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Halifax West High School Plan for Communication of Student Learning

Introduction

At Halifax West, we want every student to succeed and experience a positive learning environment during their high school career. We are here not only to help each student learn, but also to help each student understand how they learn.

The Halifax Regional Centre for Education and Halifax West High School believe that assessment and evaluation are essential components of teaching and learning. Together they provide a basis for analyzing and reflecting on student learning, teacher practice, informing instruction and programs. Halifax West High School is committed to aligning the assessment and evaluation of students with the learning outcomes detailed in provincial curriculum documents, and in so doing, providing the best possible education for our students.

Education is a partnership between teachers, students, and parents/guardians. Effective communication between school and home is a critical component of that partnership. Accurate and timely information regarding course outlines, student achievement, attendance and behavior are essential components in assisting students to be successful learners, and ensuring that parents/guardians are informed and knowledgeable partners. This School Plan for Communicating Student Learning will provide parents/guardians with some of the information necessary to support student learning. It will help to explain how we assess and evaluate student learning and provide some of the time frames and events for formal communication opportunities.

At Halifax West High School, we know the importance of having involved and active parents/guardians; they are the key to supporting and ensuring student success. Effective communication between home and school is integral to ensuring that our school community works together to support successful learners.

Communication

Formal Communications include but may not be limited to: Course Outlines, Curriculum Nights, Program Planning Team Meetings, Power School, Report Cards, School Advisory Council Meetings, Parent Teacher Interviews, Student Success Plan, Student Handbook, School Welcome Package and Alert Messages.

Informal Communications include but may not be limited to: conversations with students, e-mails, phone calls, website, and Twitter.

Communication made about student learning and progress is important. Every effort is made by teachers to keep parents/guardians informed regarding student progress. Students and parents are encouraged to frequently check PowerSchool as this is updated regularly by teachers.

Attendance is available daily to parents/guardians through Power School. Attendance codes used include:

(P) Student is present in class or in the office or student services

(ACT) Student is participating in a school related activity such as a field trip or school sporting event

(AWN) Explained absence whereby the school has been contacted by the parent or guardian

(A) Unknown absence whereby the school has not be contacted by the parent or guardian

(L) Student is late for the class

(LE) Student leaves class early

(OI) Operational Issue

Teachers can enter the attendances codes of P, L, AWN, LE and A. To report an absence call the school at 902-457-8900 and dial extension #1 for the attendance line at any time 24 hours a day.

Our office hours are from 8:30 am – 4:00 pm and the main office number is (902) 457-8900. In the interest of facilitating open lines of communication our staff directory of email addresses is on our website. In most cases, teachers have their own subject information websites, Twitter accounts and Google Classroom(s) that can be accessed through the Halifax West website (<https://hwh.hrce.ca/>)

Every attempt will be made to help individuals who identify themselves as needing assistance in understanding the assessment procedures for student evaluation. If at any time, the standard forms of communication are inappropriate for parents/guardians, the administration will set a meeting time with parents/guardians and the necessary personnel to assist with understanding their student's achievement. (This could mean bringing in an interpreter, or someone who can sign or advocate for the parents, etc.)

Register online with Power School to see up-to-date marks and attendance.

Within the first two weeks of a semester a Curriculum Night will be held. Parent / Guardian interviews will occur once each semester close to the reporting time. Please plan to attend as this is an effective way to communicate student progress. During the first week of the semester, teachers will provide students with a written course synopsis/outline and detailed information on how their work will be evaluated including components and values. This may

also be available on Power School. The teacher will inform students if they make changes to the plan. Parents/Guardians can arrange to meet with teachers if further clarification is needed.

Halifax West School Year

Calendar Dates for curriculum nights, parent-teacher interviews, exams and all other important events can be found on the school website (<https://hwh.hrce.ca/>) by hitting the “Calendar” tab.

Student Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment – the process of gathering information on student achievement with the purpose of improving both teaching and learning.

Formative Assessments (Assessments for Learning) – ongoing assessments that take place during the teaching and learning process for the purpose of showing growth over time, determining student’s needs, planning next steps in instruction and providing students with descriptive feedback prior to a summative assessment.

Summative Assessments (Assessment of Learning) – assessments that take place at the end of a period of learning for the purpose of determining the extent to which learning has occurred.

Evaluation – the process of analyzing, reflecting upon and making judgments or decisions based on summative assessment data.

Expected Learning Outcomes – goal statements prescribed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that indicates what teachers are required to teach and what students are expected to know.

Curriculum Alignment – the matching of instructional and assessment practices with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s curriculum documents/outcomes.

External Large Scale Assessments - Schools participate in regional, provincial, national and international external large-scale assessments as required by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Halifax Regional Centre for Education ie. Nova Scotia Exams for Math 10 and English 10.

Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to provide students with a wide range of ways to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes. These tools include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Conversations
- ✓ Checklists (used to record a student’s completion of homework, projects etc.)

- ✓ Debates (structured and controlled dialogue that permits students to organize, discuss, examine and evaluate varying viewpoints and/or evidence)
- ✓ Descriptive Feedback (specific oral or written information that helps students understand what they are doing well and what they need to do next in order to improve)
- ✓ Examinations
- ✓ Experiments (an activity usually conducted in a laboratory to test theory, followed by a write-up demonstrating the outcome)
- ✓ [Homework](#) (see [Homework Policy](#) p. 8)
- ✓ ICA (In class assessments)
- ✓ Journals/Reports/Logs (ongoing reflective pieces of student writing relating to learning outcomes)
- ✓ Observations (used to assess group work, individual work habits and understanding of a concept)
- ✓ Peer Assessments (used to assess group dynamics and to make students accountable to their classmates)
- ✓ Performance
- ✓ Presentations (a demonstration of student achievement before an audience)
- ✓ Portfolios (a collection of student work selected for a particular purpose)
- ✓ Projects (in-depth research on a chosen topic and/or demonstration of the application of knowledge/skills)
- ✓ Questioning (an informal method used for immediate feedback to the teacher to check for student understanding)
- ✓ Rubrics (a set of specific criteria against which a student's work will be measured and used to assess presentations, reports, visual displays, essays, labs, assignments, portfolios and other items)
- ✓ Self-assessments (used to allow students to communicate their perceived level of competence on certain outcomes)
- ✓ Surveys (a means of gathering information to inform)
- ✓ Tests/quizzes (usually carried out on a specific unit of work)
- ✓ Written assignments
- ✓ Videos

Evaluation Policies and Procedures

As education is our primary goal, helping students cope with the stress of evaluation is important. In order to do this, the following practices will be followed:

1. Students are encouraged to prepare for upcoming exams a week in advance.
2. Final summative evaluation events that require preparation at home are to be completed at least one week prior to the formal exam week of that semester.
3. Pre-reading materials necessary for exams should be given out at least one week prior to exams.

4. Practices, field trips, extra-curricular activities, evening performances or recitals should not be scheduled during the week prior to exams.
5. The Assessment and Evaluation policy dictates that no single assessment event will be evaluated at more than 30% of the final course mark.

Purpose of the Report Card

The purpose of a report card is to provide a student's parent(s) or guardian(s) with a summary of how well a student understands what is being taught, and their level of academic achievement and social development. Report cards should be used in addition to other forms of communication between the home and school such as the Power School, parent-teacher meetings, newsletters, phone calls and emails.

Report cards for grades 10 – 12 have four parts:

Attendance - Reports the number of classes the student was absent from school. Teachers monitor student attendance daily using PowerSchool and include the information on report cards.

Learner Profile - Reports on the social development and work habits using codes that show how often they are displayed over the reporting period. The codes are assigned based on the grade level expectations for social development and work habits:

- ✓ C – Consistently
- ✓ U – Usually
- ✓ S – Sometimes
- ✓ R – Rarely
- ✓ N/A – Not applicable

A comment can be included to provide more detail on the social development and work habits of the student.

Course comments – A summary of what the student has learned, which includes:

- ✓ Strengths (areas of the curriculum where your child is having success)
- ✓ Learning needs (areas of the curriculum where your child is still developing)
- ✓ Suggestions to support further learning

Grades - Grades represent academic achievement only. Although social development and work habits impact student achievement, they are reported in the Learner Profile.

Grades are based on the evidence of student learning and understanding of the curriculum concepts and skills taught in the classroom. Evidence is collected over time in a variety of ways, including work products, conversations and observations, etc. Reporting codes are used to

describe how well a student understands the material covered and how well they can apply concepts and skills in relation to the learning outcomes for each subject:

Teachers in Grades 7-12 will use the same grades and descriptors

90-100% - Demonstrates excellent understanding and application of concepts and skills in relation to the learning outcomes.

80-89% - Demonstrates very good understanding and application of concepts and skills in relation to the learning outcomes.

70-79% - Demonstrates good understanding and application of concepts and skills in relation to the learning outcomes.

60-69% - Demonstrates satisfactory understanding and application of concepts and skills in relation to the learning outcomes.

50-59% - Demonstrates limited understanding and application of concepts and skills in relation to the learning outcomes.

Below 50% - Has not met minimum requirements of the course

INS - Insufficient evidence to determine a grade

IP - In progress until all components of the course are completed.

Reporting Periods

Throughout the school year, there are four reporting periods where report cards are sent home to parents/guardians (November, February, April and June). Additional reports are sent home for students with Adaptations and Individual Program Plans. Parents/Guardians and students are encouraged to monitor student progress through the parent and student portal in PowerSchool.

Protocol for Concerns Regarding Evaluation Results

Students should first discuss the issue with the teacher. If more clarification is needed, parents should contact the teacher to discuss the concern. If students or parents are not satisfied following a conversation they had with a teacher (including the Department Head), they should contact the student's Vice Principal. The school's administration will make every effort to resolve the situation with all parties involved.

The following is a list of provisions to help students and parents/guardians when concerns arise:

1. Students should contact the teacher and discuss the grade immediately following the return of the assessment/evaluation
2. If more formal clarification is needed, the parent/guardian or student should contact the teacher directly in writing
3. The teacher will respond to this communication either in writing or by phone, in a timely manner after receiving the request

4. The teacher will document the conversation or meeting
5. If unresolved, the matter should be referred to the Department Head by the student and/or parent/guardian
6. The Department Head will then meet with the parties involved to resolve the situation.
7. If, for any reason, the matter remains unresolved, it should be referred to the Vice- Principal and or Principal.

Web-Based Student Information System (PowerSchool)

The Halifax Regional Centre for Education uses the Student Information System called PowerSchool. The system allows students and parents/guardians to log on using their own private online account to see grades, track attendance, and learn about upcoming assignments. Information is made available about how to log on to a private account and access real-time information. Students and parents will be able to log on anywhere there is internet access to access information.

Reasons why students recommend using PowerSchool

- ✓ To check on the accuracy of my attendance and late records to make sure everything is in order to receive my exam exemption
- ✓ To track my grades so that I know where I stand and see if I have any outstanding assessments
- ✓ To view the Grade History section, and click on my grade percentage to see the breakdown of all assignments and tests and the marks I received for each that has brought me to that grade percentage to date
- ✓ To see courses/credits I have completed to date so that I know what I need to graduate
- ✓ To directly email my teacher from PowerSchool if I have any questions
- ✓ To read comments from my teachers about my areas of strengths and needs in my learning
- ✓ To choose my course requests for the following school year from PowerSchool
- ✓ To be more in charge of my learning and attendance by looking at common patterns (eg. I'm always late for the first class in the morning)
- ✓ To see my attendance and marks before my parents do

Students with Special Needs

At Halifax West High School we are dedicated to supporting the learning of all students. Teachers, parents, and students themselves can initiate a referral to the School Planning Team. Once a referral is received, the School Planning Team will begin the process of reviewing the profile of the learner. Suggestions are made to the classroom teachers and a program planning team meeting is held. At this time adaptations or individual programming may be recommended to support the student in meeting with academic, social or behavioral success. Parent/Guardian participation is essential to the success of the process in both program

adaptations or in the development of the IPP. It should be noted that some students will require an Individual Program Plan in one or more courses.

In the case of program adaptations, teachers will communicate to the parents the adaptations required to assess and evaluate learning and achievement related to the outcomes of the course. In the case of an IPP, teachers will base evaluations on the student's success in meeting the individualized outcomes developed.

Halifax West High School is committed to ensuring that individual students who require English as an additional Language (EAL) Programming services are provided with the appropriate assessment and evaluation methods and strategies to support their needs.

Provincial Homework Policy

Homework and/or assignments are a constructive tool in the teaching/learning process. Purposeful assignments not only enhance student achievement but also develop self-discipline and good work habits. The purpose of homework is preparing students for class, practicing new skills or knowledge, and enrichment of learning. Homework assignments will:

- ✓ be purposeful learning
- ✓ reinforce, enrich, or help students prepare for classroom learning
- ✓ be designed with consideration for the needs and circumstances of each student
- ✓ be appropriate for each student's age and developmental stage
- ✓ have a clear purpose
- ✓ directly connect to what students are learning in their classes
- ✓ build on skills or knowledge that a student already has

Homework assigned in grades 7–12 will expand students' learning of advanced skills and will be based on the specific course of study. On average, at the High School level, students can expect to spend 6-8 hours on homework per week.

Due Dates

It is important for students to complete and pass in their assignments on time so that teachers can provide timely feedback. All assignments require due dates. Missed due dates can influence the student's summative or final evaluation. An extension can be granted if negotiated prior to the original due date with the teacher.

During the course of the semester "chronic cases" of missed work will be communicated to the parent/guardian directly by the teacher. After the Extended Deadline has expired and the assignment is still not passed in, the student will be given a zero for the corresponding piece of work for failure to demonstrate that the outcome(s) have been met.

What about Summative (Major) Assessment?

- ✓ Although there is an expectation for and responsibility of all students to submit assigned work by the deadline date set by the subject teacher, the school recognizes that from time to time a circumstance may arise whereby a student may need an extension of the pre-established deadline date
- ✓ Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a request for an extension of a summative assessment must be given a minimum of one day prior to the deadline date and to the classroom teacher
- ✓ The length of the extension will be determined taking into consideration the following:
 - the nature of the assignment and the amount of time needed for completion
 - time needed for additional instruction
 - the need to return assignments to other students for meaningful feedback
 - the need to maintain the logical progression of the course as prescribed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Vacation Time and Sporting Events

Given that exam dates are published well in advance, it is expected that family vacations/ sporting events will be scheduled around this important assessment time. Absence due to such vacations and sporting events will not be considered an acceptable excuse. Also, there are instances when the school is closed during the scheduled exam day due to inclement weather, power failures or unforeseen circumstances. In this event, exams will be moved forward one day in the schedule. All students must be present on the day of their exam.

Contact Us:

(T) 902-457-8900 extension 0

School Website: hwhs@hrce.ca

Follow us on Twitter: @HalifaxWestHS

PowerSchool: <https://sishrsb.ednet.ns.ca/public/home.html>

Please check our school website for a list of teacher websites and email addresses.