1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. The South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB) believes in and is committed to helping students reach high levels of achievement and recognizes that a balanced assessment program promotes student, parent, teacher, and system learning. Assessment and evaluation are essential components of teaching and learning. Its role and purpose can be divided into Assessment FOR Learning, Assessment OF Learning, and Communicating Student Learning.

1.1.1. “Assessment FOR Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence FOR use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.” (Assessment Reform Group 2000) It also:

- Communicates growth and progress to students and teachers.
- Helps students monitor their learning over time.
- Supports the teacher’s role to demonstrate, model, and coach success. The student is in charge of his/her learning.
- Is a tool to support student goal setting and planning.
- Assists in the diagnosis of student needs and identifying interventions.
- Drives and informs classroom instruction.
- Occurs during the learning process.

1.1.2. Assessment OF Learning uses assessments to determine how much students have learned as of a particular point in time in order to report achievement status to others. It also:

- Allows opportunities for communication and reporting to stakeholders. Assessment OF Learning responds to the need for accountability.
- Supports learning decisions by providing information to students, teachers, schools, and the SSRSB.
- Is a tool to support students, schools, and the SSRSB with goal setting and planning.
- Takes place after the learning process.

1.1.3. Communicating Student Learning uses comprehensive and effective communication with students and parents, involving a range of methods, including both formal and informal communication. Reporting is one part of this process that summarizes and
clearly communicates to students, parents, and other stakeholders the data collected through assessment and evaluation that includes goal setting and next steps.

2.0 PRINCIPLES

2.1. Classroom assessment will:
- Align with the curriculum and instruction.
- Inform instructional decisions.
- Include a balance of formative and summative purposes.
- Have a clear purpose that includes clear criteria for evaluation that is communicated to students in advance.
- Provide equitable and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their achievement of the expected learning outcomes.

2.2. The SSRSB believes balanced assessment practice includes the following:
- It supports and reflects curricular outcomes.
- It reflects classroom instruction and is guided by clear performance targets and criteria, which are consistent with provincial outcomes and expectations.
- It engages students.
- Students are active participants in assessment and evaluation.
- Students engaged in self-assessment become more reflective and are able to set goals for improvement.
- Students learn to take responsibility for their work and become life-long learners.
- It motivates and encourages student excellence and responsibility.
- It focuses on “what” and “how” students learn.
- It considers the research on how the brain learns and the cognitive style(s) of the student.
- It connects to all dimensions of the “whole child”.
- It recognizes all educational achievement.
- It recognizes achievement of the “whole child”: social, emotional, physical, and intellectual.
- It reflects achievement in all areas of learning and educational activity.
- It is part of effective learning and teaching.
- It is an integrated part of the learning process that occurs day by day, moment by moment.
- It provides opportunities for both students and teachers to obtain and use information about progress towards learning outcomes.
- It is relevant to, appropriate for, and compatible with the purpose and context of the learning. Assessment involves students, parents, and teachers working collaboratively.
- It actively involves students monitoring their growth, in communicating their learning, in developing and using criteria and/or rubrics, and in the record keeping process (e.g.: portfolios, goal setting, rubrics, student-led or involved conferences, log or journal, etc.).
- It includes students, teachers, and parents actively working together as partners.
- It is an ongoing, systematic process.
- It is a natural process that regularly occurs though all instructional activities.
- It includes both assessment “FOR” learning and assessment “OF” learning.
- It includes information that is productive, timely, and descriptive.
- It addresses individual, classroom, school, and SSRSB needs.
• It includes feedback that is time appropriate, allowing for adjustments and improvements.
• It is balanced and multi-faceted.
• It is differentiated and therefore includes and addresses a variety of methods, purposes, and audiences.
• It gathers information from several contexts and may include school, SSRSB, and provincial assessments of learning.
• It reflects the complexity of learning to include process, knowledge, product, and content.
• It respects the dignity and reflects the developmental needs of the learning.
• It identifies what students know, are able to do, and are learning to do.
• It addresses the developmental characteristics of the student and considers a variety of learning styles and intelligences.
• It considers the social, cultural, and linguistic context of the students.
• It celebrates student progress and growth.
• It is equitable and fair.
• It provides students with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors.
• It is designed and developed in ways that control sources of bias and distortion.
• It accurately represents student performance.
• It has clear and appropriate targets based on outcomes.
• It is a key professional skill.
• Assessment-literate teachers require knowledge and skills to assess for learning. This includes planning for instruction and assessment, observing for learning, interpreting evidence, adjusting practice, and providing constructive feedback.

3.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK
3.1. This policy complies with the Education Act and other related provincial acts and policies.
   3.1.1. SSRSB Policy 216: Promotion, Placement, Acceleration, Retention
   3.1.2. SSRSB Policy 225: Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding, and Human Rights
   3.1.3. Nova Scotia Department of Education Racial Equity Policy
   3.1.4. SSRSB Policy 201: Student Services
   3.1.5. Nova Scotia Department of Education Special Education Policy and Supporting Documents
   3.1.6. Nova Scotia Department of Education Public School Program
   3.1.7. Nova Scotia Department of Education Guidelines for English as a Second Language Programming
   3.1.8. SSRSB Assessment Web Site
   3.1.10. SSRSB Policy 650: Performance Appraisal of NSTU Staff
   3.1.11. SSRSB Policy 234: Homework
   3.1.12. Nova Scotia Department of Education Student Records Policy

4.0 AUTHORIZATION
4.1. The Superintendent is authorized to issue procedures in support of this policy.
STUDENT ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION
OF STUDENT LEARNING

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

CONTENTS

1.0 PROCEDURES
2.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

1.0 PROCEDURES

1.1. Introduction – Assessment for Learning in SSRSB Classrooms
It is an expectation that there is a focus on students’ learning outcomes as outlined in Nova Scotia curriculum documents. Teaching and learning are linked processes in all classrooms. Continuous classroom assessment for learning is necessary for teachers and students to be able to ascertain what has been learned and the next steps in the learning. This requires that teachers offer regular descriptive feedback on student progress. Classroom assessment practice informs teacher lesson planning, assists with students learning needs, and engages students in the assessment process.

1.2. Academic Integrity and Dealing with Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, copying someone else’s work, cheating, citing references incorrectly, and handing in the same assignment for more than one course. Regardless of the nature, students may engage in this behavior at times intentionally and other times unintentionally. For example, some students are overwhelmed, may feel as though they are incapable of being successful on their own, or do not realize that they have done a form of academic dishonesty. Employing a proactive approach will help promote academic integrity and limit incidents of academic dishonesty.

“As with most behavioral concerns, there are two main issues: how to prevent it and what to do about it when it happens” (O’Connor, 2007, p.36). If the focus is on proactive strategies in assessment practices, then there will be fewer situations where behavioral consequences will be necessary. For example:

- Explicitly state and discuss with students the traits associated with good character.
- Educate students on what academic dishonesty is to ensure that they have a clear understanding of what it is and looks like, as well as consequences for engaging in this behavior.
- Develop rich, open-ended tasks that allow students to demonstrate their learning of the curriculum exceptions.
- Include the teaching of referencing and research skills for tasks requiring students to use these skills.
- Create authentic assessments that engage students actively in their learning.
- Allow for time in instructional and assessment practices to conference with students to keep track of their progress and provide them with next steps toward success.
• Require students to attach a signed statement to all submitted tasks verifying that they have not plagiarized or cheated.
• Have research notes and rough drafts submitted with the final copy as evidence of preparatory work.

Dealing with Academic Dishonesty

“You cheated, so you get a zero on this test (assignment, etc.).”
This has been the typical response to the discovery of academic dishonesty. It is another example of broken grades because it uses the assessment/grading policy as a tool to discipline students for inappropriate behavior, thus distorting student achievement. The fixes for this are to articulate an academic honesty policy with clear behavioral consequences for breaches and to require students to redo the test or assignment without cheating or plagiarizing, to establish an accurate achievement record for grading.
~ O’Connor, A Repair Kit for Grading 2007, p.36

Students need to face consequences for behaviors that are contrary to good character. However, giving a zero does not accurately reflect what the student has learned, nor will it deter this behavior from occurring again.

Schools are encouraged to develop a range of progressive consequences in response to academic dishonesty in order that students take responsibility for their actions. The progressive nature of the school policy would take into account age, maturity, grade level, and pattern of behavior (i.e.: consequences for a grade 9 student who has plagiarized may look quite different from consequences applied for a grade 12 student, or if a student is a first-time offender versus a repeat-offender).

The following are provided as examples:
• Redoing the assignment within an appropriate time to enable the student to provide evidence of his or her learning, as defined by the school protocol (the final mark may or may not be impacted depending on the circumstance and the school protocol).
• Contacting the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students involved.
• Appearing before an in-school academic integrity committee.
• Forfeiting eligibility for in-school bursaries, scholarships, awards, or letters of reference.

1.3. Appeal Process for Marks (tests, projects, other) and/or Final Grades (report card grade)
It is highly recommended that the student, parent/guardian and the classroom teacher have discussed the mark or grade in question prior to initiating the appeal process.
1.3.1. Students and parents/guardians have five business days from the time a mark or final grade is released to appeal.
1.3.2. The initial request should be made to the school administration. Administration is required to respond within an additional five business days.
1.3.3. Within three business days of receiving the school’s decision, the student and parent/guardian may request an appeal, in writing, to the Director of Programs and Student Services.

1.3.4. The Director, in consultation with the parent/guardian and school administration, will make a final decision within five business days. A written communication of this decision will be sent to the parent/guardian and school by the Director.

1.3.5. For a Nova Scotia Examination appeal, refer to provincial guidelines.

1.4. **Assignments/Projects**
   As students strive to reach outcomes, quality assessments with a balanced mix of “write, do, and say” tasks will support all students’ learning preferences. This will allow them to work toward the learning target (outcome) while receiving feedback, instruction, and opportunities for focused revision. This leads to continued progress toward the learning outcome. It is unnecessary for all assignments to be marked with a letter or number; however, all students should receive descriptive feedback.

Assignments/Projects:
1.4.1. Will be directly related to the course outcome(s). Students must understand the intended learning target.
1.4.2. Students should be provided with examples of work that is approaching, meeting, and exceeding the intended learning target.
1.4.3. Will be differentiated to meet the needs of learners. When possible, students should be provided options in demonstrating their mastery of an intended outcome.
1.4.4. Criteria for success and quality, with practice, can be co-constructed by the teacher and students allowing for a deeper understanding and connection to the learning outcome.
1.4.5. Students should be provided the opportunity and support to understand how to close the gap between their work and the outcome and be given the time to do so. This should be followed by an opportunity to demonstrate their learning prior to assessment of learning.
1.4.6. Where an assignment is used solely for summative purposes, marking criteria must be clear to learners.

1.5. **Bonus Points**
   Marks will be directly related to the intended learning outcome. Bonus points for completing tasks not related to achievement of the outcome distort the validity of the grade. This is especially problematic when marks that include bonus points are included as part of a course grade. Therefore, bonus points should not be given. It is not acceptable to give a mark or grade above 100%.

1.6. **Constructing Assessments**
   It is important that assessments be constructed to reflect the outcomes taught and the method of assessment must be appropriate for the purpose. Students must have had the opportunity to learn the content prior to being assessed. High quality assessments will yield high quality results. To be of high quality, an assessment must be valid, fair, reliable, and free of bias.
There will be consideration given to the use of the assessment and matching the type of assessment to the intended outcomes.

1.7. **Communication of Student Achievement to Parents/Guardians and Students**

Students and parents/guardians should be informed of student progress on an ongoing basis. Report cards are the summation of this information and are sent out according to provincial and SSRSB guidelines. There shall be a minimum of three formal reporting periods during a school year for non-semestered programs (November, March, and June). There shall be a minimum of two formal reporting periods (February and June) and two interim reports (November and April) during a school year for semestered programs.

There shall be a minimum of two formal parent-teacher visitation times during a school year.

Informal reporting to parents/guardians and students is encouraged on a regular and ongoing basis (i.e.: phone calls, emails, descriptive feedback, etc.).

1.8. **Credit Recovery Systems**

Schools may extend course end dates to allow students to demonstrate attainment of missed outcomes so that they may earn a missed credit. Schools are responsible for clearly articulating the eligibility requirements and procedures for credit recovery to students via the school’s Communication Plan.

For additional information on credit recovery, refer to the Department of Education’s Credit Recovery Guidelines, February 1, 2012.

1.9. **Determining a Grade for the Report Card**

In grades 1 through 6, where a letter grade is given, teachers must collect evidence throughout the term to determine a report card grade. The process used must be clearly articulated for the student and parent/guardian in the teacher communication plan. To create an accurate picture of what learning has taken place throughout the grading period, teachers must refer to the descriptors for A, B, C, and D and student individual achievement in relation to the outcomes taught.

In grades 7 through 12, where a numerical grade is given, teachers must collect evidence throughout the term to determine a report card grade. The process used must be clearly articulated for the student and parent in the teacher communication plan. “If the purpose of grading and reporting is to provide an accurate description of what students have learned, then averaging must be considered inadequate and inappropriate.” (Guskey, 1996) Other measures of central tendency may be more appropriate than averaging in most cases. Extreme scores tend to distort the validity of a grade. Teachers must be clear in their communication plans as to how grades will be calculated (e.g.: median, mode, and mean).

Assessment is inherently a process of professional judgment. Day-to-day, minute-by-minute formative assessment informs teacher practice. At times, when summative information is discovered in the course of the formative assessment process, it is appropriate to use this information to inform course grades. Summative assessment information should be the
determinant of the report grade. The purpose of the assessment must always be kept in mind, whether it is to inform practice or to inform the final grade.

1.10. Examinations and Exemptions

1.10.1. Senior High Exams

1.10.1.1. School Based Exams may occur for all credit courses in grades 10-12.

1.10.1.2. Exams results will not exceed 30% of the total mark for a course for the year or the semester.

1.10.1.3. Exemptions for grades 9-12:

1.10.1.3.1. The basis under which exemptions are granted must be clear and articulated to students and parents/guardians in the school communication plan at the beginning of the year/semester.

1.10.1.3.2. Exemptions are not permitted in grades eleven and twelve.

1.10.1.3.3. In grade 10, exemptions may be given. In order to qualify for an exemption from the final exam, the student must have successfully completed all major assessment components related to the outcomes of the course.

1.10.1.4. End of year exams for senior high students shall not commence prior to day 187 of the current school year. End of semester one exams shall not commence prior to five days immediately preceding the end of the first semester.

1.10.1.5. Students on IPPs may write an individualized exam or may continue with regular programming as determined by the Program Planning Team.

1.10.1.6. All marked exams will be made available to students upon request of the student and/or parent/guardian. It is highly recommended that review of the exams be an ongoing part of the learning process. At year end, students will be given the opportunity to view their exams. At the end of the first semester, students will be able to view their exams within two weeks of the new semester. The preferred method of disposing of student exams is shredding.

1.10.1.7. School-based student exams should be kept for a period of one year.

1.10.1.8. Teachers are required to provide the principal with a copy of exams at least one week prior to the date it is to be written. The principal or designate is responsible for reviewing the exams and providing feedback to teachers. These exams must be kept on file for a period of five years.

1.10.2. Middle Level Exams

1.10.2.1. Students in grades 7 and 8 may be engaged in culminating assessments that take place during the school schedule. For clarity, all students in grades 7 and 8 must be in attendance for a full day during time devoted to culminating assessments.

1.10.2.2. At the grade 9 level, schools may choose to have students write one exam in each of the core subjects (English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies) at a time to be determined by the school within the school schedule. In grade 9, students on IPPs may write an exam as determined by the
student’s Program Planning Team or may continue with regular programming during the exam periods.

1.10.2.3. All marked exams will be made available to students upon request of the student and/or parent/guardian. It is highly recommended that review of the exams be an ongoing part of the learning process. At year end, students will be given the opportunity to view their exams. At other points in the year, students will be able to view their exams within two weeks of writing.

1.11. **External Assessments**
   The SSRSB participates in provincial, national, and international assessments as part of the Program of Learning Assessments for Nova Scotia (PLANS).

   1.11.1. Assessments developed and/or mandated by the Department of Education shall be administered.

   1.11.2. SSRSB personnel shall administer other group/individual testing that may be approved for administration from time to time, with direct involvement and assistance from school principals and teachers as required.

   1.11.3. Assessment results produced by the Department of Education shall be presented by SSRSB staff to the SSRSB’s Education Committee.

   1.11.4. In the context of school improvement planning, external assessment results may be considered.

   1.11.5. Individual student assessment information will be made available to students and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) upon request, in accordance with the provincial policy.

1.12. **Grading and Report Cards**
   Assessment provides information about a student’s progress in achieving expected learning outcomes. Teachers use this information to make professional judgments as they evaluate student learning in relation to the outcomes. This should be clearly and accurately communicated to students and parents/guardians. Initially, this is done in the Teacher Communication Plan, but also should occur on an ongoing basis throughout the school year and in the overall School Communication Plan.

   Grading is the process of using summative assessment information related to the outcomes taught to determine a report card grade (letter or numerical). This is distinct from marking, which is the process of assigning a number or letter to a piece of individual student work.

   The primary purpose of grading is to communicate achievement status at a point in time to students, parents/guardians, and others. The secondary purposes of grading are to provide information that students can use for self-evaluation and growth, encourage student growth and progress in learning, identify students for available educational opportunities, and evaluate the effectiveness of curricular, instructional, and assessment practices and programs.

   By its nature, grading is a subjective process. Grading involves professional judgment. It involves establishing clear grading criteria based on the outcomes and reflecting on the student’s level of achievement throughout the grading period. It is recognized that not all
work requires a mark. The value of some work is found in the practice of the academic goal. This practice allows for focused revision by both the teacher and the student.

While non-academic factors may contribute to the student’s achievement, those factors must be communicated separately from an academic achievement grade. The following are examples of non-academic factors and may not be included in the course grade: behavior (attendance, attitude, punctuality, and effort), class participation not based on outcomes, or homework that is based solely on completion.

As the purpose of grading is to reflect the students’ academic achievement, there needs to be sufficient evidence to determine the level of achievement. Evidence should be collected using a variety of methods (conversations, conferences, products, and observations). To accomplish this, effort shall be made to hold students accountable for completing the work. After all supports and consequences are offered, assignments not submitted should be recorded as “incomplete”, not zero. If, in the teacher’s professional judgment, there is insufficient evidence to make a determination on a final grade, this should be noted in the comment section (please see section on Late and Missed/Incomplete Assignments).

Teachers should be as clear as possible in their communication plans as to how grades will be calculated. The following examples will assist teachers in understanding why relying solely on averaging may not reflect the student’s achievement of outcomes.

- In the book, Making Classroom Assessment Work, Anne Davies has a good illustrative example of students in a parachute packing class. (second edition, pages 1-2)
- The basketball analogy, where the goal is for a student to be able to do a free throw. At the end of the unit, the student can shoot 10 out of 10 but averaging a record of all attempts throughout the learning process yields this student an average that is not reflective of their learned skill.

An accurate description of what students have learned may be captured numerically in several ways. For example:

- Median – the middle value of the numbers in a list
- Mode – the most frequently occurring value/number
- Mean – the average of all numbers in the list as determined by adding up the numbers and dividing by the number of numbers


Comments on report cards should provide plain, clear, straightforward information for parents/guardians about how their child is achieving and progressing in school in relation to provincial program expectations/expected learning outcomes or, for students with individual program plans, the annual and specific individualized outcomes.

Comments on report cards will address what the child does well, areas for improvement and how parents/guardians can support learning at home.
Non-academic indicators must be communicated through the learner profile and its comment section.

Comments should provide information that will assist students in taking relevant follow-up actions and assist parents/guardians in supporting student learning at home.

As much as possible, comments need to be personalized to reflect the learning of each student.

1.14. Homework
Homework tasks should support classroom learning and instill a sense of competence in the learner. The role of homework can be to support a pre-learning activity, check for understanding, practice (where needed), and reflect on concepts and apply knowledge learned to new situations. Homework’s role is not assessment of learning; therefore, it should not be graded. When homework is formative in nature, students have opportunities to practice, receive descriptive feedback, and are motivated to improve. To make homework have more of an impact on student achievement, there needs to be dialogue with the teacher and student regarding the work completed.

Projects and larger assignments must be initiated, supported, and at least partially completed during class time. For these projects/assignments that are summative in nature, it is essential that the learning outcomes are clear and that the method of determining a mark is also clear to students and parents/guardians. In addition, a system of checkpoints and feedback needs to be in place throughout the learning process. Setting up checks and balances throughout the duration of the assignment will ensure that the teacher and student are communicating about the intended learning throughout the process. Schools need to ensure that there are systems of support in place so that students can access assistance and materials that may not be available in their home.

1.15. Late and Missed/Incomplete Assignments
It is important for students to recognize the necessity of meeting timelines and completing work. To assist students with this, teachers:

- Often provide rubrics or checklists so that students will understand the expectations and goals of the work. These are often co-created with students to provide even greater levels of understanding and commitment toward the work assigned.
- Establish negotiated deadlines with students when appropriate.
- Provide assignment check-in points throughout where assignments are lengthy or have a variety of components. This ensures that work is not left until the end to complete and assists in guiding students and providing feedback throughout the process.
- Involve students in the development of completion contracts.
- Provide both students and parents/guardians with timely and descriptive information.

While lateness and incomplete/missing work are not curriculum outcomes, they most certainly can impact student achievement. Lateness is a behavioral matter. It is important to note this behavior and the absence of evidence of learning (missing or incomplete work) on the learner profile.
Penalties for lateness and incomplete/missing work distort achievement and most often do not motivate students to complete the assignment. On the day an assignment is due, teachers record assignments as they are handed in. If a student doesn’t have the assignment completed, he or she and the teacher must work together to arrange for the completion of the assignment. In some schools, this may mean that students will work in a supervised area until the assignment is completed and then rejoin their class. In other schools, this may mean that the parent/guardian is contacted. By putting supports in place as noted above, these behaviors can be reduced. The remedy for non-completion of work should be completion of work. It is important that schools establish a school-wide system to make students accountable for assignment completion that is supportive of the learner and tracked appropriately so that the student is encouraged to take responsibility. For additional information, see Douglas Reeves, *Toxic Grading Practices*.

Grades P-6 (Use of Zeros)  
After all supports and consequences have been exhausted, assignments not submitted should be recorded as “incomplete”, not zero. If students accumulate multiple incompletes, they should receive report card grades based on the evidence available to the teacher. If there is not enough evidence to issue a letter grade, this should be indicated in the comment section.

The teacher will reflect on all evidence of the student’s learning in relation to the course outcomes and use professional judgment when issuing a letter grade.

Grades 7-12 (Use of Zeros)  
After all supports and consequences, including a fair negotiated final deadline, have passed, the assignment may be recorded as incomplete or be recorded as a zero. Teachers must be mindful that in an outcomes-based framework, averaging that includes extreme scores like zeros will distort the validity of final grades. Teachers are strongly encouraged to consider other measures of central tendency, such as median or mode.

The teacher will reflect on all evidence of the student’s learning in relation to the course outcomes and use professional judgment when issuing a letter grade.

1.16. Marking Group Projects  
Cooperative Learning is essentially a learning activity, not an assessment tool. Learning that occurs in a group should be thought of as formative only. For summative purposes, students must be assessed individually on the work that he/she completed in the group. No common group marks will be given. For additional information, please refer to page 46 in *A Repair Kit for Grading*, by Ken O’Connor.

1.17. Provincial Assessments: Roles and Responsibilities  
Assessment is an integral part of instruction that enhances, empowers, and celebrates learning. Each individual plays an important role in this.
  - Administrator: Ensures that educators follow SSRSB policies and procedures in their classroom practices. Assessment is part of the expectation within SSRSB Policy 650:
Performance Appraisal of NSTU Staff. Administrators, as school leaders, are responsible to keep current with respect to research and effective practices in the area of assessment.

- SSRSB Educational Consultants and Coordinators: Provide ongoing learning opportunities and support to school staff.
- Teacher: It is expected that the teacher will draw from current research to inform classroom and professional practice. The teacher is responsible for ongoing communication with stakeholders with respect to student achievement and for grading and reporting.
- Student: It is expected that the student will be actively engaged in the learning process. Specific to assessment, the student should practice self-assessment and reflection as related to the learning outcomes.
- Parent: Seek clarification when questions arise regarding school assessment and evaluation practices and support the student in the learning process.

1.18. School and Teacher Communication Plans

It is required that all teachers and schools develop and share communication plans annually with students and parents. Each school will provide, at the beginning of the school year (or semester), a clearly communicated plan for the schedule for reports, conferences, and the range of formal and informal communication methods used by the school throughout the year and the protocol for parent communication with the school including contact information and highlighting individual school practices, such as homework.

The School’s Communication Plan

The school’s communication plan outlines how information on student learning will be communicated to parents during the year. The plan should include:

- The schedule for reports, formal meetings, and parent-student-teacher conferences.
- The range of formal and informal communication methods used by the school during the year.
- The protocol for parent communication with the school, including contact information.
- Individual school practices (e.g.: school web site, newsletters, homework hot-line).

The principal is responsible for the School’s Communication Plan, which should be sent to parents in September. It is expected that the School Advisory Council and school staff will contribute to the development of the plan.

The Teacher’s Communication Plan

The teacher’s communication plan:

- Provides an overview of the instructional program.
- Describes how the teacher will communicate further information on the program during the year.
- Outlines what formal and informal methods the teacher will use to communicate with parents about their children’s learning.
- Indicates what parents might expect to receive (e.g.: annotated samples of student work that demonstrate the student’s progress toward expected learning outcomes).
• Invites parents to communicate with the teacher and provides information on how they might do so.

The plan should include:
• An overview of the program/course.
• The teacher’s expectations of the students for learning success.
• Information on the variety of ways that student learning will be assessed.
• Information on evaluation procedures.
• The range of formal and informal communication methods used by the teacher.
• The ways in which the parent can initiate communication with the teacher.

“The plan should be a reader-friendly document and be no longer than necessary to include the information noted above.” Taken from the Nova Scotia Department of Education: Reporting Policy Framework: Pilot Draft – September 2002.

1.19. Standardized Report Cards (Province of Nova Scotia)
All schools shall use the Standardized Report Card and support systems, such as Grade Book, as contained in the iNSchool Student Information System.

1.20. Student Involvement in Assessment
Students should play a role in their assessment. When this occurs, students will maintain a greater ownership and interest in their education. This can take place through:
• co-constructing the criteria for assessments
• personal goal setting
• self- and peer-assessments
• student-led assessment
• student-led conferences
• portfolios
• tracking progress towards attainment of outcomes
• negotiation with the teacher (democratic classroom practices)
• student choice in assessment of outcomes

1.21. Students Requiring Individual Adaptations and Individual Program Plans (See SSRSB Policy 201: Student Services)

Documented Adaptations
Students experiencing challenges in accessing the curriculum outcomes often require specific adaptations in their instructional strategies and assessments through the program planning process. As soon as possible, it is recommended that individual students be part of the process and involved in their learning destinations. Students that become active participants in their learning have increased academic success. The development of self-advocacy skills is critical for students who require adaptations. Assessment and evaluation adaptations are not recorded on the student’s report card or transcripts because the adaptations are designed to enable students to meet grade level learning outcomes. In accordance with section 2.2 of the
provincial Special Education Policy, adaptations are to be recorded on the Individual Adaptation form and a copy is given to parents/guardians and students and placed in the student’s Cumulative Record.

Adaptations are developed for a student in one or more of the following areas:

- Organizational Strategies
- Resources (Human & Material)
- Presentation/Instructional Strategies
- Assessment Strategies
- Motivational Strategies
- Environmental Strategies

Adaptations should be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain appropriate for the student. Regular review provides an opportunity to examine the implementation of adaptations and whether their purpose is being achieved.

Please refer to the Nova Scotia guidelines for each provincial assessment (http://plans.ednet.ns.ca), as each assessment has specific guidelines for adaptations.

**Individual Program Plans**

As stated in SSRSB Policy 201: Student Services, Individual Program Planning Teams are expected to carry out ongoing assessment in their area(s) of responsibilities. Sections 2.2 and 2.6 of the Provincial Special Education Policy indicate that a review of the program plan should take place prior to each reporting period. The review provides the program planning team with an opportunity to evaluate both the student’s progress and the program itself. Integral to implementation of a student’s individual program plan is the ongoing monitoring of student progress in relation to his/her individualized outcomes. The assessment information that teachers gather through this process, using assessment strategies as identified in the IPP, forms the basis for judgment or evaluation of student progress. The accountability of teachers for reporting student progress to parents/guardians is the same for students who have IPPs as for all other students. It is our intent to follow the provincial reporting template for IPP reporting.

**2.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

2.1. It shall be the responsibility of the Superintendent to ensure these administrative procedures are followed.