of learning experiences and skill development provided throughout the unit. Assessments measure students' understanding and analyzing of data, application and processing of knowledge to draw connections. Tasks vary from teacher prompts to one-page graphic summaries.
- **Student Reflections.** Teachers engage students in reflecting what they learned from each unit in age appropriate ways. The younger classes may reflect on as a whole class with the teacher scribing, whereas the older classes will individually summarize their learning, with or without teacher prompts. We strive for variety and authenticity in the students' response.
- **Teacher reflections.** Grade level teams reflect on the unit by responding to question prompts from the planner template, and have open discussion about what worked and what needs improvement. We question the validity and effectiveness of the tasks, learning experiences, as well as the needed prerequisite skills. We also review how well the key concepts match the inquiry and monitor the overall balance of the PYP attitudes and Learner Profile attributes. A teacher from the grade level is responsible for scribing and documenting the discussion and submitting to the IB coordinator.

**Learner Profile.** Mark Twain's mission statement is an embodiment of the Learner Profile. We weave the attributes throughout everything we do - classroom agreements/expectations, daily instructional practice, Programme of Inquiry, and community events. Starting in Kindergarten and continuing through end of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students reflect on their development of the attributes and identify goals for themselves.

- **Tools and strategies.**

- Kindergarten introduces the attributes of the Learner Profile using picture books to explain and demonstrate the qualities of each attribute. The students write an age appropriate reflection for the Spring Student Led Conferences, which is placed in their student portfolio.
- 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students write formal reflections on their growth and development of the Learner Profile twice a year to share at their Student led Conferences. These reflections are placed in their student portfolio. Additionally, teachers provide many opportunities for students to practice reflecting on what, how and why they are learning – in class discussions, weekly reflections, unit reflections.
- In each unit of inquiry, two or three attributes are identified that match the content or concept of the unit, encouraging a deeper exploration of their qualities and applications.
- As part of their Exhibition journey, the 5<sup>th</sup> graders write essays that incorporate their aspirations and development of attributes of the Learner Profile. These essays are shared with the community.

**Student Portfolios.** Student portfolios, as “windows into their learning,” help document and remind students of their progress through our Programme of Inquiry as well as their development of the Learner Profile. The portfolios are the property of Mark Twain while the student is enrolled. Upon leaving, the portfolios are given to the child. The portfolio travels with the students throughout their tenure here at Mark Twain, shared with teachers and parents over time, they become a treasure of memories.

- **Content agreements.**

- **Grade Level Dividers.** Each year, Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will receive a color coded Table of Contents listing six units’ Central Ideas and Lines of inquiry. They will also receive a divider sheet for each unit, with its Central Idea and Lines of Inquiry.
- **Format.** Teachers have decided to add student work to the front of the portfolio each year, building forward as the year progresses. The portfolios are 2” white binders with cover sleeves.
- **Learner Profile Goals and Reflections.** Students write their reflections and identify their goals twice a year in preparation for their Student Led Conferences with one exception - Kindergarteners write a reflection only in the Spring semester. The work is placed in their student portfolio and shared with teachers and parents. Teachers submit a small sample of their students’ reflections to the IB coordinator for documentation purposes.
- **Student Work.**
  - **Kindergarten:** Two examples of student work for each planner and commented on by the teacher giving the reasons for selection. Kindergarteners also create a self-portrait for the cover.
  - **1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade:** Three examples of student work for each planner including the summative assessment, one teacher and one student selected work with written or oral reasons for selection.
  - **Specials.** Throughout the year, specialists submit work to the classroom teacher to be included in student portfolios, indicate reasons for the selection, and where to place the work in the student’s portfolio.

**Conferences.** Conferences serve an important part in developing and maintaining home and school partnerships. Conferences provide parents, students and teacher time to focus on the child’s strengths and challenges, analyze student data, diagnose needs, and generate ideas/plans for success. Mark Twain offers formal parent-teacher conferences at least once a year, informal parent-teacher conferences as needed, and Student Led Conferences twice a year. The Student Led Conference provides an invaluable time for the student to articulate their interests, share their progress in both academic achievement and personal growth, and take ownership of their learning.

**Progress Reports and Report Cards.**

**Progress Reports:** Progress provides feedback on a child’s performance. Board policy requires that if a child’s grade is below 70, Progress Reports must be sent home every 3 weeks. Progress reports are generated through PowerSchool, the District’s electronic gradebook. A signed copy of the Progress Report must be kept for documentation purposes.

**Report Cards.** Teachers follow HISD grading guidelines that require fair, valid and consistent grading procedures. District policy mandates that teachers “assign a grade that reflects the student’s relative mastery of an assignment.” The District mandates six 6-week grading cycles.

**District and State Assessments.** The chart below includes the assessments mandated by the District or State. District assessments typically are formative in nature or a means of “gathering information about student learning that informs our teaching.” The State Assessment is considered a summative of the student’s annual learning and “involves a judgment about how much and how well a student has learned.”

District & State Assessments	Grade Levels	Dates
High Frequency Word Evaluation	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Oct, Nov, Jan, Feb
Benchmarks (DRAs, Scholastic Running Records)	Kn – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	2x/year, ongoing
District Snapshots	1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade Math & Reading	ongoing
District Snapshots, District Level Assessments (DLAs) and Released STAAR Practice	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> 5 <sup>th</sup> grades Math & Reading	Oct, Jan, Feb
Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)	Kindergarten – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade English Language Learners (ELLs)	February - March
State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> 5 <sup>th</sup> ELA 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> Math 5 <sup>th</sup> grade Science	April May April - May