

Horton High School
Plan for Communicating Student Learning
September 2009

Introduction

The Mission Statement states that Horton High School provides learners with opportunities to gain proficiency in the Essential Graduation Learnings of Aesthetic Expression, Citizenship, Communication, Personal Development, Problem Solving, and Technological Competence. To achieve a well-rounded education, the educational partners encourage flexibility, understanding, and involvement in meeting the challenges of the 21st Century.

At Horton, we are committed to providing the best educational opportunities to meet the needs of all students in our school. Students, teachers and parents/guardians can work most effectively together when they share a common understanding of what students are expected to achieve. It is only through good communication that teachers, parents/guardians, and students can work together to maximize student learning.

This plan outlines the means by which we will achieve improved communication between school and home.

Background and Context

When we assess and evaluate student learning, we do so in terms of expectations or outcomes. The Annapolis Valley Regional School Board Student Assessment and Evaluation of Student Progress Policy indicates that assessing and evaluating of student learning will be based on the expected learning outcomes established by the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

The Outcomes Framework, together with the Six Essential Graduation Learnings, and a set of statements, Principles of Learning form the basis for the school program in Nova Scotia for all students from Primary to Grade 12. The Outcomes Framework tells us what children will learn and the Principles of Learning will tell us how children learn.

The Student Assessment and Evaluation of Student Progress Policy clearly states that assessment must be fair to all children. Assessment, evaluation, and the communication of student learning in relation to learning outcomes must be balanced.

Learning Outcomes Framework – What Students Learn

There are “learning outcomes” for almost all curriculum areas including Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Technology, Art, Physical Education, and French etc.

Learning Outcomes are statement/expectations that articulate what a student is expected to know, be able to do and understand; what knowledge, skills and attitudes the student will demonstrate by the end of each grade level, as a result of their learning experiences.

Altogether, this set of expectations about what children will learn as a result of their educational experiences is referred to as the Learning Outcomes Framework.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education provides outcomes-based curriculum guides that describe the learning outcomes and the framework for planning each course. Teachers at Horton use these guides in planning, delivering, assessing and evaluating the outcomes for the learning activities they set up for the class, for groups of students, and for individuals. These documents are available from the [Nova Scotia Department of Education's website](#).

Information on Outcomes

Parent/guardians can become more knowledgeable about learning outcomes by:

- observing your child's schoolwork
- monitoring homework
- asking your child about school
- asking teachers questions about curriculum
- attending school events and discussing them with your child's teacher
- attending information sessions at the school
- reading curriculum information that the school provides

Principles of Learning – How Students Learn

The Department of Education summarizes how students learn in the following principles of learning:

- Learning is a process of actively constructing knowledge.

- Students construct knowledge and make it meaningful in terms of their prior knowledge and experiences.
- 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.

Essential Graduation Learnings (EGLs)

The EGLs are statements describing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of all students who graduate from high school. These are the consequences of the total educational experience and are not limited to the particular courses.

Essential Graduation Learnings	
Aesthetic Expression	Graduates will be able to respond with critical awareness to various forms of the arts and be able to express themselves through the arts.
Citizenship	Graduates will be able to assess social, cultural, economic, and environmental interdependence in a local and global context.
Communication	Graduates will be able to use the listening, viewing, speaking, reading, and writing modes of language(s) as well as mathematical and scientific concepts and symbols to think, learn, and communicate effectively.
Personal Development	Graduates will be able to continue to learn and to pursue an active, healthy lifestyle.
Problem Solving	Graduates will be able to use the strategies and processes needed to solve a wide variety of problems, including those requiring language and mathematical and scientific concepts.
Technological Competence	Graduates will be able to use a variety of technologies, demonstrate an understanding of technological applications, and apply appropriate technologies for solving problems.

Definitions – Assessment/Evaluation/Communication

Student progress/achievement is assessed, evaluated in relation to the expected learning outcomes.

Assessment is the on-going systematic process of gathering information about how students are learning and what students know and can do, as it relates to the curriculum guides.

Balanced Assessment: Teachers recognize, and appreciate, the variety of ways in which students learn and demonstrate their learning. Teachers gather information on student learning from several different types of tasks in order to produce a fuller and more accurate picture of what a student knows and can do. This gives the students the opportunity to discuss their work and progress. This form of assessment is referred to as balanced assessment.

Evaluation is the process of analyzing, summarizing, and making decisions based on the information collected. 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.

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/guardians so that we can collaborate in supporting your child's learning.

Teachers use the expected learning outcomes as the basis for planning and teaching, and also as the basis for assessing and evaluating student learning. Teachers are aware of the differences among students as well as the similarities and work to ensure that all children are challenged at the appropriate level.

Assessment and Evaluation

Within the first week of each semester teachers will establish clear criteria for assigning marks or grades and communicate to students what is being evaluated and how it will be done. This information will also be available to parents/guardians.

The final grade will be reflective of a balanced assessment. Teachers will ensure all students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. The assigning of term or final marks involves teachers using their professional judgment in making decisions based on varied assessment collected over a period of time. No single assessment event, including an examination, will be valued at more than thirty percent of the final mark. Please refer to the individual course outlines for assessment details.

Communicating Student Learning

Horton High School staff will make every effort to provide clear and straightforward information as to the student's progress. If at any time during the school year a teacher becomes concerned regarding a student's progress, the teacher may contact the parent/guardian. Or conversely, the parent/guardian may contact the teacher and/or school administration (542-6060) or e-mail (www.hortonhighschool.ca for e-mail addresses). This informal contact can be made in addition to the regular reporting.

The school year will be divided into two semesters of five months each. The *Plan for Communicating Student Learning* is available at the end of this document.

Mid-semester Report and the Report Card

The Horton High School Mid-semester Report Card is an indication of student performance to that date. It is given in a percentage grade, which may also include anecdotal comments regarding progress. This is sent home with students approximately midway through each semester as indicated in the school calendar.

Our Report Card gives the final mark for the student in all courses, the credit values for those courses (students require 18 credits to graduate), total absences and anecdotal comments regarding the student's progress. This is sent home with students at the end of each semester.

Examinations are held at the end of each semester on dates provided by the Department of Education. Courses that do not have final exams will incorporate an alternative final assessment event(s). The Final Mark given on the report card represents the student's achievement of the outcomes in that specific course.

Student attendance has a significant impact on student learning. Regardless of whether the absence is valid, the number of classes missed can negatively affect student learning. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to ensure that students are attending all classes, especially in light of the compressed semestered schedule.

Process for Addressing Concerns Regarding Evaluation Results

If you have concerns regarding a student's progress in a course, please contact the teacher directly. The teacher will respond to your concerns in a timely manner (no more than three school days) by telephone or e-mail. The teacher will make a record of the conversation or meeting and, where relevant, the specific piece of assessment reviewed. If you still have concerns following the teacher's response, then contact the Horton administration.

If students or parents/guardians are not satisfied with the results of this review, they may contact the administration to request further examination of the assessment. The principal or vice-principal will then meet with the parties involved. In the event that a resolution acceptable to all parties is not reached, the principal will make a final determination regarding the assessment in question.

Identification, Assessment, Referral and Program Planning For Students with Special Needs

Horton High School is committed to supporting the learning of all students. We believe early identification and intervention to be the most effective approach to meeting all students' needs.

Because the school sees that parents play an important role in supporting their children as learners, parents are involved from the outset in the planning of any intervention.

Teachers, parents or students themselves may assist in identifying students with special needs. The Horton Program Planning Team will determine how to best plan for the student's needs. When formal individual assessments are needed, they will be conducted by qualified personnel, either school-based or system-based, and will be undertaken only after parents/guardians have given written consent. Information from formal testing is always provided to parents.

If the student requires adaptations to achieve expected learning outcomes, the adaptations will be developed by the Resource teacher and implemented by the student's regular class teachers. Students on adapted programs may have the opportunity to receive learning support in the Resource room.

When it is determined that established curriculum outcomes cannot be met and an Individual Program Plan is required, a meeting will be held with the student's Individual Program Planning Team. Team members include a school administrator, the student's subject teacher(s), the parents/guardians and the student when appropriate. The participation of parents/ guardians is both welcome and encouraged. Students on Individual Program Plans will receive learning support in the Resource room.

Plan for Communicating Student Learning

Horton High School utilizes many methods to communicate with parents, students and the community. These include, but are not limited to:

- The Horton website (www.hortonhighschool.ca) is updated on a regular basis and contains a school calendar where all school events are posted. This is the most effective way to stay abreast of important dates throughout the school year.
- A September *Parent Orientation* allows parents, staff and students to meet in an informal setting to discuss the upcoming school year. This year's *Parent Orientation* is scheduled for the evening of September 10.
- Formal opportunities for parents/guardians and/or students to conference with teachers are scheduled in the afternoon at the end of each mid-semester reporting period. The dates for the 2009-2010 school year are posted on the school calendar located on our website and in the student agendas.
- A monthly school newsletter is sent home beginning in September.
- A school sign will be purchased for the building in the future. Key school events will be posted here.
- Many teachers at Horton have their own websites. These can be accessed from the Horton website (www.hortonhighschool.ca)

Review of School Communication Plan

The success of any plan depends upon the continual feedback provided by those whom the plan affects. The School Communication Plan will be reviewed and amended as needed by school administration after consulting with staff and the PTSA. This review will take place in conjunction with the updating of the School Success Plan.

A complete and up-to-date copy of the Horton High School Plan for Communicating Student Learning is available at www.hortonhighschool.ca.

For Further Information

Parents/guardians wishing to review the relevant Provincial Curriculum Guides may borrow a copy from the school secretary or access them through the government websites:

doc-depot.ednet.ns.ca

apef-fepa.org

www.ednet.ns.ca

The Annapolis Valley School Board's Policy on Student Assessment and Evaluation can be accessed by visiting <http://www.avrsb.ednet.ns.ca/>.