

ASSESSMENT

Alberta Education defines an assessment focus as:

- Using a variety of assessment forms
- Assessment guides instruction
- Clear expectations about high standards
- Opportunities to redo and make up
- Fair, accurate and flexible grading practices
- Professional development to assist teachers in using the data

“The speaker at one conference we attended stated that, ‘The story we tell becomes the reality’. As a staff, we decided to change the story we tell students when it comes to assessment. Instead of taking the, ‘This is a hard test; you’d better study’ approach, we decided to focus more on the strengths and abilities of our students.”

Carol Koran, Principal

What does a focus on assessment look like at Catholic Central?

The essential question the staff at CCH sought to answer was, “How can we use assessment to inform our teaching practice?” A myriad of other questions branched off from this initial idea: What should assessment look like? Why are we assessing? Who should be involved? Again and again, we found ourselves returning to the same answers – that assessment was for and about the students. Effective assessment is meant to guide their progress, to provide them with the necessary feedback to grow and to encourage on-going conversations about learning between the teacher and student.

What we learned from our students:

In our Round Table responses, students told us what works for them when it comes to learning. They like to have clear examples (we call them exemplars); they like to be helped to create study guides and review activities; they really appreciate 1:1 conferences and immediate feedback and they like descriptive feedback. As one student said, “Something other than, this is the mark you should have got!”

Things we've done in response:

Established credit recovery protocol – students do not have to redo an entire course to demonstrate mastery of outcomes.

Established department policies that support students in redoing and re-submitting material.

Developed portfolio assessments that encourage creativity, diversity and personal connections to the material.

Created assessments that allow students more opportunities to show what they know and to express their responses in a variety of ways.

Created “group exams” where students must collaborate and problem solve to demonstrate their learning.

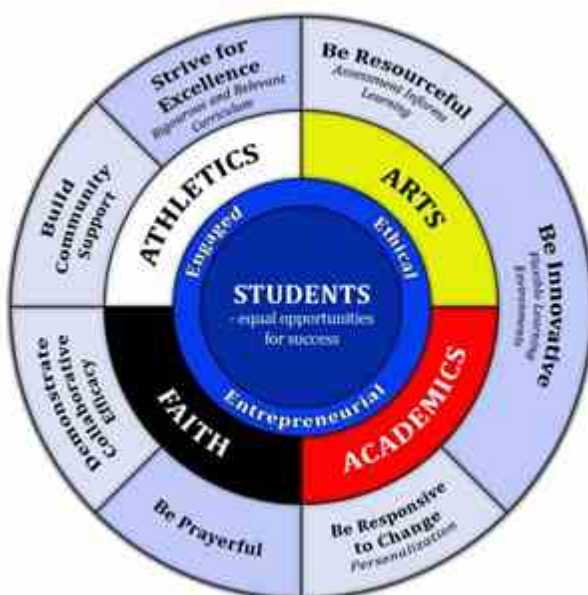
Used our flex time to provide more 1:1 assistance and descriptive feedback.

Used technology to allow teachers to respond more efficiently to students on written assignments.

Promoted the use of formative assessments such as “exit cards” and “mini white boards” so that learning is assessed throughout the class period.

Posted exemplars and rubrics to guide students in their understanding or expectations.

Administration and counselors monitor student progress at mid-term and finals and put interventions in place as soon as issues can be identified.



“When I started showing students examples of projects that other students had done in previous years, the quality of their work sky-rocketed. I’m constantly amazed and humbled by the creativity, insight and honesty they bring to the work they submit. They take incredible pride in demonstrating how much they have internalized the concepts they’ve learned.”

Grade 12 English teacher