

# **Astral Drive Junior High School**

## **Plan for Communicating Student Learning**

### **Introduction**

At Astral Drive Junior High we know that it is important for students to have the best opportunities to succeed and believe that student success depends in part upon the collaborative efforts of all those involved in the education of the child. Collaboration requires that teachers, children, parents/guardians share a common understanding of what children are expected to achieve through their educational experiences, as well as a clear idea of where the child is in his/ her learning. An effective plan will focus on academic success while also acknowledging the importance of social and emotional development, particularly during these “Middle Years” of adolescence.

### **Background**

The educational programs at Astral Drive follow the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) outcomes for each subject area. These educational outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes the student will demonstrate by the end of each grade level. The assessment and evaluation of students is based on the guidelines provided by the Department of Education.

To help parents/ guardians understand the process of assessment and evaluation of learning, an overview of the structure within which we work at the school includes:

- Public School Program (NS Department of Education)
- Essential Graduation Competencies
- Learning Outcomes Framework
- Principles of Learning

### ***Public School Program (PSP)***

**Nova Scotia public education aims to develop well-rounded, independent, critical thinkers who take initiative and responsibility for their learning.**

- All students are provided with learning opportunities to develop the competencies to become caring, compassionate, creative, resilient global citizens who help build and support their diverse communities.

Student success is comprised of three interlocking components:

- **Learning:** students acquire competencies (a set of attitudes, skills, and knowledge) in various subjects in the core curriculum, and in areas of learning outside the core curriculum, including life skills.
- **Development:** students develop appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral skills that facilitate their full membership, participation, and learning.
- **Well-being:** students learn and adopt healthy lifestyles that support their physical and mental growth and development.

Nova Scotia public education, grounded in the principles of **equity and inclusiveness**, celebrates diversity and promotes respect as well as personal and collective responsibility. Teachers, students, parents and guardians, families, and the community validate, affirm, honour and embrace the diversity, the individual qualities, the identities, the culture, the experiences and the uniqueness of everyone. Diversity in Nova Scotia public schools is a source of strength and knowledge upon which connections, deep understanding and unity can be built.

### ***Learning Through the Lens of Competencies and Skills***

- Contained in each curriculum outcome is a **skill** that is to be demonstrated in the context of some **concept** or understanding.
- Each outcome has **suggested indicators** to assist in developing those concepts and skills to demonstrate achievement.
- **Outcomes** are statements of what a learner is expected to know and be able to do. Outcomes combine **skills and concepts**.

#### ***Skills***

- Select
  - Plan
  - Evaluate
  - Apply
  - Question
  - Analyze
  - Investigate
  - Formulate
  - Reflect
  - Test
  - Classify
  - Compare
- Essential Graduation **Competencies** are an interrelated set of attitudes, skills and knowledge that is drawn upon and applied for learning and living.

<b>Citizenship</b>	Learners are expected to contribute to the quality and sustainability of their environment, communities, and society. They analyse cultural, economic, environmental, and social issues, make decisions, judgment, solve problems, and act as stewards in a local, national, and global context.
<b>Communication</b>	Learners are expected to interpret and express themselves effectively through a variety of media. They participate in critical dialogue, listen, read, view, and create for information, enrichment, and enjoyment.
<b>Creativity and Innovation</b>	Learners are expected to demonstrate openness to new experiences, engage in creative processes, to make unexpected connections, and to generate new and dynamic ideas, techniques, and products. They value aesthetic expression, and appreciate the creative and innovative work of others.
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	Learners are expected to analyse and evaluate evidence, arguments, and ideas using various types of reasoning and systems thinking to inquire, make decisions, and solve problems. They reflect critically on thinking processes.
<b>Personal Career Development</b>	Learners are expected to become self-aware and self-directed individuals who set and pursue goals. They understand and appreciate how culture contributes to work and personal life roles. They make thoughtful decisions regarding health and wellness, and career pathways.
<b>Technological Fluency</b>	Learners are expected to use and apply technology to collaborate, communicate, create, innovate, and solve problems. They use technology in a legal, safe, and ethically responsible manner to support and enhance learning.

### ***Principles of Learning – How Students Learn***

The Department of Education outlines how students learn as the following:

<b>Principles of Learning</b>
Students construct knowledge and make it meaningful in terms of their prior knowledge and experiences.
Learning is a process of actively constructing knowledge.
Learning is enhanced when it takes place in a social and collaborative environment.
Students need to continue to view learning as an integrated whole.
Learners must see themselves as capable and successful.
Learners have different ways of knowing and representing knowledge.
Reflection is an integral part of learning.

## **Assessment, Evaluation and Communication**

By *assessment*, we mean the systematic process of gathering information on student learning. This includes information about what students know and can do. Teachers gather student information that relates to what children are expected to learn as indicated by the curriculum guides. Teachers will establish tasks and routines that actively involve students in assessing, evaluating and communicating their learning. Students will work toward accepting responsibility for and ownership of their learning.

At Astral Drive Junior High there are many ways our students show us what they have learned, which may include the following:

- Class presentations
- Tests, quizzes, questionnaires
- Written responses (journals, portfolios, stories, explanations, charting)
- Research projects
- Essays
- Demonstrations (performance of a task, experiments, explanations to others, games)
- Modelling
- Conferencing
- Interviews with students (both formal and informal)
- Debating
- Multimedia presentations (computers, videos, live performance)
- Teacher observations
- Students teaching students
- Dramatic presentations (role playing, song and dance)
- Peer and self-evaluation
- Anecdotal records

Teachers design these assessment activities to collect evidence on students' progress towards achieving the Department of Education outcomes. By using a variety of assessment tools, teachers give students different opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the outcomes. This accommodates the many different learning styles of our students.

***Evaluation*** is the process of analyzing, summarizing and making decisions based upon the assessment information gathered. The decisions teachers make in evaluating student learning reflect where each child is in relation to learning outcomes, and also where the child needs to go next in their learning. Teachers will give students a variety of samples of work to help students understand what good quality looks like and what is required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

Once teachers have gathered this information, we must make sense of it by evaluating student learning. Evaluation involves weighing and balancing all available information and using a high level of professional judgment in making decisions based upon that information. It is important for teachers to share this information with students and parents so that we can collaborate in supporting your child's learning.

## ***Communication***

As parents/guardians, you can expect to receive information from teachers about your child's learning in relation to the expected learning outcomes. It is important for teachers to share this information with students and parents so that we can collaborate in supporting your child's learning. Reporting on student learning should be clear, accurate and of practical value to you as the parent/guardian. If at any time, the standard forms for communication are inappropriate for you, the staff/administration will endeavor to assist you in better understanding your child's achievement. The principal will seek the support of system and community resources to communicate with parents in languages other than French or English and in other areas of specific needs.

## ***Tools for Communication***

At Astral Drive, parents/guardians will be informed of student learning in a variety of ways; some on a school wide basis and others particular to individual classes and teachers. These include but are not limited to:

- Curriculum events
- PowerSchool Parent and Student Portal
- Collaborative goal setting
- Home/school communication: journals, e-mail, school and teacher websites, phone calls, conferences
- Work samples: published stories, book reports, journals, projects, investigations, displays, recordings, writing folders, portfolios, tests
- Homework: student work, projects, interactive activities for the student/parent/guardian
- Special events: performances, concerts, contests, guest speakers and assemblies

## ***Report Cards***

Parents/guardians will also receive three report cards, one at the end of each term. Just as in all assessment and evaluation strategies, the student will be evaluated in relation to the expected learning outcomes for the grade level. All students will receive a percentage grade and comment for each course/strand. This information will indicate the degree of competence the student has demonstrated in relation to the outcomes, and not in comparison to other students in the class.

**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 minimal 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.

N/A- Not applicable at this time. (Used only for reporting in strands in Mathematics grades 7 & 8)

Percentage grades are calculated from the Achievement Levels demonstrated for each course outcome throughout the term. This information will be made available to parents/caregivers on PowerSchool in a timely fashion and will be kept up-to-date. The Achievement Levels are as follows:

**Level 4:** In-depth knowledge and understanding of content and concepts. Able to extend the application of related skills.

**Level 3 and 3+:** Competent knowledge and understanding of content and concepts. Appropriate application of the related skills.

**Level 2 and 2+:** Developing knowledge and understanding of content and concepts. Developing in the application of the related skills.

**Level 1 and 1+:** Limited knowledge and understanding of content and concepts. Limited application of related skills.

### **Communicating Concerns with Parents/Guardians**

In addition to our regular reporting system, teachers may contact the parent(s)/guardians when there is concern about a student's progress. Parents are often invited into the school to meet with teachers regarding any concerns. If a solution is not immediately forthcoming then recommendations for further intervention may be made.

Many teachers send home more regular reports on students' achievements. This might include summaries of homework, class-work and assignments completed. We do this in

an effort to keep parents up to date on their child's progress. Provisions will be made for any parent who requires assistance with the reporting of their child's progress.

### **Parent/Guardian Concerns with Student Assessment and Evaluation**

While teachers make efforts to assist parents/guardians and students in understanding assessments and evaluations, there may be an occasion when parents/guardians have concerns. The school has established the following procedure:

- The parent/guardian should first raise the concern with the teacher. The teacher will respond appropriately within a reasonable time frame.
- If the teacher, parent/guardian, or both feel that the participation of the principal will help bring about a satisfactory resolution, the principal will meet with all involved, separately or together as is deemed appropriate.

In all cases when disagreements arise, it is expected that parents and school staff will work together in the spirit of mutual respect to resolve the situation, having in mind as the first priority the best interests of the student.

### **Children Requiring Additional Support**

Astral Drive Junior High School is committed to supporting the learning of all students. As part of this commitment, the school has established a process for the identification, assessment and program planning for students with special needs. This process follows the guidelines set out by the Provincial Department of Education and the Halifax Regional School Board.

***Identification of students with special needs:*** Classroom teachers, resource teachers, parents/guardians and students may initiate and/or assist in identifying students and providing relevant assessment information. When formal individual assessments are required, they will be conducted by qualified personnel and will be undertaken only after parents/guardians have given written, informed consent.

***Program Adaptations:*** Classroom teachers will explore a variety of adaptations based on the characteristics of the learner and are appropriate to his/her needs, age, and level of educational achievement. These adaptations and their effectiveness in assisting students in meeting outcomes will be recorded and the information communicated to parents/guardians on the Programming Adaptations Form.

***Program Planning Team:*** If the classroom teacher(s) require(s) further support to meet the needs of a student, the teacher(s) will contact the Program Planning Team. The team members include the Principal or Vice Principal, Learning Centre/Resource Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Jr. High Support Teacher, Team Teachers, and the

Parents/Guardians and Student when appropriate. Parents/Guardians participation is essential at this stage. It is also through the meeting of the Program Planning Team that a decision is made on whether an Individual Program Plan is needed for the student.

***Individual Program Plan:*** The development and implementation of an Individual Program Plan (IPP) follows a process suggested by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Parents/guardians will be involved in the process.

## **Homework**

The Provincial Homework Policy applies to all grades (primary – 12). Homework has one or more of the following three purposes:

- Prepare information or materials for future learning activities (e.g., gather resources, read something for a class discussion, or rehearse for a presentation).
- Practice new knowledge or new skills (e.g., read for pleasure, practice physical skills, practice a musical instrument, use new knowledge to complete a project, or practice basic literacy and math skills)
- Enrich students' understanding of a topic and apply it in new ways (e.g., research local news, investigate a science experiment, write daily or weekly reflections in a journal, or apply skills to a class project).

Homework assigned in grades 7–12 will expand students' learning of advanced skills and subject-specific knowledge. The development of life skills (e.g., time management, self-direction, independent problem solving) will be an important element of homework at all grade levels (primary–12).

### **Standards for Effective Homework**

Homework assignments will

- 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
- be designed so that the student can do the work without extra help
- be evaluated promptly
- provide evidence of student learning
- offer a way for families to support their children's learning, without requiring family members to teach new skills or concepts
- be coordinated by teachers and administrators through a school-wide approach



that ensures assignments are realistic and fair to all students

## **Conclusion**

At Astral Drive our School Plan for Communicating Student Learning is designed to meet the needs of our school community. Suggestions for revisions are welcome and should be directed to the principal. Our school plan will be reviewed annually and will be revised if needed in conjunction with our Student Success Plan (SSP) goals and strategies.

## **Additional Definitions**

**Formative Assessment** – involves the ongoing process of gathering and interpreting evidence about student learning for the purpose of determining where students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there. The information gathered is used by teachers to provide descriptive feedback and adjust instruction and by students to focus their learning. Assessment for learning is a high impact instructional strategy that takes place while the student is still learning and serves to promote learning.

**Summative Assessment** - is the process of collecting and interpreting evidence for the purpose of summarizing learning at a given point in time, to make judgments about the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria, and to assign a value to represent that quality. The information gathered may be used to communicate the student's achievement to parents/guardians, other teachers, students themselves, and others. It occurs at or near the end of a cycle of learning.

**Balanced Assessment** - using a variety of assessment strategies

**Curriculum Outcomes** - statements identifying what students are expected to know and be able to do upon completion of study in each specific subject area.

**Individual Program Plan (IPP)** - requires extra planning with changes to the Public School Program outcomes and/or the addition of individualized outcomes. It may include any of all of the following:

- deletion/modification of curriculum outcomes
- addition of new outcomes; may include behavioural, life skills and/or social outcomes

**Large Scale Assessment** - Any provincial, national or international assessment, examination or test the Department of Education or Halifax Regional School Board directs schools to administer.

**Program Adaptations** - extra planning with no changes to Public School Program outcomes. They may include any or all of the following:

- \* Changes to environment
- \* Class organization
- \* Resources

- \* Presentation strategies
- \* Evaluation strategies
- \* Motivational strategies

**PSP** - Public School Program as agreed upon by the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

## **Astral Drive Junior High School**

### **Communicating Student Learning 2022-2023**

Curriculum Night: September 22<sup>nd</sup> from 6 to 8 PM

#### **TERMS**

Term I Begins: September 7

Term II Begins: November 22

Term III Begins: March 21

#### **PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS**

November 30 6:00-8:00 PM

December 1 1:00-3:00 PM

March 30 1:00-3:00 PM and 6:00-8:00 PM

#### **REPORT CARDS**

Term I November 28

Term II March 27

Term III June 30