



## Friends School Curriculum Overview

# Assessment Philosophy

At Friends School we want our students to develop the following qualities:

*Creativity, Critical Thinking, Resilience, Motivation, Curiosity, Questioning, Sense of Humor, Reliability, Teamwork, Enthusiasm, Civic-Mindedness, Love of Learning, Self-Awareness, Persistence, Empathy, Leadership, Self-Discipline, Compassion, Courage, Sense of Beauty, Sense of Wonder, Resourcefulness, Zest, Endurance, Spontaneity, Humility, Optimism, Social Intelligence, Grit, Gratitude*

It's quite an impressive list. As adults, there are likely several of these qualities where we believe we have an element of mastery - and many more where we are works in progress.

What we find most interesting about this list is that there isn't one item on it that is assessed in traditional standardized testing. Our teachers support our students

in many of these qualities by knowing them as individuals, by helping them navigate the daily ups and downs of friendships and cooperative learning groups, by challenging them academically at developmentally appropriate levels, and by encouraging them to solve problems for themselves rather than solving problems for them.

We have learned that students who are engaged in the process of their own assessment are more invested in the process of learning. Students construct meaning and deepen their understanding of their progress and of themselves as learners during the assessment process.

In our Preschool, teachers record observations to share at parent/teacher conferences held twice a year. In addition, parents and teachers have opportunities to meet throughout the year to review student progress and receive a written narrative to celebrate the year's growth.

In the Elementary School, portfolio conferences, held twice a year, give a rounded picture of the student's learning process with teacher written narratives, rubrics, work samples, and progress reports. Students set and review goals with teachers. The portfolio gives a snapshot of the student at a

specific point in time. Portfolios are also used for students and teachers to reflect on student learning accomplished over the period of a year.



Teachers assess student progress constantly through informal observations, discussions, reading inventories, comparing written assignments to previous work, marking progress through beginning and end of unit assessments, and giving more formal tests, such as spelling tests (in grades 2-5) at regular intervals.

In the Middle School, students take on a greater role in their assessment process through regular use of rubrics and checklists to monitor their own progress. Students are responsible for sharing work samples and articulating their new knowledge to families in more sophisticated portfolio sharing conferences, especially in the spring. Teachers



begin to use some tests and quizzes in the middle school, so students have a sense of how their effort and work levels impact the quality of their thinking on a numeric scale, which is standard practice in most high schools. However, these grades continue to be only a small part of the whole assessment tool kit that teachers employ. Teachers continue to write short narratives, complete rubrics, and utilize presentations, projects and other methods as vehicles for students to demonstrate their learning in creative and meaningful ways.



Student evaluation is not an end in itself, but part of the growth and development process of each child. At Friends, we also have measurable achievement goals for our students: we want them to become outstanding readers, impressive writers, accomplished mathematicians, and curious scientists.

Knowing how each child is doing compared to grade level expectations is critical to us. In our older grades (3rd through 8th) we are very purposeful and thoughtful about the kinds of achievement tests we administer. We do not spend an inordinate amount of time 'teaching to the



test', and we are aware that several parents choose our school precisely because we do not place undue focus on standardized tests. However, at Friends, we do believe it is important to know how our students are doing relative to their peers. We choose to use standardized achievement tests in our upper elementary and middle school grades to guide our programming. By gaining an understanding of each grade's results, we can identify the relative strengths and challenges of our curriculum. The tests help us improve the quality of our program.

Friends School gives the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) standardized achievement test twice annually to our 3rd through middle school classes. MAP® Growth™ measures what students know and informs what they're ready to learn next. By dynamically adjusting to each student's performance, MAP Growth creates a personalized assessment experience that accurately measures performance—whether a student performs on, above, or below grade level." We believe it is important to introduce our students to what is involved in

taking these tests, giving them practice for taking such tests after they leave Friends. We see these tests as only one of many ways to help us evaluate the work we are doing and the progress each child is making.

The MAP test covers math, reading and language usage. Classroom teachers share the results during regularly scheduled conference times and use the information gathered from student scores to guide instruction.

Thank you for taking the time to read this overview of assessment at Friends and for understanding the place that standardized testing takes within our overall goals for our students.



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