“How will we know what we have learned?”
Assessment in the PYP

**PYP Definition:** Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. It identifies what students know, understand, can do and feel at various stages in the learning process: knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes/action. It is the means by which we analyze student learning and the effectiveness of our teaching and acts as a foundation on which to base our future planning and practice. It is central to our goal of guiding the child, from novice to expert, through the learning process. (Primary Years Program Assessment Handbook, January 2000. © International Baccalaureate Organization)

**Assessment in an integral part of the PYP curriculum**

The Primary Years Program defines three closely related areas that make up the curriculum at a PYP school: the written curriculum, the taught curriculum and the learned curriculum (assessment). These three components form a cycle that leads students to deeper levels of understanding as they (guided by teachers) construct their own meaning based on past experiences, exploration of their own questions, appropriate learning experiences and assessment of their learning.

(Making the PYP Happen: Figure 3, September 2000. © International Baccalaureate Organization)

The PYP further divides assessment into three components:
- Assessing – how we discover what students have learned
- Recording – how we make note of our findings about what students have learned
- Reporting – how we pass that information on to parents, administration and other parties directly involved in students’ learning
Who is involved in student assessment?

Everyone concerned with assessment – children, teachers, parents, administrators, and board members – must have a clear understanding of the reasons for the assessment, what is being assessed, the criteria for success and the method by which the assessment is made. (Primary Years Program Assessment Handbook, January 2001. © International Baccalaureate Organization)

Student self-assessment is a key component of all three IB programs.

Why do we assess?
- To promote continuous student learning and growth
- To guide children through the five essential elements of learning contained in the PYP (concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and action)
- To celebrate what students can do
- To set goals and plan for future student growth
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the learning program

What does a PYP school assess?

A PYP school assesses student growth in the following areas:
- Understanding of concepts (big ideas that transcend traditional subject areas)
- Acquisition of knowledge
- Mastering of skills
- Development of attitudes (as reflected in the student profile)
- Decision to take action
- Demonstration of the attributes of the PYP Student Profile
- Student progress and performance in the following subject areas: language; mathematics; social studies; science; the arts; science and technology; personal, social and physical education

When does assessment take place in a PYP school?

Assessment is a continuous process that allows teachers, parents and children to identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement, as well as the effectiveness of the program. It is a daily activity at McGraw and takes various forms. There are two main categories of assessment.

Formative Assessment is interwoven with daily learning and helps teachers and students find out what children already know, understand and can do in order to plan for further student learning and growth. Formative assessment occurs throughout a learning unit or process.

Summative Assessment takes place at the end of a learning unit or process. It is a chance for students, teachers and parents to evaluate progress and demonstrate what has been learned over the course of time. It is a formal ending point to a taught unit or of a process but not necessarily the end of student learning in the areas being assessed.
What are the characteristics of effective assessments in the PYP?

- Have criteria that are known and understood in advance
- Allow children to synthesize and apply their learning, not merely recall facts
- Promote student reflection and self-evaluation
- Focus on the production of quality products or performances
- Highlight children’s strengths and allows them to demonstrate mastery and expertise
- Allow children to express different points of view and interpretations
- Provide feedback regarding every stage of the learning/teaching cycle
- Based on student needs, interests and learning styles (student-driven)
- Involve collaboration between students and teachers
- Produce evidence of student growth and learning that can be clearly reported and understood by children, parents, teachers, administrators and board members
- Identify what is worth knowing
- Begin with the end results in mind (backwards design – what students should be able to know or do by the end of a learning unit, lesson or process)

How do students demonstrate learning in the PYP?

Students are provided with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate learning. These include, but are not limited to: presentations, demonstrations, performance tasks, portfolios, interviews, tests, quizzes, portfolios, reflection journals, class discussions and the 5th Grade Exhibition.

A range of assessment formats is used to represent a balanced view of each child and what they know, understand and can do in light of the content being assessed.

How do teachers record student progress?

Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to record student progress in the PYP, including: rubrics, checklists, continuums, task or subject-specific criteria, forms, benchmarks/exemplars and narrative records.

How is student growth reported to parents and students?

- Report cards (four times per year; kindergarten = three times per year)
- Portfolio/Attitudes reflection form (twice per year)
- Student-Led conferences (in the spring)
- Parent-Teacher, Teacher-Student and Parent-Teacher-Student conferences
- Unit of Inquiry progress reports (after each unit of inquiry)
- Teacher communication with parents via notes home, emails and phone calls

A record of McGraw PYP assessment practices, essential agreements and sample assessment documentation is kept in an assessment binder in the office Conference Room as a reference available for exploration by parents, students and staff.

Assessment – It’s a team effort!