



Gardner Public Schools



Assessment Framework and Planning Schedule 2020 - 2021



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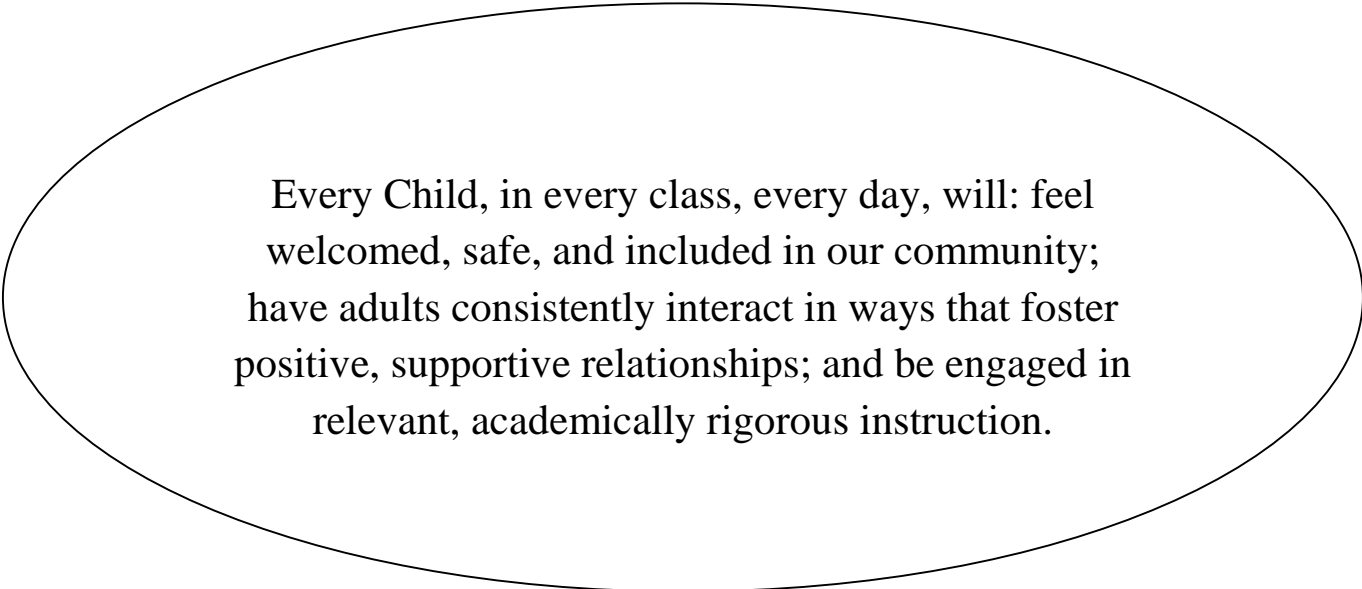
Introduction

Rationale

The Gardner Public School District's Assessment Plan articulates a balanced system of assessment that:

- Aligns with Massachusetts and local standards;
- Supports our district mission, values, and philosophy of learning;
- Provides assessment information that is aligned with previous grade level achievement and growth data;
- Provides students, parents, teachers, and administrators with specific student achievement data;
- Provides multiple, varied data sources to be used by data teams for instructional and programmatic improvements;
- Supports the requirements of the Educator Evaluation System; and
- Utilizes an array of assessment methods to determine the understandings, knowledge, and skills that students have acquired.

District Vision and Mission



Every Child, in every class, every day, will: feel welcomed, safe, and included in our community; have adults consistently interact in ways that foster positive, supportive relationships; and be engaged in relevant, academically rigorous instruction.

feel welcomed, safe, and included in our community;

- Adults will personally welcome each child as they enter the school and each classroom.
- The layout of the school and each classroom will be inviting and conducive to learning.
- Students will learn social/emotional skills through direct instruction, supports, and institutional practices.
- Disciplinary practices are restorative rather than punitive--repairing relationships.
- Schools will actively engage families in the education of their children and community.

have adults consistently interact in ways that foster positive, supportive relationships;

- School expectations, practices, and rules will be informed by the chronological and actual developmental levels of the children we serve.
- Adult responses to children's behaviors will be empathetic and caring, considering their comprehensive knowledge of the child's development and any possible trauma or stressors.
- The school will work proactively and collaboratively with families to support the whole child.

and be engaged in relevant, academically rigorous instruction, informed by data.

- Each lesson will incorporate rigorous student tasks that engage all learners, provoke higher-order thinking, monitor each student's progress, and provide feedback to students for improvement.
- The schools will monitor and adapt their instruction to ensure students learn the skills and knowledge to prepare them for their own future.

District/School Theory of Action:

If we:

- create, implement, and assess clear, high level common expectations for student learning that are aligned with grade level district and state standards & objectives, ***and***
- teach using rigorous, challenging learning activities and differentiated instructional strategies that support students' social emotional and academic growth while developing positive learning partnerships, ***and***
- utilize academic and social emotional data to inform our instruction and interventions, ***and***
- work in collaboration with families and community partners to engage in shared decision making for effective educational programming,

then:

All students will have equitable access and opportunities to achieve at their highest level, and become lifelong, collaborative, problem seekers and solvers who positively contribute to the workforce and their community.

Additional beliefs

We believe that *understanding* is the ultimate goal of learning, that the acquisition of knowledge and skills is necessary to attain understanding, and therefore are also assessed. In order to learn at the level of understanding, all students must have equal access to a clearly articulated curriculum that is taught through inquiry, exploration, discovery, application, collaboration, and reflection. Effective learning activities that lead to deep understanding begin with clear goals, and are designed to capitalize on strengths while addressing the needs of individual students. Learning begins as the acquisition of knowledge and skills; deep understanding requires a safe and vibrant learning community that allows risk-taking and fosters continual dialogue. The measure of learning and the evidence of understanding is the student's ability to apply what is learned in school to authentic, real life situations. A balanced system assesses:

- Understanding, knowledge, and skill acquisition
- Ability to think critically and creatively
- Ability to articulate thinking to varied audience with evidence that supports reasoning

Ensuring quality assessments

The Gardner Public School District believes that assessment is an integral part of instruction; it helps staff to determine whether or not the goals of education are being met. Assessment affects decisions about grading, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum, and, in some cases, funding. Assessment inspires us to ask these challenging questions: "Are we teaching what we think we are teaching?"; "Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?", and "Is there a way to teach the subject better, thereby promoting better learning?"

The Assessment and Planning schedule is designed to provide educators with data to answer these questions. It consists of formal state mandated testing, district determined diagnostic and benchmark tools as well as classroom level summative and formative assessments. It is expected that teachers will assesses students throughout each unit of study and design rigorous and engaging lessons based on student progress. End of unit summative assessments provide data that supports standards based instruction.

Assessment works best when it does the following:

- Provides diagnostic feedback
- Helps educators set standards
- Evaluates student progress

Balancing Assessments

A balanced approach to assessment includes a continuum of tools and strategies that are fair, varied, reliable measures of student learning. It is essential that schools provide varied and frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding, and reflect on their own learning. Unless a teacher identifies what a student knows and is able to do; and what a student does not know and is unable to do; he or she cannot design effective instruction for that student. Therefore, a balanced system utilizes *both formal and informal* information about student learning.

A balanced system encompasses several layers of assessment:

- At the **district level**, balance reflects a continuum of assessment tools whose data correlate and measure all dimensions of student learning, rather than focusing on a single domain.
- At the **school or grade level**, balance requires the use of multiple measures to gain a big picture view of student performance. It includes standardized tests, typical classroom assessments, as well as informal observation. Often the data is used to inform whole group instruction, or curriculum adjustments. In other words, the data is used to monitor the progress of a class or cohort of students.
- At the **individual level**, balanced assessments are used to form instructional groupings, identify interventions, monitor progress, determine a student's specific learning needs, and provide opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect on their learning. Again, multiple measures (formal/informal & formative/summative) are used to guide decision-making.

At-a-Glance: Critical Components of a Balanced System of Assessment

- Variety of assessments – both types and purposes – provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate learning;
- Constructive and specific feedback is regularly provided for all students;
- All components of assessment fit together to provide a performance profile for each learner;
- Data collection occurs regularly within the classroom;
- Progress of at-risk learners is closely and frequently monitored;
- Individual and aggregated assessment data is made accessible to both teachers and administrators;
- Analysis or interpretation of data is performed regularly through a process of inquiry;
- Data is used to guide daily instruction, make changes to curriculum, and guide program development, and
- Students have an integral role in the assessment process as they reflect on their progress, and set personal learning goals.

With the exception of state required assessments, the dates indicated below are suggested dates and always flexible depending upon the needs of each building. Student data must be analyzed on a regular basis to develop RTI groups.

Roles and Responsibilities

A balanced assessment system involves all professionals within a culture of inquiry, or *professional learning community* that utilizes assessment data to make the best decisions for all learners.

The following sums up the roles of each:

Administrator

- Provide continuous professional development in classroom assessment practices for faculty and staff;
- Identify and collaboratively determine district-wide standardized and locally developed benchmark assessments, and how to score and disseminate results in a timely manner;
- Monitor student assessment data and provide access to the data for teachers to monitor student assessments and learning;
- Establish data teams to review and disseminate aggregated, district-wide and school-wide assessment and other data, and to serve as data coaches for the schools
- Accommodate time within the schedule for teachers to collaborate with colleagues and teaching partners

Educator/Team

- Ensure that all instructional units developed in the district's curriculum database employ a balanced system of assessment;
- Involve students in the assessment process through reflection and setting of personal learning goals;
- Clearly communicate district and individual learning goals to students;
- Identify criteria, set benchmarks, gather exemplar/benchmark student work;
- Regularly interpret and discuss grade level, classroom, and individual student performance data; and
- Problem-solve within the context of grade and/or content levels to determine best interventions for struggling learners or best enrichment strategies for students who have mastered learning goals.

Learner

- Assume ownership of learning;
- Use assessment information and reflection to set personal learning goals;
- Self-assess progress toward the attainment of personal learning goals.

The charts on the following two pages reflect the importance of balancing classroom level assessment with program and policy level assessments. Each summarizes important decisions to be made, by whom, and using what information.

Level 1: Classroom Assessment Users

Decision Makers	Important Questions to be Answered	Information Needed	Assessment System Implications
Students in the Classrooms	What am I supposed to learn?	Learning targets described in student- friendly language at the beginning of learning	Accurate assessments must reflect the learning targets students are given
	What have I learned already, and what do I still need to work on?	Evidence must allow student to track progress and understand where they are now in relation to expectations at any point in time	Continuous sequence of accurate classroom assessments must provide descriptive feedback in student- friendly terms during learning
	Have I met or am I progressing toward the important achievement standards?	Status regarding mastery of each standard in student- friendly language	Assessments must provide evidence of standards mastered periodically throughout the year
	Have I met the state achievement expectations?	Status regarding meeting state standards in student- friendly language	Annual state assessments reporting standards mastered and not yet mastered
Teachers in the Schools	What are my students supposed to learn?	Standards deconstructed into classroom targets leading, over time, up to each standard; district curriculum maps of learning progression	All assessments must reflect these targets; it must be clear which target any assessment reflects
	What have they learned already, and what do they still need to learn?	Continuous evidence revealing of each student’s current place in the learning progressions leading up to each standard	Continuous sequence of accurate classroom assessments used during the learning to provide a picture of progress toward mastery of standards

	Which students need learning supports or special services?	Evidence of how students are doing in relation to grade- or age-level expectations	Assessments must provide evidence of students' relative status or progress to determine eligibility
	Have my students met or are they progressing on the important achievement standards?	Status of each student's mastery of each state standard	Periodic, interim, benchmark assessments reflecting student mastery of standards throughout the year
	Did they meet state achievement expectations?	Status regarding each student's mastery of each state standard	Annual assessment of each student's mastery of each state standard
Parents in the Community	What is my child supposed to learn?	Learning targets in family-friendly language provided from the beginning of learning	Assessments must accurately reflect these targets
	What has my child learned already, and what does he or she still need to learn?	Assessments providing information on current place in the progression toward each learning target at any point in time	Continuous sequence of accurate classroom assessments used during the learning need to provide a picture of progress
	Is my child progressing satisfactorily in meeting the teacher's classroom learning expectations?	Information gained from my child through self-assessment, indications from the teacher or from my child	Periodic summative classroom assessments must feed into report card grade or summary of classroom standards met
	Does my child need additional learning supports or the services of a specialized program?	Student's learning in relation to grade- or age-level expectations	Assessment evidence needs interpretation in terms of expected achievement levels

Level 2: Instructional Support Users

Decision Makers	Decisions to be Made	Information Needed	Assessment System Implications
Principals, Curriculum Leaders, Teacher Teams	What standards are students expected to master by subject across our range of grade levels and classrooms?	Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject as they unfold within and across grade levels	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards and their associated classroom-level learning targets
	Which of these standards are students mastering or progressing appropriately toward? Are there problem areas?	Information revealing patterns over time within the school year of achievement within and across teachers, grades, and subjects	Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically during the year
	Did enough of our students meet standards this year?	Proportion of students meeting and not meeting each standard	Annual assessments reveal how students did on each standard
	What standards are students expected to master across our classrooms, grades, and schools?	Standards mastered by grade and subject mapped within and across grade levels across schools	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards

Level 3: Policy Level Users

Decision Makers	Decisions to be Made	Information Needed	Assessment System Implications
Superintendent, Various Policy-Makers	What standards are to be met?	Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards
	Which of these standards are students mastering or making appropriate progress toward and in which schools?	Information revealing patterns of achievement within and across schools	Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically during the year
	Did enough of our students meet standards this year?	Proportion of students meeting and not meeting each standard	Annual assessments show how each student scored on each standard
	What standards are students expected to master in our schools?	Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject	Assessments must accurately reflect these standards
	How many of our students are meeting standards?	Scores reflecting patterns of achievement within and across schools and districts	Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically