IMPROVED ASSESSMENT AND NEW REPORT CARD PROVIDES MORE SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT HORIZON STUDENTS’ ACHIEVEMENT

This school year brings the introduction of a new standardized report card for all Horizon School Division elementary schools and most junior high and middle schools.

Alberta Education outlines for teachers the learning outcomes students are expected to learn in each subject for each grade. What *will* change on the new report cards is the way that in which learning is communicated. Using a four point scale, teachers will report on student learning in clear, parent-friendly categories. This format is designed to give parents and students insight to what is being learned in each subject area and how well each student is meeting the expectations for his or her grade level.

Most of our elementary schools have previously designed a similar report card, but each one used a little bit different language or information. Three teacher committees worked together during the 2015-16 school year to create a report card template that all Horizon schools can use (kindergarten, elementary, and junior high). This works stemmed from the 2014-15 school year where teachers examined best assessment practice and the division revised its Board Policy HK: Student Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting.

We know there is an important relationship between a student’s self-confidence and his or her future achievement. Breaking down a subject into smaller strands or categories gives teachers the opportunity to recognize a student’s strengths and highlight areas where more focus or practice would be helpful. Students get direct information about the areas they’re performing well and can feel good about that.

Also, student self-assessment is one of the most effective instructional strategies. When we know *what* we need to learn and reflect on *how well* we’re doing, all of us try and figure out what we need to do to perform better. A real life example is if you learned to ride a bike. As we wobble and get that first feel of what it feels like to actually balance on two wheels, we are figuring out how to hold our bodies so we can go farther without tipping over. In learning at school, a child might feel pretty good about adding and subtracting with one or two digit numbers, for example, but when they have to work with larger numbers and regroup (“carry” or “borrow”), they struggle. If they’re “wobbling” with a concept, teachers can help students learn it more completely. By breaking down a task and identifying what a student knows best, students know for themselves what they need to learn next.

Sound assessment improves learning by helping students know more about how they are performing and what exactly they can do to grow their knowledge or skills. Horizon School Division applauds teachers leading these practices to make a difference for our students.