How High School Teachers in Victoria, BC Are Implementing British Columbia's New Assessment Framework in Their Classrooms

by

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B.Sc., Vancouver Island University, 2014
B.Ed., Simon Fraser University, 2016

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

As a result of changing to a content-based, competency-driven curriculum in 2010, British Columbia's Ministry of Education and Childcare (BCMECC) has been rolling out a new provincial assessment framework since 2016. Draft provincial documents described the new assessment framework as aligning with standards-based grading, introduced a new provincial proficiency scale, and announced the elimination of percentages or letter grades in the assessment of kindergarten to grade 9 classes. Implementation of this new assessment framework was mandated across the province in September 2023. My study asks how some high school teachers in Victoria, BC had been implementing this new assessment framework in their classrooms prior to the mandate with the idea that their experiences, successes, and challenges would be of value to teachers who would be required to make similar changes, as well as school districts, educational partners, and the BCMECC who could use the data to support teachers with this change. By interviewing four high school teachers, I collected narrative data using a multiple case study model, which I analyzed with thematic analysis. The study finds that the new classroom assessment framework is most authentically implemented when teacher assessment philosophy aligns with the provincial framework, embraces learning as a process, involves students in the assessment process, and keeps students at the centre of decision-making. While the mental and practical work of classroom assessment models requires the undue work and time of teachers, this work is both important and necessary for the emotional and academic student success.

Keywords: assessment, British Columbia, assessment philosophy, standards-based grading, proficiency scale

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Straddling Two Worlds

I come from a diverse educational and teaching background. With a Bachelor's degree majoring in Molecular Biology and minoring in English, I have solidly had one foot in my love for Science and the other in my passion for English since my late teens, and I have been balancing between the two worlds ever since. As a student, I relished in the differences between the two disciplines of study: the freedom of creative words and texts being open to interpretation in English contrasted with the safety and reliability of the scientific method and its resulting findings in Biology. However, when I became a new teacher, these differences suddenly became something that caused me discomfort. I became starkly aware of how differently I planned, taught, and assessed my English classes compared to my Science classes, and while I still saw the merits in both ways of thinking and learning, this dichotomy sat uneasily at the back of my mind for my first few years of teaching. It was this uncomfortable feeling that sparked my critical reflection into assessment and set me on my research journey.

I am a high school classroom teacher who teaches English, Science, and – more recently – Mathematics. My experience teaching in the humanities and STEM fields has given me a unique perspective on the differences in traditional assessment in these two disciplines. In STEM, the assessment focus tends to be on content with the majority of students' marks being mathematically calculated based on test or quiz scores. Even when competencies are emphasized, such as during labs or projects, the assessed artefact generally holds more weight than the competencies used (i.e., a lab mark is based on the quality of the lab report produced, not on how well chemicals were measured and data collected which were essential skills for that lab). On the other hand, while English classes may teach and practice discrete skills (i.e., grammar, writing thesis statements, integrating citations), assignments are generally assessed

holistically and constructive written feedback to students is commonly provided. Assessment in English is often done using rubrics or proficiency scales, with peer- and self-assessment more commonly used.

For the past four years, I have been thinking critically about my own beliefs about assessment and trying to align the two different views of assessment with my own values. During this time, I have rejected the traditional percentage-based model of assessment and began experimenting with different models in my own classroom. I have experienced many obstacles and still have many modifications that I want to make, but certainly have found greater clarity when it comes to my own definition of good assessment and my own assessment philosophy.

The Pedagogical Shift

Decades of research has illuminated issues with traditional percentage-based grading, much like the grading I commonly saw in high school science and mathematics classrooms. Traditional percentage-based grading consists of averaging a student's marks mathematically to produce a single number on a 100-point scale, and despite seeming like an accurate measure of student learning, has been criticized for distorting the "precision, objectivity, and reliability of grades" (Guskey, 2013, p. 72). Since learning is an ongoing process, if assessment data is collected and averaged throughout a learning period, Iamarino (2014) considers this "an intrinsically flawed method of evaluation which often produces a snapshot inconsistent with the true outcome of the student's efforts in the course" (p. 1). Additionally, percentages have been called "multidimensional measures" (Brookhart et al., 2016, p. 820) due to the fact that more than half of a students' course mark may actually be attributed to work habits, such as attendance, participation, or homework completion, not their academic understanding of the course learning goals (Bowers, 2011). Since the weighting of these noncognitive factors are generally based on teacher judgement, this makes percentages difficult to compare from teacher

to teacher, yet grades often have a disproportionately large influence on a student's future education and opportunities (Brookhart et al., 2016). Traditional percentage-based grading has continued to be very prevalent despite research showing that percentages are not necessarily accurate, reliable, or useful measures of student academic understanding.

Research into learning and assessment supports the move towards other assessment models, such as standards-based grading (SBG). Put simply, SBG communicates student progress in relation to a set of course specific standards or learning goals. Teachers describe the academic proficiency students show on these standards using a series of ordered categories, such as basic, proficient, and advanced (Brookhart, 2016; Iamarino, 2014). With SBG, work habits and behaviour are reported separately from academic performance (Brookhart, 2016). SBG has commonly been used as the assessment model in elementary schools and is showing some prevalence in post-secondary classes as well, especially those in the STEM fields, suggesting that transitioning high schools to a SBG assessment model would be consistent with current educational trends (Elsinger & Lewis, 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Lewis, 2020; Townsley et al., 2019; Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). As is often seen with any kind of reform however, changing the status quo can be a challenging process. Shifting perceptions and practice regarding how classroom assessment is done has been met with criticism and challenges from parents, teachers, and students alike despite literature providing support for this change.

After 22 years of the same curricula, British Columbia's Ministry of Education and Child Care (BCMECC) began developing a revised curriculum in 2010 (British Columbia Ministry of Education [BCME], 2012). Similar to other curricular reforms happening worldwide, BC's revised curriculum was intended to respond to the rapidly changing demands of our globalized, technological world, and place more emphasis on skills and critical thinking rather than rote memorization of content. Of course, such a significant change in how concepts were being taught

necessitated a responsive change in how learning is assessed. The Draft K-9 Student Reporting Policy (2019) introduced British Columbia's new assessment framework, and without explicitly using the term, described the province's new assessment model as aligning with the principles and values of SBG. Additionally, the new reporting order document outlined a provincial proficiency scale to be used for classroom assessment and reporting.

The Challenge

The BCMECC began revising the province's assessment framework and reporting order in 2016. During the 2018/2019 and the 2019/2020 school years, the Ministry of Education invited a number of districts to participate in a pilot of this new reporting order to provide feedback in order to make further revisions. The official mandate of this rollout was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the K-12 Student Reporting Order (Government of British Columbia [GBC], 2023b) was published on July 1, 2023, coming into full effect in September 2023. While this new assessment framework affects classrooms from kindergarten to grade 12, I was interested in the effect of SBG and the provincial proficiency scale being implemented from kindergarten to grade 9, because this will affect assessment practices at a high school level. My research question addresses how some high school teachers in my school district have begun to implement SBG and the provincial proficiency scale into their classrooms to help inform others who must make similar changes this school year.

Until the publication of resources for educators in August 2023, the documents from BCMECC surrounding the major change in assessment did not provide a lot of guidance for classroom teachers. While pieces of the assessment puzzle were clearly spelled out after the release of the K-9 Draft Reporting Policy in 2019 (such as the general assessment philosophy and reporting logistics like how many learning updates needed to be communicated home per school year), what the change in assessment would look like or how it could work at a classroom

level was unclear. While examples provided in the August 2023 released resources were classroom- and curriculum-relevant and painted a clearer vision, they would all require considerable work on the part of the classroom teacher to modify them for grade-level, subject area, and teaching style. For teachers looking for guidance as to how to implement the new assessment framework in their classrooms, the Ministry of Education really only gave teachers two months (on their summer break!) to work with the formalized K-12 Student Reporting Policy and only one month to utilize the associated resources before the mandated implementation in September 2023.

The recent changes to British Columbia's curriculum have been significant, moving the focus away from content to a competency-based approach of teaching and learning; without a doubt, assessment in the province needs to reflect the drastic changes made to the curriculum. Due to the delayed rollout and the invitation for schools/teachers to participate in the pilot program, some high school teachers around the province began to implement the new assessment framework several years ago while others may only have begun thinking of the new assessment mandate when school started in September 2023. This creates a unique scenario where there is a spectrum of experience in developing, implementing, and troubleshooting the new assessment guidelines, where some teachers in the district can be considered peer experts. Gathering, organizing, and distributing their useful expertise could be invaluable to others as they change their assessment methods to align with new provincial guidelines.

The Research Question

For years, I critically reflected on my own assessment practice and made changes to better align my practice with my developing beliefs on assessment. The development of the new assessment framework as outlined in the K-12 Student Reporting Policy aligns with my

assessment beliefs, but still begs the question: What are some ways this framework can be implemented into high school classrooms?

To answer this larger question, I embarked on a qualitative multiple case study, where I ask, “How have high school teachers in Victoria begun implementing SBG and the provincial proficiency scale in their own classroom assessment models?” The purpose of my study is to learn of the experiences, creativity, and challenges of high school teachers implementing the new assessment framework in their classrooms. I believe this data to be valuable not only to colleagues who will be making these changes to their own assessment practices but to districts, educational partners, and the BCMECC to guide them in the best ways to offer professional development and support their teachers during this pedagogical change. Ultimately, the goal of a changing curriculum and corresponding assessment model is to increase student success; it is in the best interest of all educational stakeholders to take all necessary steps to implement a new assessment model to the best of their abilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

My research focuses on how high school teachers in Victoria, BC have already begun implementing the new provincial assessment framework into their classrooms before the official mandate in September 2023. In order to contextualize my research, it is important to understand a brief history of traditional assessment models in North America, as well as become familiar with the concept of standards-based grading (SBG), a model that is becoming more prevalent and accepted due to its focus on student success, ongoing learning, and proficiency of higher-order processes. Additionally, I review how British Columbia's assessment framework has been morphing over the last decade into a SBG model to respond to the revised provincial curriculum, with special focus on classroom assessment and how assessment affects students and teachers (BCMECC, 2022). Of course, as with all major pedagogical shifts, changing the assessment model has not gone without criticism, so I address common critiques of SBG and explore suggested methods for successful implementation in relevant current literature.

The Problem with Percentages

Percentage-based grading in high schools became prevalent in the early 20th century as a way of reducing the time and effort of teachers as student populations grew (Brookhart et al., 2016). Previous to this, detailed oral or written reports of students' progress were the norm (Brookhart et al., 2016). Sadly, this shift in practice from oral or written reports to representing grades with percentages essentially "eliminated the specific communication of what students knew and could do" (Brookhart et al., 2016, p. 805) and replaced it with a single number. Interestingly, criticism of percentages emerged as early as 1912 when researchers Daniel Starch and Edward Charles Elliott "challenged the reliability and accuracy of percentage grades" (Guskey, 2013, p. 69) by asking a variety of high school teachers to grade the same two student

papers, finding that the percentages teachers reported spanned 40 points. This research spurred the gradual decline of percentage-based grading in the middle of the century, with more high schools opting for assessment models with fewer categories, such as A, B, C, D, and F letter grades (Guskey, 2013). However, a resurgence in percentages occurred in the 1990s as the popularity of grading software and online gradebooks rose, suggesting that this shift in assessment practice "appears to come mainly from the increased use of technology … not from the desire of educators for alternative grading scales or from research about better grading practice" (Guskey, 2013, p. 69). Clearly, assessment practices have fluctuated over the last century and a half, and assessment changes have often been driven by convenience and technology rather than concern for effective assessment practices.

Research has illuminated many significant issues with traditional percentage-based grading. First of all, today's percentages can be seen as a "multidimensional measure" (Brookhart et al., 2016, p. 820) not only of academic knowledge, but also of a number of noncognitive factors, such as "classroom participation, effort, behavior, attendance, improvement, and turning in homework" (Bowers, 2011, p. 142). In fact, studies have shown that 65-75% of a student's grade may be based on these noncognitive factors (Bowers, 2011, p. 154). When assessing student work, classroom teachers may be influenced by "individual student circumstances, their instructional experience, and perceptions of equity, consistency, accuracy, and fairness to make professional judgments, instead of relying solely on a grading algorithm" (Brookhart et al., 2016, p. 827). Some researchers, such as Kelly (as cited in Brookhart et al., 2016), argue that this practice has a positive effect on student learning, suggesting that substantive engagement (which are positive work and study skills) is an important aspect to academic success that is not directly measured by tests, but should contribute to student grades. However, since each teacher ultimately subjectively weights attributes they value in their

students when determining grades, most grades are “impossible to interpret accurately or meaningfully” (Munoz & Guskey, 2015, p. 64) and may not be comparable to percentages given by other teachers.

As another example, percentages create a false sense of accuracy. While a 100-point system like the percentage grading system may seem like a very precise system, “in the absence of a truly accurate measuring device, adding more gradations to the measurement scale offers only the illusion of precision” (Guskey, 2013, p. 70). Additionally, the use of percentages to calculate grades is based on the assumption that the percentage a student gets on an assessment “reflect[s] the percentage of the content the student has learned or the percentage of the skills the student has mastered” (Guskey, 2013, p. 70). This assumption is rarely true, due to the subjectivity of how assessment instruments are made and evaluated. In fact, Romagnano (2001) looks at assessment in mathematics, often considered one of the more “objective” disciplines, and argues that all assessment, from a classroom math quiz to a standardized, norm-referenced assessment such as the SAT-I, is subjective because “knowledge, beliefs, judgments, and decisions are unavoidable parts of any assessment scheme” (p. 36).

Another issue with percentage-based grading is the devastating and unfair effect of getting a “zero” on an assignment or assessment, which teachers often give if it has failed to have been submitted. As Guskey (2013) notes, to “recover from a single zero in a percentage grade system, a student must achieve a perfect score on a minimum of nine other assignments” (p. 71), a challenging task for even the strongest student. While some schools and districts have suggested or even implemented minimum-grade policies, these are met with strong criticisms about grade inflation and fairness (Guskey, 2013). Interestingly, these criticisms are unfounded, as studies have shown that these policies do not actually give students credit for work they haven’t completed, instead eliminate the devastating effects of zeros by giving incomplete work

a slightly less devastating score (Guskey, 2013). Ultimately, grading should be a way to communicate academic progress with students, families, and schools, yet percentage-based grading is inherently flawed. Even though "traditional grading practices continue to be problematic in the eyes of educators and scholars" (Townsley et al., 2019, p. 284), Allen (2005) argues that teachers have been perpetuating the invalid assessment practice of assigning "hodgepodge" (p. 220) grades simply because they are mimicking the assessment practices they experienced when they were at school. It is time for a change, this time driven by research with sound practice in mind.

Standards-Based Grading

Standards-based grading (SBG) has emerged as a potential alternative to traditional percentage-based grading. SBG can most concisely be described as "a grading system in which students are evaluated based on their proficiency in meeting a clearly-articulated set of course objectives" (Iamarino, 2014, p. 1). While SBG looks differently depending on the education level, subject, and teacher implementing the system, researchers agree it does share some common properties (Brookhart et al., 2016; Cox, 2011; Elsigner & Lewis, 2020; Guskey, 2004; Guskey et al., 2020; Iamarino, 2014; Peters et al., 2017; Townsley et al, 2019). First of all, the learning outcomes, whether they be content- or competency-based, are clearly communicated to students. Student understanding is then compared to grade-level standards using broad ordered categories, such as Basic, Proficient and Advanced, or Emerging, Developing, Proficient and Extending, or Pass and Fail. Secondly, academic performance is reported separately from behaviour and work habits, making a student's grade purely a reflection of the understanding or skill the student has demonstrated. Thirdly, students are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate their understanding, and the final grade reflects the final result of the student's learning, "instead of relying on a summation of grades awarded at various stages of the student's

learning process - an intrinsically flawed method of evaluation which often produces a snapshot inconsistent with the true outcome of the student's efforts in the course" (Iamarino, 2014, p. 1). Additionally, other characteristics of SBG includes not deducting late marks for late work, not penalizing students with marks of "zero" when assignments or assessments aren't completed, and not counting practice homework towards students' final marks (all examples of separating student understanding from student behaviour/work habits) (Iamarino, 2014; Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). SBG "has been shown to orient students towards learning, rather than towards a grade, by giving them the opportunity to self-evaluate and self-learn" (Lee et al., 2018, p. 54).

The theory behind SBG largely rests on Bloom's concept of "mastery learning," developed in the late 1960s (as cited in Guskey, 2007). Bloom's mastery learning originated from his efforts to reduce achievement gaps in classrooms, during which he quickly recognized that it was the lack of variation of teaching practices that resulted in a wide variation of student achievement. To reduce this achievement gap, Bloom proposed using formative assessment as a diagnostic tool in the classroom to identify learning areas students had not yet mastered. These deficiencies in understanding were then immediately addressed, and students were given individualized remediation work, called correctives, focused on these areas. Students already showing a strong understanding on the formative assessment measures were given enrichment activities to work on until all students were ready to write the summative assessment. This model was found to "drastically reduce the variation in students' achievement levels" (Guskey, 2007, p. 14), suggesting that differentiating instruction was key to individual student success. SBG embraces Bloom's concept by valuing the final result of student learning by not averaging their marks throughout the course/unit and supporting students on their individual learning journeys.

SBG has been around since the 1990s, although its assessment principles have been around much longer. Many elementary schools use a form of SBG to assess students (Lee et al., 2018; Townsley et al., 2019; Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). Additionally, SBG is slowly gaining popularity in some post-secondary courses, especially in the STEM fields such as mathematics (Lee et al., 2018, Elsinger & Lewis, 2020; Lewis, 2020). Lee et al.'s (2018) study of post-secondary engineering faculty using SBG in their classes showed that these professors found the assessment model to be beneficial and noticed it evoked "self-regulated learning and clear connections between grading and learning" (p. 59) in their students. From current literature, it is clear that SBG implementation in high schools would be a move consistent with trends seen in current assessment literature.

Support for SBG

SBG has been slowly gaining in popularity due to the fact that it eliminates many of the issues presented by traditional percentage-based grading. It does this primarily by differentiating academic performance from work habits and behaviour and reporting on these two areas separately. By "recognizing that merging diverse sources of evidence distorts the meaning of any grade" (Munoz & Guskey, 2015, p. 65), SBG provides a clear picture of how the student is doing exclusively with the content and academic skills of the course, without the grade being distorted by things like completion marks and late marks, each of which respectively reward and punish work habits and are not indicators of student understanding of the course content. As well, SBG allows teachers to sidestep the awkward and often arbitrary decisions around "the appropriateness of various weighting strategies" (Munoz & Guskey, 2015, p. 66) when calculating student percentages. As Iamarino (2014) states, "there is no clear way to apply the acquisition of points to anything other than a gradebook" (p. 3), suggesting that the accumulation of points cannot be equated to authentic learning. Iamarino (2014) believes it is time traditional

percentage-based grading was replaced with something that contributes more meaningfully to and better communicates a students' learning.

Another positive aspect of SBG is that it emphasizes communication rather than numbers and ranking. For example, assessment from SBG communicates student progress more effectively than traditional percentages, since students are assessed on their understanding of learning objectives using an established set of ordered standards (Brookhart et al., 2016). This provides a clearer picture of a students' strengths and weaknesses rather than a single percentage that is distorted and challenging to interpret. Additionally, an effective implementation of SBG requires communication between teachers and students, forcing teachers into "the sometimes uncomfortable realm of communicating with students directly and often about the particulars of their academic progress" (Iamarino, 2014, p. 4). Ultimately, SBG encourages teachers to be more personally immersed in each students' unique learning journey to provide feedback and catch problems as they arise, instead of addressing them during a summative assessment, which is generally "too late" and does not result in considerable further learning or relearning (Iamarino, 2014). To summarize, Iamarino (2014) believes that SBG provides "both student and teacher a chance to work together to demystify learning objectives and establish critical connections" (p. 3).

SBG also provides an alternative to the challenges percentage-based learning presents when it comes to student motivation. Studies have shown that percentage-based learning actually has "an adverse effect on students' motivation to improve their understanding of subject matter" (Iamarino, 2014, p. 4). In a 2013 study by Frey and Fisher (as cited in Iamarino, 2014) that surveyed 550 high school students, over 80% of students reported that they most valued feedback on their work that told them their mark. Inconsequential percentages of students reported valuing feedback to help them improve or specific detailed feedback about the strengths

and weaknesses of their performance. This study shows that students indoctrinated in percentage-based school systems are more focused on numbers than they are on the process of learning, essentially "replacing cognitive learning goals with the acquisition of points" (p. 4). Another study by Peters et al., (2017) reported that implementing SBG resulted in students "moving beyond "playing the game" of earning points for a grade and engaging more substantively with course content" (p. 11). SBG effectively removes percentages and marks from the equation, allowing students to focus on the means instead of the end—the learning instead of the percentage. In the end, SBG addresses "the overarching inefficiency of the current [percentage-based] grading system… [that] does not encourage a continuum of improvement" (Iamarino, 2014, p. 4), replacing it with a system that clearly shows a student's current state of understanding as well as identifying areas in which a student can focus and improve.

In theoretical terms, traditional percentage grading and SBG fall into two different categories based on Elliot and McGregor's (2001) achievement goal framework, a theoretical framework focusing on the motivations that drive human achievement. Elliot and McGregor (2001) posit that traditional percentage grading sets up getting a good grade as a normative performance goal. With normative standards, students are assessed compared to the standards established by their peers, which creates a hierarchical culture of competition and comparison that can detract from the cohesion of the classroom community. Additionally, students see percentages as an end goal to be achieved, which draws attention away from the development of the competency, or the learning itself. Percentages themselves are strong motivators, and while some students may view percentages as positive ("I will study hard because I want to do well") others will view them as strongly negative motivators ("I will study so I am not a failure"). In contrast, SBG sets up learning and achievement as an intrapersonal mastery-approach goal. In the philosophy of SBG, the focus is on the learning progress or mastery of the competence, not

the end goal. By giving students multiple opportunities to reassess, not penalizing work habits, and having the final mark reflect students' final understanding, SBG frames learning as success-driven, rather than failure-avoiding. Finally, even though SBG does use normative standards in the assessment process to determine the broad ordered categories by which students are assessed, since every student is focused on their own learning, their learning goals can be seen as intrapersonal, as they are setting their own achievement goals. SBG reframes assessment as a mastery-approach goal, which allows students to focus on mastery and view assessment in a more positive light.

SBG is also an inclusive assessment model that can easily work for all learners. One group of students that can benefit from SBG are students who experience test anxiety. Lee et al.'s study (2018) surveying 86 post-secondary engineering professors about their experiences with using SBG found that the "transparent nature of SBG affords students with an opportunity to connect to the grading system, which… lead to attitude shifts and lowered anxiety" (p. 57). The idea behind this phenomenon is that "the possibility of future reassessment (replacing the grade of the current assessment) lowers the stakes of any individual assessment, which should mitigate or reduce the impact of stress or anxiety on a student's performance" (Lewis, 2020, pp. 155-156). Lewis (2020) expanded on this idea, and from his own experiences using SBG in his post-secondary mathematics courses, determined that women disproportionately experienced test anxiety, and were also more likely to take advantage of reassessment opportunities. Lewis concluded that traditional percentage grading can disadvantage groups affected by test anxiety, whereas SBG can "provide a more equitable assessment structure by reducing the impact of factors such as test anxiety that are known to disproportionately impact underrepresented groups such as women in mathematics" (p. 154).

In summary, SBG addresses and alleviates most of the issues presented in traditional percentage-based grading by reporting academic proficiency and work ethic separately from one another. This prevents the distortion of marks by noncognitive factors, making marks more accurate and more easily interpretable. SBG also promotes communication between student and teacher, which often results in better improvement in student learning. Due to SBG framing assessment as a success-driven goal, it also increases student motivation and prevents assessment and grading from being punitive. And finally, SBG can benefit disadvantaged students, making it more inclusive and personalizable than traditional percentage-based grading.

Addressing Concerns with SBG

Disrupting the traditional assessment model in education has not gone uncontested, and SBG has received a fair bit of criticism since its implementation in classrooms. As a result, a significant amount of literature has come out addressing criticisms and concerns of SBG, with the majority of conclusions supporting SBG as a reliable and less-biased method of assessment. One criticism of SBG rests on scepticism of the role teacher judgment plays in determining grades, suggesting that grades determined using SBG may be based on teacher opinion, and therefore be less valid and less accurately reflect a student's achievement than traditional percentage-based grading (Brookhart et al., 2016). However, Pollio and Hochbein (2015) compared the standardized test scores of students assessed traditionally to students assessed using SBG and found that "a stronger association existed between course grades and standardized test scores among students who experienced standards-based grading as opposed to students who experienced traditional grading methods" (p. 21). They suggest that since percentages often are affected by numerous noncognitive factors, such as participation and effort, a student's percentage in a course is not a strong predictor of how well they will perform on a standardized assessment, which reflects only a student's academic understanding. Interestingly,

Pollio and Hochbein's 2015 study also found that there was an even stronger association between course grades and standardized tests scores amongst minority and at-risk students. They attribute this finding to past research that suggests teachers will often "grade minority students less on achievement levels and more on a variety of additional factors" (p. 22). As a result, the course grades of minority and at-risk students are often over-inflated, leading to larger discrepancies between their course grades and standardized test scores. This is yet another factor that makes SBG a more inclusive and fair assessment model compared to percentage-based grading. Though the study had limitations, the findings "suggest that a standards-based grading approach may offer a more valid method than traditional grading practices" (p. 22) and that "grades in a standards-based assessment system more validly reflect student learning" (p. 22).

Another criticism with SBG is that it presents challenges when it comes to communicating student progress, especially to parents. Parents confronted with broad ordered categories will often try to translate each into a letter grade or interpret them from a norm-referenced perspective by asking where their child stands compared to their classmates (Guskey, 2004). Also, without clear communication explaining SBG, parents may be confused about why the change in assessment practice is needed, especially since a theme in SBG literature is that parents have "confidence for the known and dislike for the unknown" (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020, p. 4). Finally, parents likely hold their own philosophical beliefs about assessment based on the assessment model they experienced in their education, and without clear communication, parents could push back against new assessment models (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). In order for SBG to be understood and accepted by the parent community, the responsibility to clearly communicate lies with teachers and schools.

Notably, however, not all research on parents' perspective on SBG is negative. In one study by Swan et al. (2014), parents of high school students received two report cards — one

traditional report card providing a single percentage for each class, and one SBG report card that provided information on students' progress towards learning standards and work habits — and were asked to fill out a survey comparing the two; teachers who participated in this study were also surveyed. Findings showed that both parents and teachers strongly felt that the standards-based report card conveyed more information, included better quality information, and was clearer than the traditional percentage-based report card. Of note, while both parents and teachers reported the SBG report card provided information that was easy to understand, the teachers, i.e., those conveying the information, actually rated the understandability lower than the parents did. This suggests that "teachers may underestimate parents' ability to make sense of the more detailed information included in the standards-based report cards" (p. 297) and that this concern should not be a barrier to implementing SBG in high schools. Though this study was conducted within a single school district and the data should be taken conservatively, this study does suggest that SBG can be communicated clearly and well received by parents if plainly explained and established.

Another criticism of SBG stemming from parents is around students' preparation for the rigors of post-secondary education, where SBG may not be used. Predominantly, parents express concerns around the practice of allowing students to reassess multiple times to show their learning (Guskey et al., 2020). Parents worry that this may foster the bad habit of not preparing for initial assessments or that the lack of retests in university will prevent their children from being successful in post-secondary (Guskey et al., 2020). Guskey et al. (2020) sought to determine if experiencing SBG as an assessment model in high school helped or hindered students' transitions to post-secondary by surveying students in this situation. When asked what aspects of their transition to post-secondary were most challenging, students did not provide aspects related to SBG, but rather referenced social and emotional challenges, like living away

from their friends and family or making new friends at university. Academically, students were more likely to refer to difficulties with time management or understanding class expectations than they were to mention anything related to assessment. In the end, the study determined that "the implementation of [SBG] was not detrimental to high school students' transition to university learning environments" (Guskey et al., 2020, p. 264) and therefore should not deter schools and districts from implementing SBG.

When it comes to the perceptions of students to SBG, there are mixed reviews. Peters et al. (2017) looked at survey data collected from a high school with the longest running mandated SBG program in the region, choosing specifically to focus on negative feedback and criticisms. This allowed the authors to present a summary of main high school student concerns with SBG. Students expressed displeasure at the inconsistencies of implementation of SBG between classrooms, concern that good grades were harder to achieve with SBG as the assessment model, worry about being prepared for post-secondary education, and a lack of motivation. Peters et al. suggest that clearer rationale and buy-in from teachers would help address these issues, and perhaps turn these negative comments around. On the other hand, Buckmiller at al. (2017) studied "student attitudes and experiences with regard to [SBG] principles introduced in a university education technology course" (p. 151). By interviewing the students at several points in the course, the authors were able to map out the process that students took when faced with the new assessment model. Initially, students expressed anxiety about the new grading system and recognized that "a shift in thinking was necessary" (p. 153). After the initial anxieties, students began to understand what was expected of them, and recognized that even though they were expected to put in greater effort, their learning would be deeper and more permanent. By the end of the course, the students had recognized the SBG model had made them take responsibility for their own learning process, and the majority of students felt that it was

"beneficial and defensible" (p. 155). The differences in the results between Peters et al. and Buckmiller et al.'s studies could be attributed to a number of factors: post-secondary students have more maturity and have better capacity to reflect on their own learning; the post-secondary students were largely education students, so could have been more open to new ways of learning and assessing; or, SBG was well scaffolded and rationale was clearly provided in the post-secondary context. Regardless, these studies show a wide range of responses to SBG from students, but also suggest that students can potentially see value in SBG and the learning SBG requires.

Finally, a major criticism of SBG from teachers is confusion regarding how class grades or summative proficiencies should be determined. SBG is an assessment model that generates a lot of useful information regarding where a student is at in their learning and what their next steps can be. However, this information must then be communicated, and many schools and districts still require a summative level, percentage, or letter grade to be placed on a student's report card. The problem becomes: How can the plethora of SBG data be accurately synthesized into a single mark? There is minimal research in this area, but Hooper and Cowell (2014) proposed a method of calculating a student's true score — an inherently unknown measure of a student's true understanding or skill on a particular learning target — using a mathematical formula called a History-Adjusted True Score (HAT-score). The authors determine that HAT-scores do "align with the philosophy of standards-based grading" (p. 72) and is a reasonable choice for calculating the true score; however, the major weakness of their approach is that their method is for calculating the true score of a single learning standard when courses cover many learning standards which need to be summatively reported on at the end. This problem is one that continues to concern teachers, including teachers in British Columbia.

While not all concerns with SBG have been addressed in the literature, SBG has only risen to popularity in the past few decades. Additionally, the majority of literature supports SBG as a fair, more accurate assessment model that emphasizes communication and student improvement. It has also been shown that some concerns, such as the concerns of parents, can be alleviated with education and communication. Ultimately, the unresolved concerns for SBG indicate where future research is still needed and where special consideration is required during implementation.

Suggestions for Implementation

The experiences of districts, schools, and teachers who have paved the way by discarding traditional percentage-based grading and implementing SBG provide valuable information for those still thinking of changing their assessment approaches themselves. Townsley et al. (2019) found that a second wave of SBG implementation is coming, as 79 of 100 of the secondary school principals they surveyed indicated that the switch to SBG was part of their vision for their school. When looking at relevant literature, some major themes emerge that can provide suggestions and advice for those planning to change their assessment model. The first major theme is that most people's beliefs about assessment are entrenched in tradition and stem from a person's own experiences with assessment when they were in school (Townsley et al., 2019; Percell & Meyer, 2021). Creating meaningful change in the area of assessment means changing the perspectives and beliefs of students, teachers, parents, and school stakeholders, which is not an easy endeavor. In order to do this successfully, the transition needs to be well communicated and framed with a clear understanding of what the purpose of assessment is (Townsley et al. 2019; Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020; Percell & Meyer, 2021). Educational leaders implementing this change need to recognize that people will need time and space to process and accept, then embrace, these new ideas (Townsley et al., 2019).

Secondly, teachers raise several concerns about SBG that educational leaders need to be prepared to assuage. First and foremost, some districts that initially mandated assessment changes experienced significant teacher resistance, somewhat attributed to their own long held beliefs about assessment (Townsley et al., 2019). In order for a successful transition to SBG, teacher clarity and buy-in is essential (Peters et al., 2017; Percell & Meyer, 2021). Townsley et al. (2019) report that teachers have a variety of reasons for being hesitant to embrace SBG, whether it stems from their fear of or resistance to change, or from the lack of desire to reimagine their assessment practice when retirement is within sight. Additionally, a lot of teachers work in districts where, regardless of the assessment model implemented in their classroom, a single percentage grade must be reported for each high school course (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). Without support and guidance, teachers feel lost as to how to translate their assessment data into a percentage or may feel like SBG is a waste of their time and effort. The best way to navigate the transition to SBG is with clear communication of assessment goals, time, and sufficient professional development to support teachers' learning (Townsley et al., 2019; Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020; Percell & Meyer, 2021). If teachers feel supported regarding their questions of what learning standards to prioritize or what gradebooks to use that will support SBG, SBG will be more readily embraced.

Finally, students have expressed some concerns with SBG as well. Peters et al. (2017) interpreted survey data from high school students who attended a high school where SBG had been implemented for several years, specifically focusing on the criticism students had for the SBG model. The dominant concern was around inconsistency. SBG had been mandated in the school, and while the goals and philosophy of SBG were clearly laid out, individual teachers implemented SBG in their classrooms in different ways. Students expressed their frustration with the lack of consistency between departments, and even cited that some teachers made aspects of

SBG, such as providing multiple opportunities to reassess, purposefully inaccessible for students because they personally did not support the new assessment model. Additionally, students expressed concerns about their grades, complaining that the assessment standards had too few categories (four) which they perceived made it harder to pass. Some students also didn't like that practice work, such as homework, did not contribute to their marks, as many recognized completing homework as a way to strategically boost their marks in traditional grading models. Finally, students worried about whether SBG was preparing them for college and life after high school, some reporting that SBG encouraged poor study habits since second chances were readily available. Peters et al. suggest two ways schools can prevent these student concerns. First, schools can ensure teachers have a strong understanding of SBG and help implement the model consistently in all departments and classrooms. Secondly, teachers can have more discussions with students to help them understand their own learning and also address possible misconceptions students have of post-secondary education and adult life, all of which may be negatively influencing the way they view SBG.

A Shifting Curriculum

Worldwide, the high school curriculum has been undergoing a reform since the early 1980s. After 22 years of teaching the same curriculum, British Columbia's Ministry of Education and Child Care (BCMECC) began developing a revised curriculum in 2010 (British Columbia Ministry of Education [BCME], 2012). Similar to other curricular reform, BC's revised curriculum was intended to respond to the rapidly changing demands of our globalized, technological world. Academically, "the redesigned curriculum develops around key content, concepts, skills and big ideas that foster the higher-order thinking demanded in today's world" (Province of British Columbia, 2021). To allow for this, the curriculum was redesigned with more flexibility for teachers and tried to "remove the barriers that limit teachers' ability to

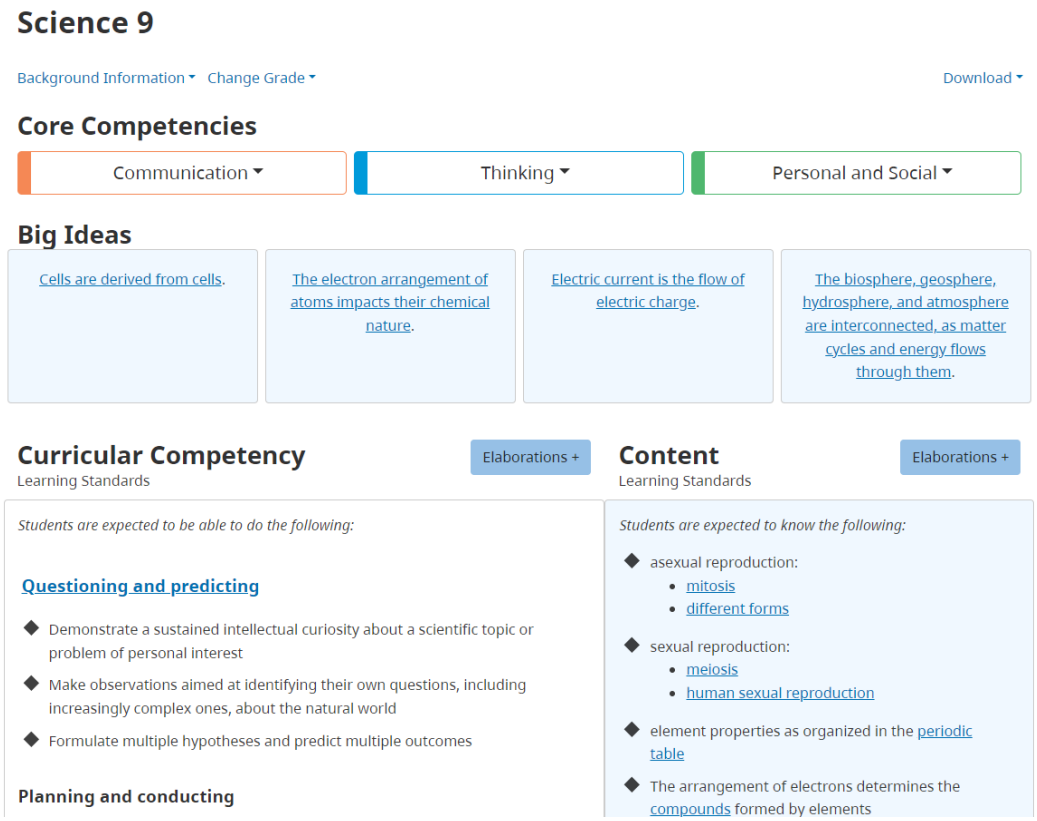
innovate and personalize learning based on students' needs and the community context" (BCME, 2012, p. 2). The curriculum is considered to be "concept-based, competency-driven" (BCME, n.d-a., p. 1) meaning that the required content to be taught in each grade and subject level is far less prescriptive, while emphasis is placed on developing skills, competencies, and understanding. Underlying all levels of the curriculum is a "focus on sound foundations of literacy and numeracy" (BCME, 2012, p. 1).

More practically, the Ministry of Education has released a curriculum document for every grade level of each area of learning, also known as a subject area in which students will be assessed. The curriculum documents consist of three main components: the Big Ideas, the Curricular Competencies, and the Content (see Figure 1). The Big Ideas are "generalizations and principles and the key concepts important in an area of learning" (BCME, n.d.-b) and are expected to "endure beyond a single grade and contribute to future understanding" (BCME, n.d.-b). These are often used as themes or overarching ideas to units in the classrooms. The curricular competencies and the content are both considered "Learning Standards", things that students should be taught and assessed on. While the content is the "essential topics and knowledge at each grade level" (BCME, n.d.-b), the curricular competencies are the "skills, strategies, and processes that students develop" (BCME, n.d.-b) over time throughout their education. The curriculum documents are hyperlinked with helpful elaborations for teachers, students, and parents where applicable. Underlying every grade level and area of learning are the core competencies. In addition to creating a curriculum that results in students who are "critical and creative thinkers and communicators" (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care [BCMECC], 2022, p. 3), social and emotional learning embeds the core competencies – critical and creative thinking, personal and social responsibility, and communication – with the goal of

producing students who are well-rounded “educated citizens” (Province of British Columbia, 2021).

Figure 1

Sample British Columbia Curriculum Document: Science 9

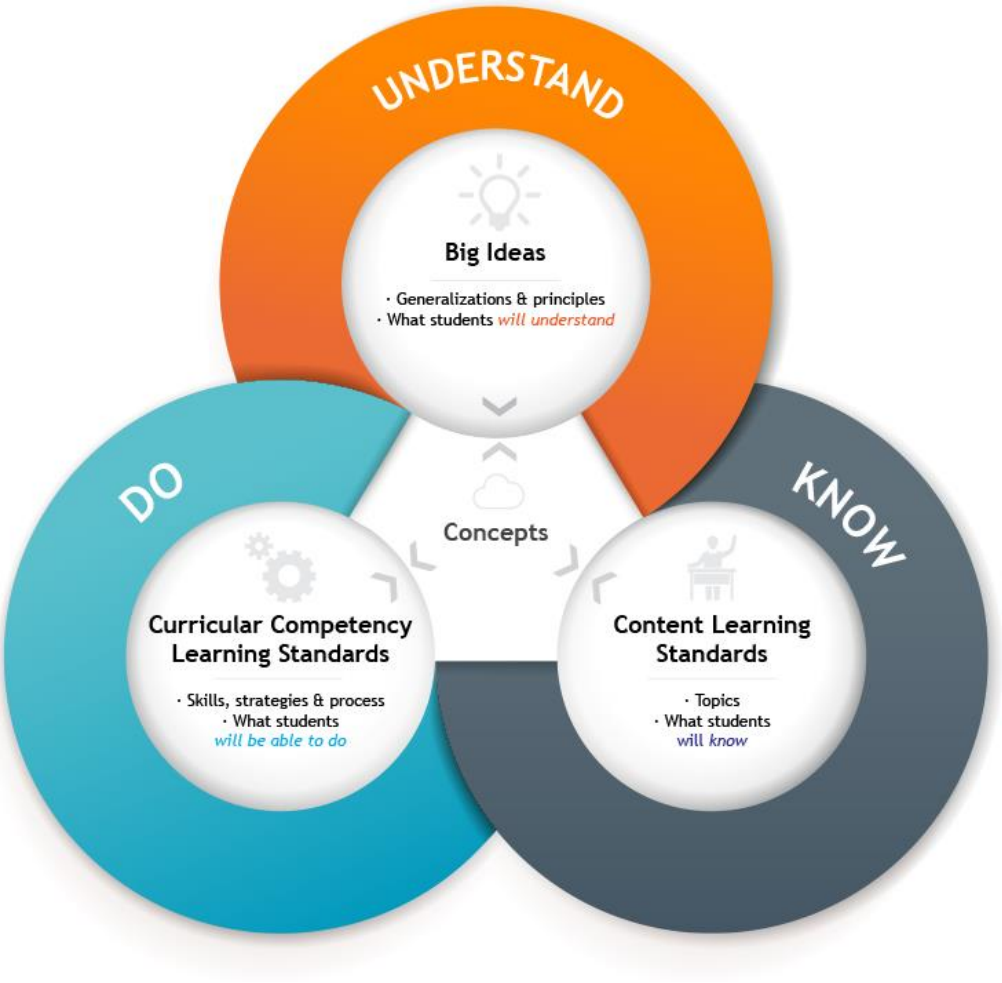


Note. Excerpt of the online curriculum document for the grade level and area of learning for Science 9, showing the Core Competencies, Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies and Content. Elaborations of key terms and phrases are hyperlinked. From *Science 9*, by British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.-c (https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/science/9/core)

The big ideas, curricular competencies, and content tie together to make a "Know-Do-Understand" model that is the basis of the content-driven, competency-based curriculum (see Figure 2). British Columbia's revised curriculum began gradually rolling out in 2016 and was provincially mandated from kindergarten to grade 12 in the 2019/2020 school year, with the implementation of provincial assessments and the new reporting policy continuing its rollout until 2023 (BCME, 2021).

Figure 2

The "Know-Do-Understand" Model



Note. From *Curriculum Overview*, by British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.-b (https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview)

Thinking Critically about Assessment in British Columbia

In 2012, the Curriculum and Assessment Framework Advisory Group (CAFAG), a group made of individuals from several partner groups and academic institutions that met four times between December 2011 and April 2012 to discuss the future of British Columbia's curriculum and assessment, released the document "Enabling Innovation: Transforming Curriculum and Assessment" that outlined the progress and proposed next steps of creating BC's revised

curriculum (BCME, 2012). Regarding assessment, it proposed the emphasis of student self-assessment and development of metacognition, assessment for learning (also called formative assessment), and assessment of competencies in the secondary grades. The group also suggested changing the language "from "reporting" to "communicating student learning…" to highlight the importance of ongoing communication between learners, teachers, and parents" (BCME, 2012, p. 7). They felt this shift in language would change reporting from something that teachers do independently and share with students and parents, to something that happens collaboratively. Additionally, the group discussed "issues around using percentages and requiring letter grades at various levels" (BCME, 2012, p. 7), a conversation that continues for many years. Ultimately, CAFAG concluded that the need for the development of new assessment models which reflect the flexibility of the revised curriculum, that embraces a variety of ways students can show their learning, and emphasizes assessing student achievement in relation to skills and competencies. With teaching, learning, and assessing looking so diverse in classrooms, the group recognized that percentage-based grading struggled to capture the nuances of the new curriculum.

However, when the new K-9 curriculum began implementation in British Columbia in September 2016, a new provincial assessment model had not yet been developed to accompany it. Due to the requests from teachers for "additional instructional and assessment supports" (BCME, n.d.-a, p. 1), the BCMECC put out "A Framework for Classroom Assessment" (BCME, n.d.-a). In this document, three major changes in thinking surrounding assessment were outlined. First of all, it emphasized that the new curriculum focused on curricular competencies, so learning and assessment should focus on skills or "doing." Secondly, it defined Learning Standards (previously called Learning Outcomes) as the curricular competencies and content of an area of learning upon which students would be assessed. Finally, it identified formative assessment as a key component of classroom assessment that would be used to communicate to

students and parents about where student understanding was in relation to the Learning Standards and how students needed to improve to progress their learning. The document also provides some examples of how teachers could create assessment tools with the new curriculum in mind, but these examples were suggestions, grade-level and subject specific, and required considerable time and effort on the part of classroom teachers to develop. At that point in 2016, assessment in the new curriculum was very conceptual and reliant on classroom teachers to develop on their own. Reporting in high schools still used percentages and letter grades as well, as per the provincial reporting order.

Between October 2016 and February 2017, the BCMECC conducted a community engagement project called "Your Kid's Progress" where they collected data from parents regarding how student progress should be communicated between school and home (BCME, 2017). Collection methods ranged from electronic feedback forms to community open houses, and the information gathered strongly influenced the direction of assessment in British Columbia moving forward. While the information collected was diverse, data pertinent to BC's reformed assessment model and grading will be highlighted.

First and foremost, the "Your Kid's Progress: Engagement Summary Report" (2017) does acknowledge that feedback gathered from parents could at times be "conflicting" (p. 5). However, "[m]ost respondents stated a preference for letter grades and percentages" (p. 4) over the use of a proficiency scale, though many parents said that letter grades and percentages should perhaps be introduced later in elementary school and should not be used in earlier grades. Parents in favour of keeping the use of percentages and letter grades felt that they were a familiar measure of assessment, encouraged student motivation, and helped to prepare students for post-secondary and the real world. Additionally, they worried that post-secondary institutions might "not recognize reporting that does not contain letter grades or percentages" (p. 10). Parents

opposed to the use of letter grade and percentages believed that they "may not align with the concepts of the new curriculum" (p. 10) and hinder self-esteem while encouraging unnecessary competition between peers. Contrasting views on how percentages and letter grades influenced work ethic also emerged. Some parents thought that students who achieved high grades became "complacent" (p. 10) which prevented "striving for improvement" (p. 10), suggesting that the elimination of letter grades and percentages would alleviate this problem. On the other hand, other parents felt that percentages and letter grades encouraged a strong work ethic and gave students something to focus on. Despite contradictory views, regardless of what side of the percentages vs. proficiency scale debate parents were on, desire for detailed and personalized teacher comments was deemed most important and strongly supported.

Other concerns identified by the respondents of the community engagement initiatives surrounded proficiency scales themselves. Interestingly, parents often stated that they didn't understand how teachers determined which category their child fell in (BCME, 2017). Therefore, they felt that proficiency scale information didn't give parents the same level of insight into their child's strengths and weaknesses. The fact that parents felt that a letter grade like a "C" was more informative compared to a descriptive category like a "approaching expectations" speaks to the ingrained familiarity society has with the established use of letter grades and percentages. Additionally, other parents felt that proficiency scales "sugarcoat feedback" (p. 11), weren't as appropriate for all subject areas, such as mathematics, and have negative effects on student motivation. Other parents believed that the proficiency scale did not have enough categories or divisions to convey enough information to parents about their child's progress and wanted to know how their child compared to others within the same category (i.e., if they were a "high" meeting expectations or a "low" meeting expectations). From the concerns presented at this time, it was clear that families had reservations about moving away from percentages and letter grades,

and any movement in that direction would necessitate educating families as well as students on new assessment models.

Assessment Policy Change: Nearly There

The data from the "Your Kid's Progress" initiative was conducted concurrently with a comprehensive review of literature on assessment and evaluation by prominent British Columbian universities (BCME, 2019b). This literature review revealed three foundational aspects of good assessment: ongoing and regular communication between school and home, a focus on proficiency to boost student engagement in their own learning, and the benefits of peer- and self-assessment (BCME, 2019b). Combined, these findings resulted in the Draft K-9 Reporting Policy (2019), which was formally and informally piloted by schools around the province in order to refine the language, inform possible revisions, and recommend changes to the in-development grade 10-12 reporting policy. It is the Draft K-9 Reporting Policy which first introduces the "descriptive four-point provincial proficiency scale" (p. 2) as a way to "establish consistent provincial standards" (p. 2) in assessment, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Four-Point Provincial Proficiency Scale

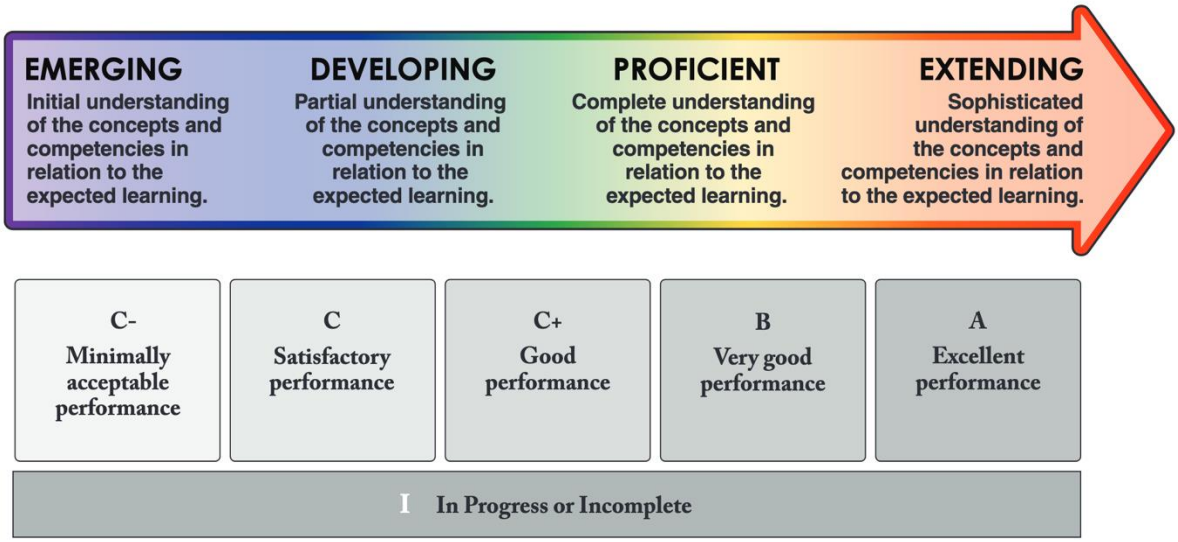
Proficiency Scale	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Extending
	The student demonstrates an initial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a complete understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.

Note. From “DRAFT K-9 Student Reporting Policy (2019): Handbook for Piloting Schools and Districts,” by British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 6.

The draft reporting policy mandates that communication of student progress be reported to families five times a year. Of those reports, two, including the final summary of progress reported, must use the provincial proficiency scale for every area of learning. This means that from K-9, percentages and letter grades are replaced with either “Emerging,” “Developing,” “Proficient,” or “Extending.” A table comparing the categories of the provincial proficiency scale with traditional letter grades (see Figure 4) was also provided to aid understanding of both teachers and parents, but it was found that “the majority of pilot participants found that the comparison table was not required when parents received consistent, clear information on the use of proficiency levels and descriptive feedback to report student progress” (BCME, 2019a, p. 17). The rationale behind the implementation of the provincial proficiency scale was three-fold. First of all, it was supported by findings published in recent assessment literature. Secondly, it aligns with the assessment scale used to assess the new provincial literacy and numeracy assessments, as well as the provincial Foundations Skills Assessment. And finally, it conforms to the initial recommendations of the Classroom Assessment and Reporting Advisory Group to standardize provincial assessment.

Figure 4

Draft Proficiency Scale/Letter Grade Comparison Table



Note. From "DRAFT K-9 Student Reporting Policy (2019): Handbook for Piloting Schools and Districts", by British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 17.

From the previous section, it was clear that the removal of percentages from the communication of learning in kindergarten to grade 9 was not a unanimously supported decision by parents. Despite this, the BCMECC chose to replace percentages and letter grades in kindergarten to grade 9 with a proficiency scale. After the first year of the reporting order pilot, over 4000 parents provided feedback, and the majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they received quality information on their child's progress (60%), understood how their child could move forward in their learning (56%), and understood the language in the provincial proficiency scale (74%) (*Rethinking*, 2019, p. 4). The data showed some positive results, though with room for improvement. Several parents did report that they preferred letter grades and percentages, citing tradition and comfort as their main reasoning behind this opinion, which suggested that "additional engagement with teachers, parents, and students to communicate the benefits offered by the new reporting practices" (*Rethinking*, 2019, p. 4) was still needed.

In June 2022, the draft of the province's K-12 Reporting Policy Framework came out after some delays due to the global COVID-19 pandemic (BCMECC, 2022). The finalized version was implemented in the 2023/2024 school year to allow time for "additional planning" (p. 5) and "co-development of supporting resources" (p. 5) to support "deeper understanding of the Provincial Proficiency Scale, the language used within it, and its many benefits for learners" (p. 6). It largely echoed the DRAFT K-9 Reporting Policy, stating that the four-point provincial proficiency scale will be used to communicate student learning from kindergarten to grade 9, but percentages or letter grades will still be used in grades 10-12. It emphasized the focus on student proficiency of the Learning Standards, which will lead to "improved reliability of assessment results and increased student engagement" (p. 4). Additionally, this document is very clear that academic progress and student behaviour should be reported separately, stating that "[s]tudent behaviour or attendance should not contribute to a student's overall mark in each learning area" (p. 7). The focus of the document is to establish the conceptual framework and logistics of British Columbia's new assessment model, with promises that supporting documents would be released before the official rollout in September 2023.

The Final Product

The finalized assessment framework for British Columbia's education system was published in July 2023 on the Government of British Columbia website (Government of British Columbia, 2023b). One month before taking effect on the province's school system, the K-12 Student Reporting Policy: Communicating Student Learning Guidelines (BCMECC, 2023b) came out, providing elaborations and useful descriptions to understand the rationale behind and in-classroom practices of the new assessment framework for educators, parents, and students alike. Both these reports contain the same main components that were emphasized in the June 2022 framework, such as: when, how frequently, and what form communication of learning to

families should take; the emphasis on student self-reflection and goal setting, specifically pertaining to the core competencies; important definitions, such as of terms like Learning Standards and descriptive feedback; and kindergarten to grade 9 reporting being communicated using the provincial proficiency scale while grade 10-12 use letter grades and/or percentages. As in previous documents, it supports behaviour and attendance being reported separately from learning progress. Very explicitly, it states:

> Assessment feedback for each of the areas of learning should be in relation to the learning standards alone. Therefore, learning habits and engagement should be reported on separately from academic learning. Student learning habits and engagement should not contribute to a student's overall mark. (p. 37)

It goes on to say that "assessment and reporting are not disciplinary tools," (p. 37) so teachers cannot use marks to punish students for their work ethic, attendance, or behaviours.

However, the K-12 Student Reporting Policy: Communicating Student Learning Guidelines also provides far more detail about what the assessment framework should and could look like in classrooms. This document "provides suggested practices and strategies for gathering and evaluating evidence of learning," as well as "suggested practices and strategies for translating evidence of learning into clear, meaningful communication of student learning" (p. 4). It also poses assessment and the communication around assessment as a way for students to "take part in meaningful conversations that help them develop responsibility for engaging deeply with their learning" (p. 6). The idea that learning is ongoing, and that assessment plays a vital role in the cyclical nature of learning and improving, is a strong narrative throughout the document:

> We use the information we gather through assessments to inform our instruction. Communicating this information to students through ongoing feedback encourages them

> to recognize their successes and set learning goals, further engaging them in the learning process. (p. 9)

The Student Learning Guidelines provide some suggested evaluation tools, such as rubrics, single-point rubrics, checklists, and teacher observation sheets. All evaluation tools need to be accompanied by descriptive feedback that focuses on describing the student's strengths and areas of improvement in relation to the Learning Standards being assessed. The document also goes into an in-depth description of the provincial proficiency scale, establishing that "every student has a place on the scale at any given time," (p. 28) an aspect of the assessment framework that makes it very inclusive, and that ""Proficient" is the goal for students" (p. 29). While there is discussion and examples around how to use the provincial proficiency scale to assess students on an individual assignment or individual learning standard, the Guidelines do not provide instructions as to how to determine a summative proficiency based on collected data to report at a learning update. There are broad instructions for how to determine a percentage or letter grade in grades 10-12, which suggests teachers collect evidence of learning throughout the term to help them determine "the student's overall learning in relation to the learning standards for the unit or term and assign Ministry-approved letter grades and percentages that correspond to the learning demonstrated by the student" (p. 32). The Guidelines caution against averaging marks from an entire term and advise that "learning demonstrated close to the communication of student learning will be the most reflective of student proficiency and should be used as the strongest evidence of learning when deciding on a letter grade and percentage" (p. 32). The Guidelines are not more specific than this with instructions for how letter grades or percentages should be determined.

The Student Learning Guidelines also discusses the role of teachers' professional judgement and the use of non-traditional assessment. For example, it suggests that a

"triangulated approach to assessment is an effective way to assess the whole child" (p. 12), meaning that evidence of learning can be gathered in three ways: "through observation, conversation, and product" (p. 12). Teachers using observation and conversation to gather evidence of learning, not just a tangible product, is a new idea in this assessment framework, but one that aligns strongly with the curriculum's belief that students should have multiple opportunities and flexible formats in which to show their learning (BCME, 2012). The document also supports teachers using their professional judgement to offer universal or targeted educational supports to students – not just those students with designated Individualized Education Plans – and to weigh "recent evidence and determine the overall growth of the learner in relation to the learning standards" (BCMECC, 2023b, p. 32) when it comes to determining final proficiency or letter grade/percentage when reporting on student learning.

Accompanying the new K-12 Student Reporting Policy was a flurry of supporting resources. For families, for example, a page on the Government of British Columbia website called the K-12 Student Reporting Information for Parents and Caregivers (2023a) provides brochures, a slide deck presentation, information packages translated into 8 languages, and a half-hour video, all of which explain the new Reporting Policy and rationalize the changes. The website explains that report cards have largely remained constant between 1994 and 2016 even though British Columbia's curriculum underwent major changes during that time. The document Communicating Student Learning: Information for Parents and Caregivers (2023a) suggests that new report cards will look different but will "provide a complete picture" (p. 2) of what students can do, and that the implementation of a proficiency scale will "ensure that students focus on learning instead of competing for marks" (p. 2). The resources for parents and caregivers repeatedly draw upon education and assessment examples of the past (i.e., "Today's classroom is different from when you were in school. You may remember working only from textbooks or

worksheets" (BCMECC, 2023a, p. 5)) and go on to explain how the new curriculum and reporting order bring these things into the present day (i.e., "Students now learn in many ways, often through experiences both inside and outside the classroom. They also show their learning in a variety of ways" (BCMECC, 2023a, p. 5). The resources create a fully realized picture of what parents and caregivers should expect from their child's reporting.

For educators, in addition to the K-12 Student Reporting Policy: Communicating Student Learning Guidelines (2023b) document, British Columbia's Curriculum website also provides a slide deck, a 40-minute video presentation, informational sheets, and an 8 part webinar series. While the webinar is largely an explanation of Reporting Policy, it does feature guest speakers – educators from around the province who played a role in developing the new assessment framework – who share examples of how they are implementing the new assessment model in their classrooms. For example, Joanne Weatherby from the Abbotsford School District provided an example of a "low floor, high ceiling" (BCMECC, 2023d) activity that allows all students an opportunity to engage with it, as well as some strategies for offering explicit supports that students can choose to access, building in them the "self agency and culture of confidence" (BCMECC, 2023d) that is seen in successful learners. As another example, Danielle Paloposki from King David High School showed some practical ways of using the provincial proficiency scale, demonstrating how descriptors for each proficiency level can be tailored to specific Learning Standards from the curriculum (BCMECC, 2023c). She explained that these descriptors, written in strengths-based language – language that describes what students can do, not what students cannot do – not only help students understand where they are in their learning, but by reading the descriptor in the level above the one they are currently assessed at, it describes where they could improve. Paloposki also provided an example of a modern "gradebook," or method of recording proficiencies, which is the only tangible example I've found in the

provincial resources. Interestingly, Paloposki used the term “standards-based assessment” (BCMECC, 2023c) in her presentation, a term that is seemingly avoided in the literature and resources around BC’s assessment framework, perhaps to distance itself from the more regimented and prescriptive standards-based assessment systems implemented in parts of the United States.

SBG and the K-12 Student Reporting Policy

As mentioned, though nowhere in the K-12 Student Reporting Policy (GBC, 2023b) does it use the term, BCMECC is implementing a new assessment model for the province that aligns with the definition of SBG. At its most simple, a SBG assessment model has established curricular learning outcomes, broad ordered categories used for assessment purposes, and separates academic progress from work habits. Moving forward in British Columbia, Learning Standards (note the choice of the word *standard*) have been established as the unit of learning to be assessed and an associated standardized proficiency scale has been published as an assessment tool. Conveniently, Learning Standards are not limited to content, but also include the curricular competencies, which lends itself well to the reformed curriculum which focuses on doing rather than just knowing. The province has also been very clear about reporting academic progress separately from behaviour and work ethic.

In addition, the province’s new assessment model and SBG share many of the same values. At their core, both value student success and learning above all. For example, the reporting order emphasizes the necessity of teachers providing descriptive feedback in addition to reporting progress (BCMECC, 2022). Descriptive feedback is “strengths-based, written comments or documented conversations that are aligned to the Learning Standards and describe student learning” (BCMECC, 2022, p. 22). Necessitating descriptive feedback of students’ strengths and areas of future growth places focus on each individual student’s learning journey

and encourages communication between teacher, learner, and family. Additionally, a key aspect of K-12 reporting redesign is the implementation of student self-assessment and goal-setting, which allows for "greater responsibility for their own learning" (BCMECC, 2022, p. 4). The development of student metacognition and their ability to be active reflectors on their own learning journey is an important aspect of successful SBG. Finally, separating reporting of academic progress and work habits, ensures that "assessment and reporting is not a disciplinary tool" (BCMECC, 2022, p. 24), making assessment continue to be seen as a mastery-approach or success-driven goal according to Elliot and McGregor's (2001) achievement goal framework, aligning with the theory behind SBG. Communication and feedback, self-reflection and goal setting, and success-driven assessment all enable and nurture student progress.

Additionally, like SBG, the province's new assessment model focuses on the learning journey and draws a lot of inspiration from Bloom's theory of mastery learning. Like mastery learning, it gives students multiple opportunities to show their learning, embraces the idea of each student having their own learning path, and emphasizes mastery of content or skills. Studies have suggested that this type of learning is "particularly effective when applied to instruction focusing on higher level learning goals such as problem solving, drawing inferences, deductive reasoning, and creative expression" (Guskey, 2007, p. 22), all of which are valued by curriculum reform. Also, like mastery learning, the K-12 Student Reporting Policy Framework highlights the importance of learning being an ongoing process that may not accurately be reflected by averaging the learning over the entire learning period because "students may not demonstrate the same high level of learning at the beginning of the unit as they do near the end" (BCMECC, 2022, p. 18). It notes that "[d]ue to the cumulative nature of learning, the final term of learning may be more heavily weighted" (p. 18) and "averaging marks may not provide a true picture of the student's abilities" (p. 18). Most interestingly, these suggestions are made when discussing

the use of letter grades and percentages in grades 10-12, showing that the province is trying to embrace the values of SBG even when using what is seen as the traditional grading model.

Finally, since SBG is largely founded on Bloom's mastery learning, it can be seen as a way to reduce achievement gaps in classrooms by providing multiple opportunities for students to show their learning. For example, SBG "allows students to take different paths to success in the course" (Lewis, 2020, p. 155). SBG is an inclusive practice recognizing and normalizing that each student learns differently and may do so on a different timeline than their peers. This strongly aligns with the inclusive values of the new framework which "pertains to all learners in the B.C. education system" (BCMECC, 2022, p. 10) and emphasizes that all learners have a place on the provincial proficiency scale. SBG is an equitable assessment model that encourages the opportunity for all students to be successful.

Conclusion

Making any kind of sustained, meaningful change in a societal institution such as education will always be faced with challenges and concerns. However, the challenges that arise in the transition from traditional percentage-based grading to SBG are worth facing, as can be seen by examining the evidence that implementing SBG in high school classrooms would be beneficial to students while also aligning with current trends in assessment literature. To summarize, SBG is an assessment model based on Bloom's mastery learning that emphasizes mastery and the learning process by assessing students' achievement and understanding of academic standards based on established ordered categories. SBG eliminates many of the known flaws perpetuated by percentage-based grading for decades by reporting work habits and academic proficiency separately, as well as framing learning as an ongoing process. Studies have shown that SBG is an inclusive assessment model that provides opportunities for all students to experience success, especially those disadvantaged in mathematics classrooms such as minority

students, at-risk students, and students experiencing test anxiety. In addition, SBG reportedly results in course grades more consistent with scores of standardized tests, lending evidence to the SBG providing more valid grades than traditional grading systems. As Iamarino (2011) states:

> Standards-based grading takes aim both at mediocrity in the classroom and inaccurateness in the gradebook, attempting to reinvigorate education by encouraging teachers to implement more accurate methods of evaluation – methods that hold students accountable not for earning points, which often do not represent learning achievements so much as students' ability to follow a set of rules, but for actual mastery of the subjects taught to them. (p. 2)

The transition to SBG is a purposeful step forward in aligning assessment practices with the modern curricular reform.

BCMECC has done much work to create a pedagogical framework for the new reporting order that is based on current trends in research, aligns with the values of the revised curriculum, and focuses centrally on what is best for student learning. For kindergarten to grade 9 – the grades seeing the biggest transition from traditional percentage-based grading – some areas have been thoroughly developed. For example, documents have made it very clear that the curricular competencies and content make up the Learning Standards for each area of learning and grade, and the provincial proficiency scale should be used to assess student proficiency of these Learning Standards. Additionally, work habits and academic proficiency need to be reported separately and work habits (attendance, participation, homework completion, etc.) cannot be an influencing factor in a student's academic progress or mark. Finally, the reporting order is clear that personal and specific descriptive feedback from teachers is essential to student learning, and also highlights the importance of self-reflection and goal-setting in the development of students as self-driven and meta-cognizant learners.

While the BCMECC has done a good job changing the province's assessment philosophy to align with the principles of SBG, the logistics of how this will look from classroom to classroom and how overall assessment will look has been late to be communicated with teachers. With the finalized reporting policy being released in July 2023 and the most useful resources for teachers being released in August 2023, teachers were not afforded a lot of time to develop and implement their classroom assessment practices which were mandated to rollout in September 2023. Even the resources that were released in August provide few examples of classroom assessment logistics, meaning that all teachers would have to tailor the examples to their own grade-levels, subject areas, and teaching styles. This is a clear disservice to teachers, and a big ask for teachers considering their already considerable workload and the emotional and practical toll of teaching during a global pandemic.

Of course, some high school teachers have already participated in the pilot of the new assessment model and worked hard to develop resources and align their own classroom assessment philosophy with the province's. On the other hand, many teachers may not have begun working with the new assessment model until the start of the 2023/2024 school year. This creates a unique situation where some teachers around the province can be seen as peer experts who are further along in the assessment journey and can be seen as instrumental sources of knowledge to help other teachers in this process. It is the goal of my research to learn how high school teachers in Victoria, BC have already begun implementing the new reporting policy in their classrooms. This information will be significant for helping other teachers who are embarking on this transition within their own classrooms and illuminating challenges to districts, educational partners, and the BCMECC who play a role in supporting teachers during the rollout of this change.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To examine how high school teachers in Victoria have been implementing BC's new assessment framework in their classrooms, I used a qualitative multiple case study approach. I collected primary data though in-person, semi-structured interviews and analyzed the data using thematic analysis.

Research Design

Case study research is described as "a versatile form of qualitative inquiry suitable for a comprehensive, holistic, and in-depth investigation of a complex issue" (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 12) which stems from "the motivation to explore, seek understanding, and establish the meaning of experiences from the perspective of those involved" (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 8). Case study research is known to be flexible, compatible with a variety of philosophical orientations, methods, and disciplines of study (Harrison et al., 2017). However, case study research is the "preferred strategy when 'how' and 'why' questions are posed" (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 1994) and has been a methodology embraced by educational research since the 1970's. An essential aspect of case study research is defining the case, or "bounded system" (Mertler, 2022, p. 96), which is to be studied. Cases are "selected based on the research purpose or question and what they could reveal about the phenomenon or topic of interest" (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 10). While case study research may focus on a single case, multiple case studies allow for the perspectives of multiple cases to be interpreted and analyzed discretely or comparatively.

Stake (2005) posits that case study research is a successful methodology because it is "in harmony with a reader's experience" (p. 5), making it easier for the reader to interpret and make meaning by relating the data to their own life. When readers "recognize similarities in case study details and find descriptions that resonate with their own experiences" (Melrose, 2009), they undergo a process called naturalistic generalization. Naturalistic generalization allows readers to

take data which is “complex, holistic, and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables” (Stake, 1978, p. 7) and create meaning, making case study research a sophisticated way to learn about complex phenomena. Stake believes that case study research “proliferates rather than narrows” (p. 7), making it best suited for “adding the existing experience and humanistic understanding” (p. 7).

My research tackles a “how” question: how high school teachers are implementing the new provincial assessment framework in their classrooms. This is a complex issue being tackled by a number of teachers in a number of ways. Since all kindergarten to grade 9 teachers in British Columbia now have to implement the new assessment framework in their classes, teachers who began doing so prior to September 2023 are pioneering this initiative. With provincial guidance being so sparse, learning the experiences of how these teachers are translating the assessment framework to a functioning assessment model in their classrooms is valuable information to other teachers, schools, districts, and the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care as it will help guide the new assessment rollout. Based on my question, I have defined a “case” as a high school teacher who has been implementing the new provincial assessment framework in their classroom. By gathering data from multiple cases, I was able to learn what teachers are individually doing, but also compare and contrast their respective experiences to see what themes emerge.

A multiple case study research project allowed me to hear several unique experiences and perspectives on the topic. Since these teachers have developed their classroom assessment model organically without a prior mandate, it was important to me that they were able to describe their experiences, successes, and challenges organically in rich detail using their own words, which strongly aligns with the values of case study research.

Sampling

The criteria I used for selecting my participants is as follows: current or past high school teachers who teach/taught in the Greater Victoria School District #61 who have begun to implement aspects of the assessment framework outlined in the 2023 Reporting Order into their classrooms. This includes teachers who, for example, assess students using the language of the provincial proficiency scale (Emerging, Developing, Proficient, Extending) or have adopted the practice of standards-based grading (SBG) while moving away from traditional percentage-based grading. While the new assessment framework states that only kindergarten to grade 9 teachers will have to provide a final proficiency instead of a final percentage or letter grade in every area of learning in the 2023/2024 school year, I did not limit my participant selection to only high school teachers that teach grade 9. My rationalization is that teachers who have begun to make an assessment shift in their classrooms already are not necessarily doing so to abide by the provincial guidelines, and therefore may have been changing their assessment models in any of their courses from grades 9-12. I feel strongly that their experiences making these changes will be relevant regardless of which grade level they were implemented.

I interviewed a total of 4 participants for the multiple case study aspect of my research. Three participants – Caroline Baldwin, Tim Spray, and Graham Mclaren – are teachers who I know from previously hearing them speak at professional development workshops. The fourth participant – Emily Mathias – was referred to me by a co-worker. All communications with the participants to set up the interviews were done electronically via school-based emails, and all participants contacted agreed to participate in the study. The participants signed consent forms allowing me to identify them by name in my research.

Participants

- Caroline Baldwin is a high school Chemistry, English, and Math teacher who teaches at Reynolds Secondary School. In her 28th year of teaching, Caroline spent some of her time teaching at Mount Douglas Secondary – where she collaborated with other teachers, including Graham, on assessment – as well as teaching a year of middle school. Caroline worked as a nurse for 5 years before becoming a teacher, spending 2 years teaching in Alberta and the remainder of her career in British Columbia.
- Graham Mclaren is a high school Applied Design, Skills, and Technology teacher. Examples of courses that he has taught currently or in the past are Drafting and Design, Design and Innovation, Robotics, and Outdoor Pursuits. He has been teaching for 23 years, spending his first 6-7 years in classrooms in Alberta before moving to British Columbia.
- Tim Spray is a high school teacher at Oak Bay High School who teaches Mathematics 9 through 12 and Calculus 12. He has been teaching for 25 years.
- Emily Mathias is mainly an English and French teacher at Lambrick Park Secondary. At the time of interview, she was teaching French, English First Peoples, and Career Life Education, which is taught exclusively online at Lambrick Park. She has been teaching for 12 years in British Columbia, after completing her teacher education training in Ontario.

None of the participants formally participated in the K-9 Draft Reporting Order Pilot between 2017 and 2020.

The School District

As the school districts in British Columbia are very diverse, understanding the demographics of the school district of study is important when considering the data in context. School District #61 covers the greater Victoria area and encompasses 28 elementary schools (kindergarten to grade 5), 10 middle schools (grades 6-8), and 7 secondary schools (grades 9-12)

(Greater Victoria School District [GVSD], 2022). Data from the 2023/2024 school year shows that 20,455 students are in the district, including 3026 students with diverse needs, and 1621 indigenous students (British Columbia, Ministry of Education and Child Care [BCMECC], 2024, p. 3). Data from 2021/2022 shows approximately 1800 English Language Learners and 800 International Students in the district as well (GVSD, 2022). Compared to provincial averages, the population in the School District #61 catchment has a slightly lower unemployment rate, higher median family income, lower rate of single-family homes, and higher percentage of the adult population with a post-secondary education (BCMECC, 2024, p. 2). The district has an 87% average six-year completion rate (GVSD, 2022).

Methods

Since the goal of case study research is to gather "rich, holistic description that illuminates one's understanding of the [studied] phenomena" (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 10), I personally collect the data by conducting semi-structured interviews. According to Merriam (as cited in Harrison et al., 2017), "interviews are the most common form of qualitative data collection" (p. 10) in case study research because they allow for the voice of participants to be preserved and the semi-structured format is the "most frequently used interview technique in qualitative research" (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2955). This is because it allows for a reciprocity to develop between interviewer and interviewee as the interviewer responds to the interviewee and improvises follow-up questions (Kallio et al., 2016). While semi-structured interviews do follow a preestablished framework, they allow researchers to "explore the research area by collecting similar types of information from each participant … by providing participants with guidance on what to talk about" (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2955). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather relevant data from my participants, but also provide opportunities for them to describe unique experiences that I may not have anticipated in my interview framework.

I developed the semi-structured interview outline based on my research question and was also influenced by my prior knowledge of my participants' classroom assessment. I developed the semi-structured interview outline to gain information in four areas. First, I wanted some background information on my participants to provide context for their data. Secondly, I sought a detailed description of what assessment looked like in their classrooms. Thirdly, I was interested in their motivations and assessment philosophy. And finally, I wanted to hear what challenges they had faced and what insight and recommendations they could offer into the September 2023 mandate.

The four interviews in-person were conducted between January and May 2023 in the participants' respective classrooms and video recorded using the Camera application on my laptop. Interviews began by reviewing the Participant Consent Form and having participants give written consent to the interviews. The outline of the semi-structured interview that was followed can be found in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

Sound from the video recordings from the interviews was enhanced using the website videolouder.com and then uploaded as private videos to YouTube. The YouTube transcripts were used as the starting transcripts of the interviews, which I then checked over and transcribed any missing audio by ear (Hopper et al., 2021) .

The transcripts were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis based on the methodology laid out in Braun and Clarke's "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology" (2006), which has been previously used in similar education-based studies (Gamlem & Helleve, 2022; Jones, 2022; Martínez-Sierra et al., 2016; Mitick & McCauley, 2022). Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify and report patterns in their data, as well as "interpret various aspects of the research topic" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Based on having reviewed the transcripts, I began by

brainstorming possible thematic categories, such as “Assessment Philosophy,” “Needed Teacher Support,” “Reporting,” and “Recording.” Then, using ATLAS.ti Web for my qualitative data analysis, I went through each transcript and developed a coding scheme for the data with codes that naturally emerged. I made note of codes that emerged later in my analysis, and then went back to earlier transcripts to see if any of the data could be categorized under those codes.

Next, I organized my data by downloading the quotations for each code in a separate Excel file, and began grouping my codes into logical broader categories so that I could best describe and interpret the findings. For example, in the category “The Why,” which describes the reasoning and motivation behind the participants implementing their current assessment models, I looked at all the quotations coded as one or more of the following when describing the findings: Goal of Assessment, Learning as a Process, Motivator, Philosophy, Teacher Emotion, Teacher Reflection, Change in Teaching Practice, Teacher Timeline, Multiple Opportunities to Show Learning. My findings are organized and described in detail as follows.

Chapter 4: Findings

The breadth and depth of the interview data is vast. For the sake of organization, I begin the Findings section with a comprehensive description of how each participant describes their own classroom assessment, including any recording tools or technology they use, how they view and use the provincial proficiency scale, and how they summatively reported at the end of a term or semester. Next, I look at the philosophical beliefs of the participants that drive their assessment practices, with a particular exploration of the role students play in the assessment process. Next, I look at the benefits and difficulties the participants experienced and conclude by examining the perceived perspectives of others and what the participants identified as needs as they moved forward with their assessment practices.

Description of Teacher Assessment Models

Logistics of Recording

Each participant was asked to describe in detail how they do assessment in their classroom, which I consider to be the "logistics" aspect to their assessment model. Some teachers created electronic recording tools, which I refer to as "infrastructure" that the participants have built to support their assessment practices.

To some degree, what each participant described overlapped between their assessment model and teaching practice, and it should be noted that these practically are not separate from one another, nor should they be. For the purpose of this study, I focus as much as possible on the assessment model in isolation and draw upon examples participants gave of their teaching practice as needed.

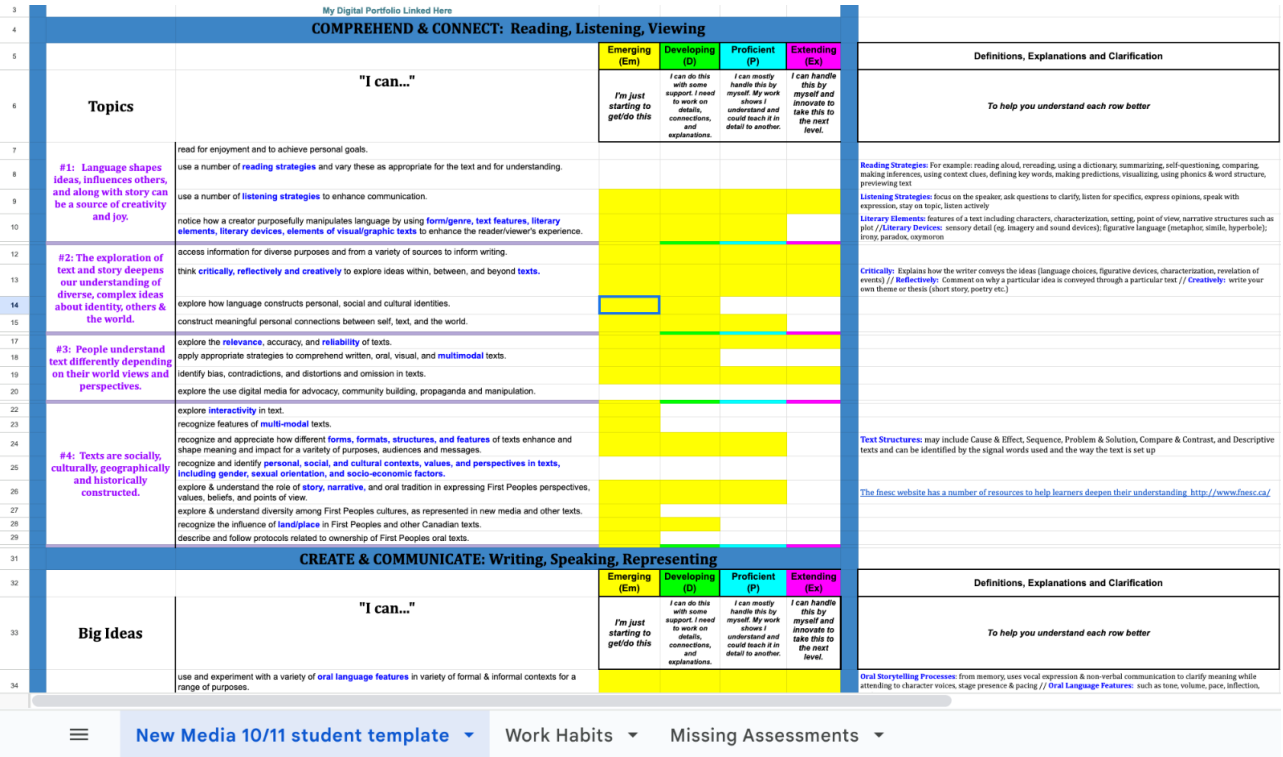
The Competency Charts of Caroline and Graham.

Caroline and Graham were part of a group of teachers at Mount Doug Secondary who pioneered the creation and use of 'competency charts' for assessment in their classrooms. Each

competency chart is course specific and has been created in Google Sheets. Every student in the course has their own competency chart. The competency chart lists the curricular competencies down the left hand column and the categories of the proficiency scale - Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Extending - along the top row (see Figure 5). As students engage in assessments that show their learning of various curricular competencies, Caroline and Graham assess them and record the level of learning each student has shown in the charts. They call this "shading" and do so by highlighting cells in the student's competency chart that correspond to the particular curricular competency. Caroline explains her shading system: "If you show that you're Developing, I shade both Emerging and Developing because [...] hopefully I set it up logically so that if you are Developing, you also have the Emerging skills as well."

Figure 5

Caroline Baldwin's Competency Chart: Student Sample



My Digital Portfolio Linked Here

COMPREHEND & CONNECT: Reading, Listening, Viewing

Topics	"I can..."	Emerging (Em) *I'm just starting to get/do this*	Developing (D) *I can do this with some support. I need to work on details, connections, and explanations.*	Proficient (P) *I can mostly handle this by myself. My work shows I understand and could teach it in detail to another.*	Extending (Ex) *I can handle this by myself and innovate to take this to the next level.*	Definitions, Explanations and Clarification *To help you understand each row better*
	read for enjoyment and to achieve personal goals.					
#1: Language shapes ideas, influences others, and along with story can be a source of creativity and joy.	use a number of **reading strategies** and vary these as appropriate for the text and for understanding.					**Reading Strategies:** For example: reading aloud, rereading, using a dictionary, summarizing, self-questioning, comparing, making inferences, using context clues, defining key words, making predictions, visualizing, using phonics & word structure, previewing text
	use a number of **listening strategies** to enhance communication.					**Listening Strategies:** focus on the speaker, ask questions to clarify, listen for specifics, express opinions, speak with expression, stay on topic, listen actively
	notice how a creator purposefully manipulates language by using **form/genre, text features, literary elements, literary devices, elements of visual/graphic texts** to enhance the reader/viewer's experience.					**Literary Elements:** features of a text including characters, characterization, setting, point of view, narrative structures such as plot // **Literary Devices:** sensory detail (eg. imagery and sound devices); figurative language (metaphor, simile, hyperbole); irony, paradox, oxymoron
#2: The exploration of text and story deepens our understanding of diverse, complex ideas about identity, others & the world.	access information for diverse purposes and from a variety of sources to inform writing.					
	think **critically, reflectively and creatively** to explore ideas within, between, and beyond **texts.**					**Critically:** Explains how the writer conveys the ideas (language choices, figurative devices, characterization, revelation of events) // **Reflectively:** Comment on why a particular idea is conveyed through a particular text // **Creatively:** write your own theme or thesis (short story, poetry etc.)
	explore how language constructs personal, social and cultural identities.					
	construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and the world.					
#3: People understand text differently depending on their world views and perspectives.	explore the **relevance**, accuracy, and **reliability** of texts.					
	apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, visual, and **multimodal** texts.					
	identify bias, contradictions, and distortions and omission in texts.					
	explore the use digital media for advocacy, community building, propaganda and manipulation.					
#4: Texts are socially, culturally, geographically and historically constructed.	explore **interactivity** in text.					
	recognize features of **multi-modal** texts.					
	recognize and appreciate how different **forms, formats, structures, and features** of texts enhance and shape meaning and impact for a variety of purposes, audiences and messages.					**Text Structures:** may include Cause & Effect, Sequence, Problem & Solution, Compare & Contrast, and Descriptive texts and can be identified by the signal words used and the way the text is set up
	recognize and identify **personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts, including gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic factors.**					
	explore & understand the role of **story, narrative,** and oral tradition in expressing First Peoples perspectives, values, beliefs, and points of view.					The fnesc website has a number of resources to help learners deepen their understanding http://www.fnesc.ca/
	explore & understand diversity among First Peoples cultures, as represented in new media and other texts.					
	recognize the influence of **land/place** in First Peoples and other Canadian texts.					
	describe and follow protocols related to ownership of First Peoples oral texts.					

CREATE & COMMUNICATE: Writing, Speaking, Representing

Big Ideas	"I can..."	Emerging (Em) *I'm just starting to get/do this*	Developing (D) *I can do this with some support. I need to work on details, connections, and explanations.*	Proficient (P) *I can mostly handle this by myself. My work shows I understand and could teach it in detail to another.*	Extending (Ex) *I can handle this by myself and innovate to take this to the next level.*	Definitions, Explanations and Clarification *To help you understand each row better*
	use and experiment with a variety of **oral language features** in variety of formal & informal contexts for a range of purposes.					**Oral Storytelling Processes:** from memory, uses vocal expression & non-verbal communication to clarify meaning while attending to character voices, stage presence & pacing // **Oral Language Features:** such as tone, volume, pace, inflection,

New Media 10/11 student template | Work Habits | Missing Assessments

Note. This is an excerpt from a sample competency chart of a student in a grade 10/11 New Media English class. The competency chart is organized with the big ideas and corresponding curricular competencies or "I can…" statements down the left-hand side and the proficiencies along the top. Caroline has used yellow to shade the student's current proficiency for each "I can…" statement. The far-right column includes elaborations of the "I can…" statements, largely pulled from the BC curriculum website. Other tabs in the Google Sheet are seen at the bottom, where Caroline records work habits and any missing assignments the student has. Reprinted with permission from Caroline Baldwin.

Even though they collaborated to develop the competency charts, Caroline and Graham have both made subtle changes to the charts and to their practice over the years to better suit their personal preferences and perceived subject area needs. For her English classes, Caroline has translated the curricular competencies into "I can…" statements to make them student friendly, and Graham has modified some of the curricular competencies to fit the specific skills and goals of his Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies (ADST) courses. In Graham's competency chart, each cell has been filled in with a descriptor of what the specific curricular competency would look like for each level of the proficiency scale. This was the original design of the

competency charts, but Caroline has made changes to make her approach “more digestible” to students. Caroline’s chart contains empty cells, as she spends class time describing what learning looks like for the curricular competency she is teaching. For example, when she introduces an activity, she will provide students with an assessment rubric on the criteria sheet that includes the competencies being assessed and a descriptor for each level of the proficiency scale.

Caroline will often create a paper or digital self-assessment sheet for her students, where students can self-assess on the “I can…” statements and also reflect on something they’re proud of and something they struggled with (see Figure 6). Caroline uses these sheets to aid her in assessing her students’ work. Caroline will sometimes do assignments that are not nuanced enough to show a full proficiency understanding. She explains that some assignments can only show a maximum of Emerging as it pertains to a particular competency, “with the idea that it's a normal part of learning to begin something new at the Emerging level, even if you are a strong student that it would be a normal part of the process to maybe be Emerging and Developing before you’re Proficient, for example.” For example, some assignments will touch on a competency, but not allow students to show enough understanding to earn a Proficient, so the maximum proficiency they could earn on that assignment was Emerging or Developing. Then, she explains, “when we either assess the same “I can…” statement again with something that's bigger or allows for more complexity, then maybe you move into Proficient and then I just add the shading, so the shading builds.”

Figure 6

Sample Assignment Self-assessment

Self Assessment and Reflection Name: _____

Shade in the cell that best represents where your learning is at so far...

Row #		Emerging (Em)	Developing (D)	Proficient (P)	Extending (Ex)
	"I can..."	*I'm just starting to get/do this*	*I can do this with some support. I need more practice & opportunities to show my learning.*	*I can mostly handle this by myself. My work shows I understand and could teach it in detail to another.*	*I can handle this by myself and I choose to innovate of my own accord.*
8	Recognize and understand how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts reflect a variety of purposes, audiences and messages.				NA
9	Select and apply **appropriate strategies** in a variety of contexts to guide inquiry, extend thinking, and comprehend texts.				NA
10	Think **critically, creatively, and reflectively** to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts.				NA
11	Examine how text features such as form, genre, narrative structure, **literary elements, new media techniques** and **devices** enhance and shape meaning and impact.				
14	Recognize and explore personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts. (see below)				NA
15	Appreciate and understand how language constructs and reflects personal, social, and cultural identities. (11)			NA	NA

Note. An excerpt from a student self-assessment corresponding to an assignment from one of Caroline's English classes. The column labelled "Row #" indicates the corresponding row in the competency chart and only rows that relate to the assignment are included on the self-assessment. Students shade in the self-assessment for each of the curricular competencies or "I can…" statements. For some "I can…" statements, Caroline has restricted the maximum proficiency that students can show on this particular assignment, as shown by blocking out the cells with "N/A." Reprinted with permission from Caroline Baldwin.

As she assesses, she uses the Google Sheets comment function on each competency chart to note what assignment resulted in that particular shading, and writes some feedback for the student. Caroline also allows students to self-assess by using the comment tool in Google Sheets to comment on the level of proficiency they believe they have shown and provide an explanation. However, she does not give her students editing abilities in their competency charts, so students

do not have the ability to add shading to their own charts. Her rationale for letting students comment but not edit is the worry that students will create major and erroneous modifications to their charts, and she will have difficulty keeping track of these changes. Additionally, each student's competency chart has a page where she can record any missing assignments. Overall, Caroline's competency charts create a place where students can see their progress, self-reflect on their learning, get teacher feedback, and see what work they need to complete.

When Graham begins a new course, he goes through a slide deck with his students that he calls "Competency Chart 101," which shows "the anatomy of the chart to students so they understand that we progress from Emerging to Proficient throughout the course and that you can't really hit Proficient right away, that most of us are going to be in Emerging and then move; it's very progressive." Since Graham teaches courses that are very visual, such as Drafting and Design, he also has his students create digital portfolios, which he gets them to hyperlink to their competency chart to provide evidence for their learning on different competencies. This "adds a three-dimensional aspect that gives a link to direct evidence of learning." He maintains the competency chart in collaboration with his students, having them self-assess by shading with green while he does his shading in yellow. Graham will review the student's shading and use it to aid his own assessment of the assignment or project, but ultimately the decision of the students' level of learning is up to his own professional judgement. Due to the hyperlinked aspects, Graham believes his competency charts give a more rounded, comprehensive view of a student's learning than if they did not include linked examples of work.

Both Graham and Caroline run a "reference chart" as their course progresses. The reference chart is a competency chart that shows the maximum amount of shading that a student could have. Students have access to this chart and can use it to get an idea of their learning and

growth in the course. Caroline uses the reference chart to help students understand their progress and provides the following example:

> If the reference chart only has shading in the Emerging column or the Developing column, that's because we've just begun our learning. We haven't done enough to show that we're Proficient or Extending. We haven't delved into these things in a deep enough way, so then what they can do is they can look at their chart and the reference chart and do a little comparison.

It is essential for students to compare their own charts to the reference chart, because even if a student has a lot of Emerging or Developing shading and may feel that they aren't doing well in the course, the reference chart could show students, teachers, and parents that the class has not yet been given opportunities to show deeper learning and show Proficient or Extending understandings yet.

In Caroline's math and chemistry classes, she uses a scaffolded assessment method that involves students in their assessment. When assessment time comes, Caroline has students choose which level of assessment they would like to attempt — Emerging, Developing, Proficient, or Extending. These pencil and paper assessments involve different levels of questions or differing levels of supports. For example, Caroline explains, "if you're going to choose the Emerging assessment I choose questions that will be more appropriate and that an Emerging learner could be successful with and then the Emerging learner sits with me and we do it together" whereas "if they choose to do a Developing assessment they will get same questions as the Emerging learners but there are hints on the paper and little guiding things like, "Oh, you can use your notes on this one or go to this page in the textbook"" If a student is successfully able to complete the assessment they choose, that is the level of proficiency she shades in their competency chart. Students can change their mind (for example, decide to complete the

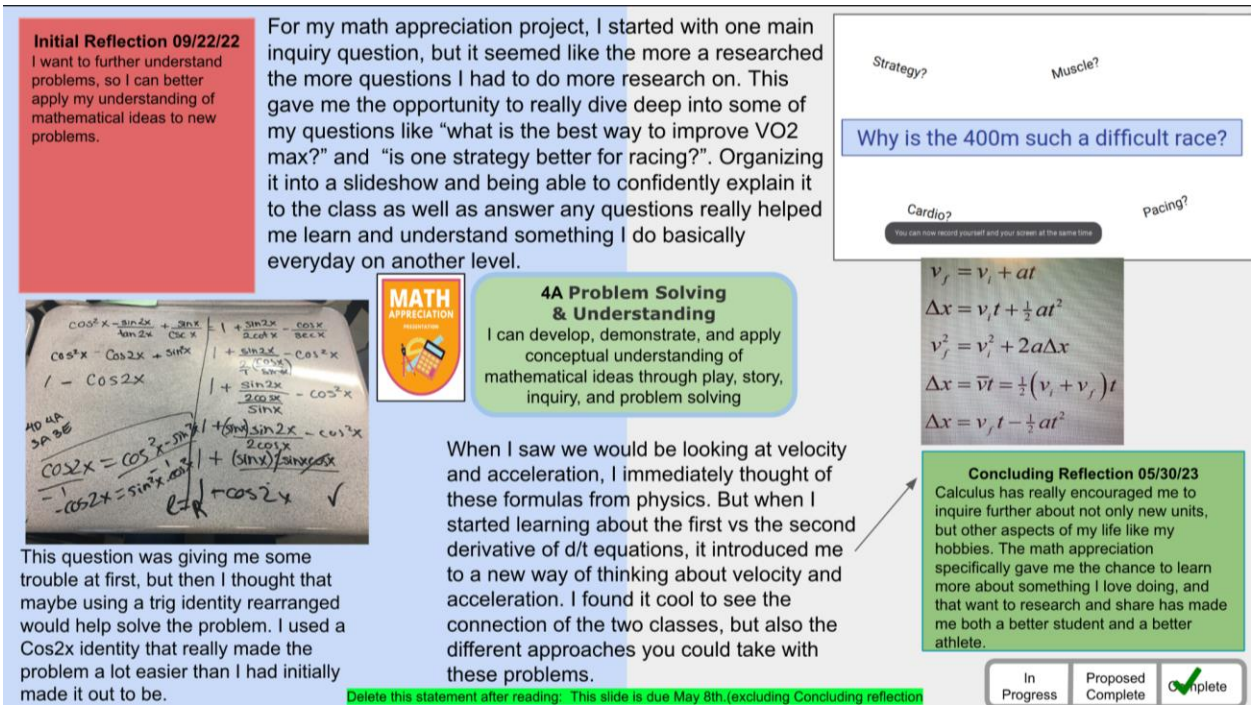
developing assessment if the proficient assessment is too difficult at that time) and challenge a more difficult assessment at a later time in the course.

The Digital Portfolio and Colour-Coded Gradebook of Tim.

Tim's assessment in his math classes is intricately interwoven with his practice, making it difficult to explain his assessment model in isolation. To provide context, Tim sees the curricular competencies as challenging to assess in a standardized way authentically and accurately. As a result, he teaches content and creates an environment that allows students opportunities to develop the curricular competencies as they learn. For example, Tim has his students do SCITs – scaffolded collaborative inquiry tasks – on a regular basis, which allows them to work on teamwork, problem solving, communication, and creative thinking. Tim differentiates his assessment into two pieces – a digital portfolio for the curricular competencies and a gradebook for content. The digital portfolio (see Figure 7) is a slide deck on Google Slides and contains one slide for each of the approximately 16 curricular competencies Tim assesses. As the course progresses, students complete their digital portfolio, writing reflections and linking photos or activities they completed that they believe provides evidence for their learning. Tim's rich lessons, projects, and activities give students opportunities to practice and reflect upon the curricular competencies, which is ultimately displayed in their digital portfolios. He asks them to bring "evidence about how they are demonstrating a curricular competency, which makes me feel so much more authentic than me with a little clipboard walking around the room and wondering if this kid is showing enough curiosity to say they're proficient," for example.

Figure 7

Student Sample Slide from a Digital Portfolio

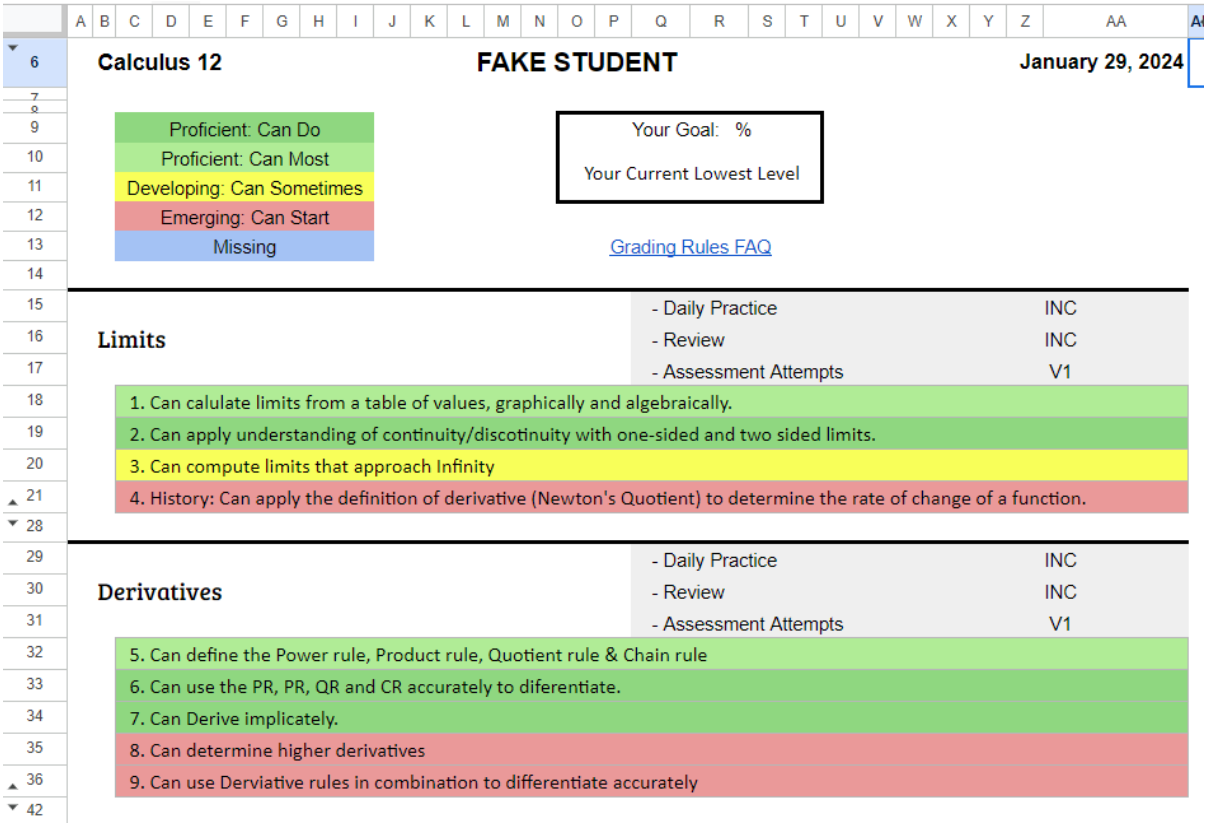


Note. One slide from a student-made digital portfolio. This slide focuses on the Curricular Competency that falls under Problem Solving and Understanding: "I can develop, demonstrate, and apply conceptual understanding of mathematical ideas through play, story, inquiry, and problem solving." This student performed an initial self-reflection and self-assessment, where she indicated she had an emerging (as indicated by the red colour of the textbox) understanding of the competency at the beginning of the course. She also provides pictorial and textual evidence that she gathers during the course supporting her development of this competency. Finally, she includes a concluding self-reflection and self-assessment, where she indicates that she has grown substantially, giving herself a proficient (as indicated by the green colour of the textbox) in this competency. Reprinted with permission from Tim Spray.

For content, Tim has broken his course up into learning objectives and his assessments largely take the form of traditional pencil and paper tests. However, when he marks the tests, he assesses the student's learning progress on each Learning Standard using the proficiency scale. Tim has eliminated numbers from his assessment model, and instead uses colours: dark and light green for Proficient, yellow for Developing, and red for Emerging. Each student has a Google Sheet gradebook – a "single print out with all the information from the [master] spreadsheet gradebook" that Tim fills in himself – and can see their strengths (greens), weaknesses (yellow and/or red, depending on the goals of the student), and their next steps (which learning objectives to continue working on) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Colour-coded Gradebook Example



Note. Portion of a mock student gradebook for Calculus 12. Gradebook includes the various units covered in the course and the numbers indicate the Learning Standards that are assessed. The colour of the box that each Learning Standard is contained within indicates the students' highest demonstration of that Learning Standard to date, with the colour-code described in the upper left corner of the gradebook. Reprinted with permission from Tim Spray.

Tim invites students to retest learning objectives, with more recent progress replacing older progress, so the gradebooks are live documents until the very end of the course. In summary, Tim describes his two-prong assessment as including a "gradebook, in which we have the content which are moments in time, and then we have the curricular competencies that spiral through the entire year."

The Assessment Cycles of Emily.

Emily's assessment in her classroom involves less infrastructure and also tightly weaves together her assessment with her teaching practice. In her French classes, her teaching style is based on a model called comprehensive input which she describes as being "focused on storytelling and really tapping into the natural pathways of the brain that want to acquire language" and emphasize "where is the child right now instead of where he was six weeks ago". Each unit focuses on a different story with associated vocabulary and language skills and concludes with an assessment cycle that focuses on the four different areas of learning acquisition – reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These assessments are the only things that "count" towards a student's overall progress and are assessed using the proficiency scale or using a basic 3-point numerical scale. Emily then has students self-reflect on their assessments and set goals for the assessment cycle in the next unit.

In her English classes, Emily tends to assess students using single point rubrics which make it clear if they are proficient or not; "you can either do this or you're not there yet," she explains. As in her French classes, very few assignments actually contribute to a student's overall progress, since learning on older assignments is replaced by learning on newer assignments. By the end of her course, students have amassed a body of work which provides evidence of their learning and growth. She collects a lot of this evidence as assignments submitted through Google Classroom.

The Use of Technology

All four participants utilized technology in their assessment models. While Emily tends just to use Google Classroom as a method of assigning and collecting work, communicating rubrics and feedback with students, and recording marks, the other three participants have invested considerable time and effort into creating online infrastructures to record and

communicate student progress. In addition to Google Classroom, Caroline, and Graham use Google Sheets to host their competency charts, and Graham uses Google Slides for the digital portfolios. Tim also has his students use Google Slides for their digital portfolio on the curricular competencies, as well as an elaborate combination of Google Sheets and Google Docs for his content gradebook. His master gradebook is a Google Sheet that includes all his students that he has programmed to autofill an individual Google Doc for each student. Every student has access to their individual Google Doc, which lists the Learning Standards and the colour that they have earned for each. As Tim fills out his master gradebook with colours, those colours appear on each student's Google Doc. While this takes time to set up, it saves him time in the long run because it prevents him from having to open each student's gradebook when recording progress, such as Caroline and Graham have to.

Understanding the Proficiency Scale

Implementing the Scale. All participants used the proficiency scale and its corresponding language in their classrooms and in their assessment. All participants expressed an understanding of learning as progressing through the levels of the proficiency scale (i.e., students generally start at the Emerging level, progress to Developing, progress to Proficient, and perhaps progress to Extending) and see reaching Proficient as the goal for all students. Emily reiterates that "the focus is on the growth into proficiency."

Because there was not a lot of explanation around the proficiency scale when it was first released, Tim says, "the ministry has now come out and explicitly said the goal is proficiency, not extending, which I'm happy to say that's how we took it."

All participants describe 'Proficient' by a similar definition. Graham describes Proficient as "as having the skills to be able to accomplish that task." Caroline sees Proficient as being the spot between students needing assistance to complete something but not needing to create

something new with their thinking or using their understanding in a novel way; essentially, students are Proficient when they can complete a task independently. Tim defines Proficient as "I can do this with a silly mistake here or there, but I can do this." Emily gave an example of how her French students understand the definition of Proficient: "I do need to put all my text into Google translate in order to write a paragraph in French, so I know I'm not Proficient."

For Caroline and Graham, the language of the proficiency scale is embedded in their competency charts. Emily uses the levels of proficiency to assess students and also has a student-created poster of the proficiency scale that she refers to on a regular basis. Tim has converted the levels of the proficiency scale to colours, which he uses to record student proficiencies in their gradebooks.

Participant Perspectives on Extending.

While the goal is for students to demonstrate a Proficient understanding of the content and curricular competencies laid out in the provincial curriculum, interestingly, the proficiency scale implemented for assessment includes a level beyond Proficient: Extending. Interestingly, Tim notes that of the four categories of the proficiency scale, three are verbs – Emerging, Developing, and Extending – while one – Proficient – is a noun. Emily suggests, "The goal is to be Proficient, like that's really where we're landing. It's 1% of people are in that Extending [category]."

For the most part, the participants had a clear understanding of what Extending was; as Tim explains: "You always know it when you see it." He goes on to describe an Extending student:

> They're not doing it for the grade. They're doing it for the love, the passion, for their curiosity, and in some ways slapping a grade, a higher level on to that, somehow ruins the spirit they've already found and like, you don't extend without a love interest or

> whatever. If you're studying for your mom, for your future, for your whatever, it's almost not extending. I want them to do it for themselves, so for me extending is absolutely a piece of feedback.

Graham echoes the idea that the Extending level is a way of "being able to honour when a student blows me away" or has "gone beyond what is demanded of [them] in this course." He doesn't consider it a bonus mark, but rather a "pride piece" that does not correspond to a numerical score or impact a student's overall standing in the course more than earning a 'Proficient' would.

Tim also noted that he found it challenging to create opportunities for students to show Extending understanding on a timed, paper and pencil assessment, such as a test. Where he saw Extending learning was on open-ended, creative projects.

End of Term Reporting Practices

At the time of data collection, the current reporting order mandated a percentage on the report card for grades 10 to 12 and a letter grade or percentage for grade 9. As a result, teachers who began implementing assessment that aligned with the philosophy of the new Reporting Order were faced with a unique and challenging problem: how do they convert proficiency scale data into a percentage or letter grade for midterm and final report cards?

Due to their collaboration, Caroline and Graham have a similar approach to using their competency charts to report marks in an informed way. Graham explains that "this chart doesn't really calibrate well with percentage grades" so at midterm time, students are asked to look at their own competency chart and compare it to the class's reference chart. Caroline explains, "I ask them to ballpark it and tell me if you think you're an A range, B range, C range and then the number that I put on their report card is a number that's midway in that range." For final report card time, Caroline says:

> I get them to go through a little bit more comprehensive look at their chart and back and forth between their chart and the reference chart and then again they make a little bit more nuanced decisions about what number fits them, but I don't let them choose every number between 0 and 100.

Instead, she gives them three possible percentages in each letter grade range. For both midterm and final report cards, Graham and Caroline have short conferences with students to ensure the student's self-assessment is backed with evidence and aligns with Graham and Caroline's professional judgement. Graham and Caroline both mentioned cases where students didn't feel that the pre-selected percentages accurately reflected their learning, and explained how, with dialogue, they and the students were able to settle on a number they all felt good about, showing that their reporting method is flexible, caters to the needs of the students, and involves students in the assessment process.

Tim also integrates his students into the assessment process. In collaboration with his department, he has developed a method for converting the colours in the gradebook into percentages. First of all, if a student has all green, they have shown proficiency in all learning objectives, so they fall in the 90-100% (mid to high A) range. A student with all dark green would be 100%, a student with all light green would be 90%, and a student with a mixture would be somewhere in between. Students with all greens and yellows would fall between 73-89% (B to low A). If a student has any red, they can get a maximum of 72%; this was implemented to incentivize students. Tim explains:

> We did that intentionally to play on the idea that most people would probably prefer a B than a C+ so the kid is literally going to go: "So all I have to do to get a B is [retest] that one outcome?" We're like: "Yup." They're like: "Okay, I'll do it."

Tim is very transparent about how the data of the gradebooks is converted into a percentage, and has his students self-assess before conferencing with them and deciding on the percentage that will go on their report card.

While the other participants have an established and rigorous method for converting proficiency scale data into a percentage, Emily opts for a method that relies on dialogue. She assesses her students' work in Google Classroom, and come report card time, they use their collection of work like a portfolio. Together, they sit down, look at the learning they showed throughout the term or semester, and discuss the goals the student set for themselves. Emily and the student each express what percentage they think the student has earned and decide on what percentage will go on their report card together.

Some commonalities can be noted between the methods all participants use. First of all, each of them, to some degree, relies on dialogue between teacher and student to land on a final percentage or letter grade. In the same vein, all participants involve students in the assessment process by having the students self-assess themselves and then invite them to be part of the discussion when it comes to what number actually appears on their report card. All participants also exclusively use evidence of student learning to come up with their percentage, meaning that their students' marks reflect the learning they have demonstrated throughout the course. Additionally, all participants noted that students were usually fairly good at self-assessing. Though some participants told anecdotes of students being way off, these students seemed to be the anomalies because participants suggested that the vast majority of their students come up with a percentage that closely aligns with the assessment of the teacher. Finally, Emily and Tim both let students take a leadership role in writing report card comments, with Emily writing them collaboratively with the student while they conference and Tim having students write a portion and him write a portion. As he puts it, "it's hard to beat what they've written."

The Why: What Drives the Participants' Assessment Practices

Making large changes to assessment practice is something that requires considerable time and effort. As a result, teachers who overhaul their assessment practices should possess a strong rationale as to why they want to or need to make the change. During the interviews, while not asked explicitly, participants revealed key aspects of their assessment philosophy, their beliefs on the purpose of assessment, and what motivated them to change their assessment.

Assessment Philosophy

While not asked directly about it, all participants discussed their philosophy and beliefs around the best practices of assessment. Two major and several minor categories emerged.

Learning is a Process. All participants talked about learning as an ongoing process with students beginning and progressing to different points of understanding. Traditional assessment practices often viewed all students starting from very little understanding at the beginning of a unit, for example, then they were expected to progress and learn throughout the unit. Then, their learning was summatively assessed at the end of the unit. Whatever learning the student achieved and was able to demonstrate by the end of the unit was the end of the learning, because the teacher moved on to the next topic. Seeing learning as an ongoing process requires teachers to adjust their assessment practice, as traditional assessment is incapable of reflecting the fact that students are always learning and progressing. As Emily asks herself, "What about tomorrow?" referring to the fact that a student's learning can progress even after an assessment or particular unit is completed. The new reporting order and the provincial proficiency scale strongly support this type of assessment, with even the wording of the proficiency scale —from Emerging to Developing to Proficient to Extending — lending itself well to discussing learning as an ongoing process.

Tim frames it as follows: “The goal is to assess growth, assess progress.” He acknowledges that all students begin at different starting points, so it’s important for students to be assessed individually based on their progress. Tim uses his digital portfolios as a way for students to self-reflect and provide evidence of their learning over time. He also believes that learning takes a considerable amount of time and that all skills need to be taught and practiced. For example, Tim knows that if he wants his students to be good at self-reflecting and self-assessing, he needs to scaffold how to do this and provide them regular opportunities to practice.

Caroline agrees with Tim that “learning happens over time” and the design of the competency charts, which see shading progress from Emerging to Extending, lets students visualize this process. Graham tells all his students “we progress from Emerging to Proficient throughout the course and that you can't really hit Proficient right away; most of us are going to be in Emerging and then move. It’s very progressive in terms of the movement.” By concurrently running a reference chart, Caroline and Graham’s students can compare the shading on their own charts to the “maximum” amount of shading that they could currently have in the course. Caroline says this allows students, especially anxious students, to see that “we haven't done enough to show that we're Proficient or Extending,” and also allows students to see their learning grow by watching the shading on their chart increase. It is the goal of both Caroline and Graham for all their students to have their whole competency charts shaded in by the end of their courses.

Emily likes the new reporting order because it emphasizes “making sure that the assessment was looking at the child as recently as possible and really tracking their learning in that moment.” This idea that learning is ongoing means that older assessments are replaced with more recent pieces of evidence of learning. Interestingly, this sometimes results in only a handful of pieces of student work actually contributing to an overall grade. Emily believes that giving

students multiple opportunities to make mistakes and refine their learning is essential. She uses regular goal setting to help her students focus on their next steps of learning.

Student Involvement. While participants didn't cite this explicitly, through their explanations of their assessment practices, they made it clear that involving students in the assessment process was something they all valued. This second major theme will be explored in depth in the next section "Student-Focused Assessment."

Other Driving Beliefs.

In addition to the two main themes that all participants shared in their philosophy, some other aspects emerged, with two or more participants sharing these beliefs. First of all, they believed that student assessment should be evidence-based as a way to maintain authenticity in assessment. Tim's digital portfolio of the curricular competencies and Graham's competency chart to which students linked samples of their work are two examples of the participants using evidence of learning directly to assess a student's learning. Secondly, they believed that transparency was important. Their assessment models – such as the coloured coded gradebook or the shaded competency charts – allowed students a clear picture of where they were in their learning. Finally, they believe that work habits need to be assessed and reported on separately from learning, as echoed by the Ministry's Reporting Order. As Caroline says, "Kids come in with quite a muddy picture of those two things being the same," which needs to be clearly communicated to students.

What is the Goal of Assessment?

Each participant has a slightly different belief of the ultimate goal of assessment. Graham and Caroline share this understanding, likely from collaborating on their assessment in the past. They both see the goal for their students to be to learn everything, or to show proficiency on every curricular competency they assess. Both of them express that having every student be

Proficient in everything would make them very happy. Caroline says, “If I could have every student walk out at the end of a course with all of that shading, I would really feel proud” and Graham says, “My goal is actually that you [students] would all get 100 percent, meaning that you all achieved what I am setting out to do which is to help you be proficient in these skills.” Caroline used an analogy where she compared learning to possessing jellybeans. She says it's not about ““I only have this many jelly beans to give out.” It's really “I'd like to give you as many jelly beans as I possibly could to every single kid. I have an infinite number of jelly beans. Please come and help yourself.””

Emily’s goal for her assessment is that it encourages students to continue learning. She wants her assessment to be motivating, positive, and empowering to the student. She says that instead of her students feeling overwhelmed by having to write an assessment, she wants her students to feel interested and capable when thinking about the assessment matters, a goal that she herself describes as “lofty.”

While Tim also encourages students to continue learning and would like his students to show proficiency or earn all dark greens on all the Learning Standards, he believes that the goal of assessment is also to aid the student in their learning. His assessment model makes it clear what the student’s strengths and weaknesses are so they always know where they’re at in their learning. It also makes it clear to them what their next steps are, as they can continue learning and retest the learning objectives on which they got Emerging/red and Developing/yellow. His belief is that assessment should be like a road map, showing students where they’ve come from, where they’re at, and where they can go next.

Participant Motivators

I consider motivators to be factors that have contributed to why the participants moved from their old model of assessment to the framework that aligns with the new Reporting Order.

These motivators can be split into two broad categories: negative reasons to move away from their old model of assessment and positive reasons to move towards new assessment.

Negatives of the Old Framework. Participants noted limitations of the old assessment framework that didn't align with the views of the new curriculum. Graham simply started making the switch when the curriculum began changing, seeing the writing on the wall and knowing that the assessment framework would follow suit. Emily felt that traditional grading didn't account for students' ability to grow and improve which did not conform to the idea of learning as a process. Tim doesn't "want to be an obstacle in anyone's learning," and believes that traditional grading was just that. Caroline was disappointed in how little attention her students often paid to her written feedback, opting instead to focus on the number or percentage. Making the change "makes the feedback more meaningful in a way or not get passed over," in Caroline's opinion.

Additionally, Caroline says, "I have been working on assessment my whole career now and trying to find the better way" because she didn't think traditional assessment reflected what is seen in the world. She was inspired by her previous career as a nurse, during which she realized that assessing or grading things with percentages was rarely used or useful once one had left school. She remembers writing anecdotally about her patients or occasionally using a scale to describe her patients' conditions, so when she started teaching, she felt uncomfortable having to assign numerical grades to student work. Caroline began making changes to her assessment practice after teaching for several years, citing the confidence of experience as what allowed her to make the next steps.

Positives of the New Framework.

Participants all indicated positive motivators that drove them towards changing their assessment models. Some were drawn to it for curricular reasons. Emily changed her teaching

style to focus on something called comprehensible input and changing her assessment to better suit her new teaching style just made sense. Tim fell in love with the curricular competencies when he first read them, realizing that, as a math teacher, while his students may not use every math concept he teaches them, they will certainly use and apply the curricular competencies to other aspects of their adolescent and adult life. Additionally, in this technological world where most math problems can be solved by a computer, he likes that the curricular competencies are relevant and useful skills for his students to have. Emily also likes how the new assessment framework allows for so much focus on the curriculum. Sometimes she prints the curricular competencies and shows them to her students, emphasizing that those are what she is assessing, not things like handing work in on time or coming to class on time.

The participants were also motivated by the need they saw from their students. Tim has changed his teaching and assessment practice a lot over his career, reflecting on everything from the physical layout of his classroom to his gradebook. He prides himself on his "student-informed practice," and keeps his learners at the center of all his decision making. He also regularly asks students to evaluate his teaching and listens closely to the feedback he gets. He says, "I listen. I'm paying attention and I'm looking at it and I'm also looking out at the world and I'm seeing how these connect." Caroline likes that her assessment model provides flexibility, meaning she can assess students through conversation or place more emphasis on certain competencies. She sees her assessment as beneficial for all her students, but especially her at-risk learners. As she says:

> I tend to also think about my at-risk learners more than the kids who are doing really well. They don't really need me in the same way that the at-risk learners do and I think they benefit from the structures, but they would probably do okay in whatever structure they're in.

Her assessment model allows her the flexibility to meet the needs of all her students. Emily and Graham think a lot about how their students perceive and emotionally respond to assessment, wanting to make the assessment process positive on student mental health and leave their students feeling motivated and encouraged.

Caroline and Graham also note that the new assessment framework more easily incorporates indigenous learning philosophies. For example, Caroline likes that her competency charts allow her to accept many forms of evidence, such as conversation, as learning, something that aligns with indigenous teaching and learning. Caroline was also motivated to keep her practice current and progressive because she enjoyed mentoring teacher candidates when she had the opportunity; “Oh, I'm not going to teach them an old way,” she emphasized.

The Importance of Teacher Reflection

Throughout the interviews, it became very clear that teacher reflection was an essential part of developing not only a functional, authentic assessment model, but also a well-contemplated assessment philosophy. It was only through continual reflection on their practice that the participants were able to progress to the point they are at today.

Graham talked a lot about how he conceptualized his courses. Referring to creating his competency charts, he says, “A big part of that is conceptualizing what a competency is in the course and how you can chart that.” It required him to think about the curricular competencies and his existing assignments, activities, and assessments and meld them together in a comprehensive way. Of this process, he notes, “That's a very difficult thing to do to sit down and think about the whole course and how you know for each competency are there things that students can do to show their level of proficiency.” He calls this process “going to the woodshed,” a way of describing the big picture thinking and reflecting required to really overhaul the assessment in his courses.

Emily expressed a lot of wonder and openness around her assessment practice, being transparent about it continuing to evolve. She questioned a lot of aspects of assessment, from the assessment she uses in her classroom, to how she assesses the different subjects she teaches, to her role in the implementation of the Reporting Order in September 2023. She also doesn't claim to have all the answers but continues to progress and make small changes as she sees fit. She regularly asks herself questions like "Am I assessing what the curriculum really says?" to keep her assessment focused on the curriculum and student learning.

Tim talked about reflecting on two major aspects of his practice. First, he reflected on how to best set up his classroom and structure his classes to provide the best learning opportunities for his students. For example, after going through several trial layouts, he now has his desks positioned in groups of 4 to best suit all the group work he does with students. Secondly, he reflected upon what it is best to teach his students and how best to assess that. He decided that he values the curricular competencies because of the transferability of the skills and has realized that they are very difficult to assess accurately. He recalls his thoughts on how to assess the curricular competencies: "How do we standardize that? And so when I first started I'm like, "I don't know," but I know that I want to make sure that they can grow in this regardless of whether I can accurately assess them." From this realization, he developed his digital portfolio, which asks students to set goals, reflect, and provide evidence for how they have progressed within the curricular competencies' framework.

Caroline has put a lot of thought into her competency charts and how to best serve her students. A lot of her reflections have led to minor changes to the charts; for example, her time teaching middle school resulted in her modifying the curricular competencies to "I can…" statements to make the curricular language more student friendly. Caroline also thinks a lot about how her assessment model serves all of her students. She thinks of her at-risk students, and uses

scaffolded assessments to empower all her students, regardless of their academic abilities. She also talked about her interest in getting feedback from colleagues and the district Indigenous Education Department to see if others could help her improve her competency charts. She says, "I'd be curious to hear from other people who like the chart: How do you feel about using it, like can you maneuver around it?" Caroline would be happy to share her charts with other people in the district, but through reflection, recognizes that it might not work for other people, or other people need to make changes to it to suit their own practice.

All participants also showed their reflective capacity by describing their goals and next steps they want to take with their assessment models. For example, Graham visualizes his competency charts one day becoming a "circular chart instead of the grid system, taking inspiration from medicine wheels and indigenous ways of thinking," though he's not yet sure how he'll actually achieve this, because his current computer skills don't support the building of something so complex. Emily plans to continue working on how she talks about the proficiency scale with her students so her students understand the scale, how it relates to the curriculum, and how to authentically self-assess. She also has plans to introduce a new piece of technology that will help her facilitate portfolio assessment in her classrooms. Tim was planning to teach Math 9 in the upcoming school year, so was planning to do a lot of work around creating appropriate SCITs and explicitly teaching students the skills of self-reflection and self-assessment. Caroline is working towards giving her students more autonomy with shading their own competency charts and is always looking for others to give her feedback to continue to improve her competency charts.

How Teachers Use Their Professional Judgement

Professional judgement plays a role in all forms of assessment, whether it be traditional percentage-based grading or assessing with a proficiency scale. Tim points out:

> With 30 math teachers, I could give them a test written by a student. I've already marked it with the questions right or wrong, but then I say “What mark would you give this?” but I didn't say what any of these questions are worth and we’d see a 30% spread of data.

This suggests that assessment is subjective and relies on teachers to use their professional judgement to make decisions. Tim and Caroline both talk about pioneering their classroom models of assessment, which required both of them to make decisions. For example, Caroline referred to curriculum documents and decided the best way to organize and combine the information into her competency charts. Tim and his department used their judgements to make decisions about how to interpret their colour-coded gradebooks in a somewhat standardized way. Without prescriptive direction from the BCMECC, any form of classroom assessment that reflects the values of the new reporting order is going to involve the professional judgement of the classroom teachers who developed it.

All participants combined their professional judgement with the thoughts and opinions of their students when it came to determining midterm and final report card marks, by basing the marks on the evidence of learning that students produced – either by consulting a portfolio, competency chart, or colour-coded gradebook. Caroline believes that professional judgement and confidence go hand in hand. She reports that her experience as a teacher gave her the confidence in her own professional judgement, resulting in her making the changes to her classroom assessment.

Tim and Emily both appreciate the opportunity to utilize professional judgement with their assessment that the new reporting order allows. Emily likes that she can be responsive to her students, both in what she teaches and how she focuses her assessment. Tim believes that “to some degree the proficiency scales themselves are better and we can do more with them,” though

cautions that we always need to be aware that assessment is “based on something and that something can change, so everything can change.”

Student-Focused Assessment

All participants’ classroom assessment models show evidence of being designed with students and student success at its core. This was an aspect of the participants’ teaching and assessment philosophy that they all strongly valued, which also aligns well with BC’s redesigned curriculum that is “learner-centred” (BCME, n.d.-b) and strives to create “citizens who are competent thinkers and communicators, and who are personally and socially competent in all areas of their lives” (BCME, n.d.-b).

The Role of the Student

This section will explore the ways in which the participants describe their students’ role in assessment. The K-12 Student Reporting Order Policy (2023b) values student involvement in their learning and assessment, emphasizing that students should “take part in meaningful conversations that help them develop responsibility for engaging deeply with their learning” (p. 6). It also suggests that “giving students a voice in their learning … promotes student responsibility for their learning; and helps foster a lifelong-learning mindset” (BCMECC, 2023b, p. 7)

Students Active in Assessment and Self-Assessment.

The major theme that emerged from the data is that all participants involve their students in their own assessment. As Tim says, students “need to be involved in every step along the way – no surprises”. One of the main ways that students participate in their own assessment is through self-assessment.

For Graham and Caroline, who use competency charts, students actively assess themselves in their own charts. Graham allows his students to shade cells in their own colour and

comment or hyperlink evidence to support their self-assessment, while Caroline has her students comment through their self-assessments. Both teachers then look at the evidence their students have provided, compare it to the students' shading, and then use that information to shade the chart themselves. Graham considers this method "teamwork" with the students.

Additionally, all teachers interviewed collaborate with their students when it comes to midterm and final report card marks. Tim says he only feels "comfortable" with putting a percentage on the report card because his students choose their final mark. Tim and Emily both involve their students in the report card comment writing process as well. Emily likes this because she's able to "include stuff that is meaningful to them that they've been working on and that I obviously see demonstrated," which makes report card comments personal and special to her students. Tim believes that "lots of times it's hard to beat what they've written," which supports the idea that his students are aware of their own learning and progress by being active in all aspects of their education (see Figure 9).

Tim's curricular competency digital portfolios provide an exceptional opportunity for students to be active in their own assessment. Starting with an initial self-assessment, students must think critically about the work they do in class and connect it to the curricular competencies. Then, throughout the year, students fill their portfolios with text, image, and video evidence of their progress. Students even submit Google forms online to Tim when they want portions of their digital portfolio to be assessed by Tim, another example of students taking an active role in their assessment.

Student Voice.

I characterize "student voice" as having two components. One, student voice is the opportunity to make choices, be active, and advocate for themselves in their own education. All examples from the previous section "Students Active in Assessment and Self- Assessment" fall

under this definition. Two, in a more literal sense, student voice is involving students in dialogue around their own learning and assessment.

Figure 9

Sample of Report Card Comment Written by Student

Student Reflection:

1. I could not list all the skills I have learned this year, because if I did, it would take up the entire page. Some highlights, though, for me were being able to critically think, to explore multiple avenues when solving problems, to think more creatively when approaching a problem that needs to be solved, and remaining positive whilst doing so.
2. This year, I am most proud of my Desmos art piece. At the time, when I had created it, I did not think it was very special, but as the year has progressed, I have found that the complexity of the "code" that I used to make it was extending far past what was expected of me at the time. For that, I am quite happy with myself.
3. In the future, I hope to develop more of the First People's worldviews into my learning. I do not know how this will happen, but I intend to be as cognizant as possible in my efforts to attain a higher level of understanding of their teachings.
4. I hope I can be at 99% in M12, and 97% in C12. There are quite a few silly mistakes in C12, which is why I think 97% is fair, and there are significantly less in M12, so I believe it ought to be higher.

Note. Final report card comments written by a Mathematics 12 (M12) and Calculus 12 (C12) student. Student was prompted to reflect on what they had learned, what they were proud of, and an area of future improvement, as well as determine the percentages that would appear on their report card. Reprinted with permission from Tim Spray.

Graham was very aware of the limitations our education system creates in assessment, mainly how the large number of students that teachers are responsible for assessing prevents ideal assessment – which he believes is rooted in dialogue – from being feasible. He uses his competency charts as a tool to help him have "digital conversations" with students, by encouraging them to comment and by replying to their comments. He also draws inspiration from indigenous traditional ways of knowing, which involves a lot of conversation and feedback from a teacher or elder to a learner. Tim also uses technology to give his students voice in his

classroom. Through the digital portfolio, he communicates with his students about the curricular competencies and engages in a digital conversation with them about their progress.

Emily sees the proficiency scale and the new reporting order as a positive driver of dialogue in her classroom. Not only does she talk about the proficiency scale and the definitions of the proficiencies with her students she believes that assessing with a proficiency scale allows for so much more dialogue than other methods of assessment, such as assigning a percentage, letter grade or even colour which "hinders a conversation." The proficiency scale, she believes, is a large "part of the whole listening and conversation" aspect of learning and assessment, something that might be intimidating for other teachers. She acknowledges that the new reporting order requires teachers to "have a pretty specific relationship with kids, like friendly relationships" that many teachers may not be prepared to have. Ultimately, Emily is strongly in favour of the new reporting order and the opportunities it presents for dialogue and student involvement in their own education.

Caroline offers her math and chemistry students scaffolded assessment opportunities where students proactively select which assessment they think they would be most successful with – Emerging, Developing, Proficient, or Extending. This gives students the power to choose their assessment level, and students are also able to attempt different levels of assessment once taking the first assessment, giving students flexibility in their choices. Like the other participants, dialogue plays an important role for Caroline in determining midterm and final marks since they are decided collaboratively with students in one-on-one conferences.

Student Self-Reflection and Goal Setting.

Student self-reflection in the classroom was highly valued by the interview participants and strongly intertwined with their assessment models. For Caroline and Graham, self-reflection is needed for students to self-assess in their competency charts and to compare their own

competency charts to the reference chart when deciding on their midterm and final mark in the course. Caroline often has her students reflect on something they're proud of and something they struggled with on assignments they complete. Her scaffolded assessments in chemistry and math also require students to reflect on their own understanding of course material when choosing which assessment to attempt. Even as they write the assessment, if they reflect and decide the assessment is not the right level for them, they are able to lean on these reflections to choose the assessment best suited to their understanding. Emily and Tim have their students use their self-reflection abilities to help them write their report card comments.

Tim is a believer in integrating self-reflection on learning into his lessons on a regular basis, as this helps students become more aware of their own learning. He knows that self-reflection is something that he needs to teach explicitly, just like all academic skills, so will teach his students what activities develop which skills and teach them ways of voicing these reflections by using sentence stems and repetitive practice. Tim has seen benefits from integrating student self-reflection in his classroom, namely that his students are more aware of their progress. When asked to compare their progress in the curricular competencies, he saw a "20 to 40 percent" increase in their perceived progress in his class compared to in past years. While polling his students does not definitively conclude that they progressed more in the curricular competencies, what it does suggest is that his students are more aware that they have been working on and building these skills. As he says, what is most important is that we "make sure that we are developing and assessing the curricular competencies and giving kiddos a chance to, at the very least, recognize their own growth." Especially since students all start from different places when it comes to the curricular competencies, it is important that students are aware of where they start and aware of their progress for them to understand how far they have come.

Emily closely ties student self-reflection with goal setting. After each of her assessment cycles, she has her students look at their assessment and set a realistic goal for the next cycle — something perhaps relating to verb conjugation or another grammatical concept they struggled with on the present assessment. She then gets her students to use their goal to drive their own learning and has them reflect on their progress after the next assessment cycle as well. While Emily sets learning goals for all her students through her units and lessons, she also thinks it's important to ask, "Are they meeting their goals?" when it comes to assessment, because "they set their own goal" that guides the next steps in their learning. Using a portfolio, such as Emily, Tim, and Graham do, allows the participants to not only have their students practice self-reflection but also record their goals.

The Role of Compassion and Empathy

Based on their interviews, it became clear that all participants thought of teaching and learning through a very student-centric lens, reflecting how their teaching impacts students' emotions. First and foremost, it became apparent that the participants all genuinely cared about how their teaching and assessment made their students feel. For example, Graham and Caroline have put in a lot of thought and effort trying to make their competency charts more student friendly, and Graham has come to appreciate how the chart uses affirmative language, describing student proficiency based on what they can do, not what they cannot do. Emily talked a lot about wanting her students to feel positive about assessment and to not have assessment be "this painful, uncomfortable experience." She often put herself in her students' shoes while thinking about the negative impact of traditional grading; she recognized that people feel ownership over marks they are given, and considered the emotional impact this can have on students if their mark is poor. She believes that acknowledging student emotions in her classroom does not make her "soft" or make her course "easy" like perhaps some other teachers believe.

Tim, Emily, and Caroline all discussed the benefits of lowering the stakes of assessments on student mental health. Emily and Caroline talk about how lower stakes assessments, such as scaffolded assessments or creating an assessment where “nobody fails,” encourage students to take risks and chances that they might not otherwise feel comfortable doing. Having that safety net gives students the confidence to try. Tim lowers the stakes of his assessments by encouraging retests and allowing retest proficiencies to replace the old ones. He thinks that giving students an incentive to learn material they didn't master the first time is so important: “They're so busy so why would they go back and relearn something if they're not gonna be acknowledged in any way?” He also lowers the stakes of his assessments by giving his students many opportunities to practice their skills in class ahead of time. He takes steps to make his assessments safer to dispel “this sense of panic and stress that students feel” around tests.

Additionally, participants use assessment methods in their classrooms that are very transparent. For example, students always have access to their competency chart in Caroline and Graham’s classes and always have access to their colour-coded gradebook in Tim’s classes. This transparency means that students always have the opportunity to know where they are at in their learning, and can infer what their next steps can be if they are unhappy with their current progress. Emily likes this because it prevents assessment from being “a guessing game” where students must wonder, “Where am I going to land?” This gives students a sense of security and self-confidence, taking away the stress that comes with uncertainty.

Finally, the participants also talked about valuing their students. For example, Caroline believes that the dialogue around final mark decisions greatly values the input of her students by giving them a say in the process. She also recognizes that how feedback is given to students affects students’ self-worth, and that it’s important for teachers to have relationships with students before giving critical feedback, because regardless of student performance, it’s

"important to make a person feel validated." Tim knows that each of his students start from a different point when it comes to the curricular competencies, so he uses self-reflection and his digital portfolios to value each students' individual growth in those areas. As he says, "we have to know that for some people, walking into math class is already a huge risk," so it's unfair to assess each of his students on the same scale; instead, his digital portfolios highlight student growth, so that even if not every student demonstrates the curricular competencies to the same extent, value is placed on the progress the student made. Even the way Tim teaches his class shows he is cognizant of the value he places on his students. By creating student-led scaffolded activities, students are able to piece together a complex concept themselves (with any assistance they need, of course), developing a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence in the process. He also provides his students with project opportunities where students can extend their learning; this is important because it gives students a chance to pursue and show off their passion for learning, making students more invested in their own education and instilling the values of lifelong learners.

The Benefits of the New Assessment Framework

Benefits to Students

Consistently, participants reported many benefits with the assessment models implemented in their classrooms. It is worth noting that the majority of the benefits identified directly benefit students. This speaks to the student-centred attitude towards teaching and assessing that the participants shared. Some of the benefits the participants saw in their assessment practices directly aided students with the educational goals.

Focus on Learning.

The benefit most reiterated was that it encourages a strong focus on learning. Notably, Caroline states that "it helps move students away from the focus on what their number is" on an

assessment and instead “pushes them to read feedback.” This benefits the students by engaging them in their own learning and encouraging them to see assessment as a checking in point rather than an endpoint. Caroline says that removing the percentage or letter grade to emphasize feedback helps to “make that a part of their thinking about their own learning as opposed to “I got a whatever [percentage or letter grade].””

There were also some ways that their assessment models allowed teachers to focus more on student learning. First of all, an assessment model where students value feedback resultantly values the time and effort teachers spend writing feedback. Since no teacher reported that the assessment model they use in their classroom saves them time when compared to a traditional assessment model, it is important for teachers to know that the time put into a new way of assessing is beneficial in other ways. Additionally, teachers noted that their new assessment model reduced the amount of “tracking” they needed to do. This means that they no longer spent a significant amount of time getting students to make up quizzes or hand in missing assignments, which Emily refers to as “all of the little piddly pieces.” This, in exchange, allows teachers to spend more time on the more important aspects of teaching. Emily says, “I would rather be putting my efforts into creating new content for the kids that’s exciting and gets them excited about the language versus the tracking pieces.”

Student Involvement in Assessment.

Several teachers mentioned that their assessment model allowed students to be very active in their own assessment. For example, Tim says that his students are involved in their own assessment “every step of the way,” including writing their own report card comments. He believes that having kids self-reflecting on what and why they’re learning is a great step towards them becoming lifelong learners. Caroline’s scaffolded assessments allow students to take responsibility for understanding their own learning by letting them self-reflect and choose what

level of assessment they are going to attempt. Both previous examples also show that student self-reflection is an important skill that students are developing.

Most participants also identified that dialogue with students around assessment happened regularly in their classrooms. Caroline and Tim, for example, have students self-assess themselves around report card time and then conference with them to determine what percentage went on their report cards. Emily believes the new Reporting Order "opens up the dialogue" with students about their learning, saying that the proficiency scale allows for more conversation than a number on an assessment, which students view as considerably more final and concrete.

Students also show improvement in areas that matter. Tim polls his students at the beginning and end of his course about how much progress they've made in the core competencies, such as communication. He finds that when students enter his course, 39% of students report improving in communication in their previous year, but 96% of students report that they have improved in communication by the end of his course. While this is a small and informal poll, Tim says, "I know they're improving, they know they're improving: mission accomplished." Tim also places a lot of focus on teaching and assessing skills that allows students to prepare for life outside of high school. Focusing on transferable skills that are sought after by future employers empowers students and creates context and purpose for the topics learned in class. Emily strongly believes that her assessment model encourages and creates the skills for lifelong learning.

Emotional Benefits.

Many of the benefits related to the emotional impact of assessment on students. For example, both Emily and Caroline were proud of the fact that their assessment was student friendly. As a result of her time teaching middle school, Caroline rewrote her learning outcomes in "I can…" statements to ensure students can clearly understand what they are being assessed

on. Emily chooses to use single point rubrics when assessing because she feels they make it easier for students to visualize where they are. “You can either do this or you’re not there yet,” Emily explains, and the single point rubrics make this very clear to students.

Restructuring assessment to reduce the fear of failure on assessments was a common theme. Emily structures her assessments so they are “lower stakes,” something that encourages her students to be willing to take risks. In Caroline’s math and chemistry classes, she offers scaffolded assessments where students can choose whether they attempt the Emerging, Developing, Proficient, or Extending assessment. By giving students this choice, it reduces students experiencing “that horrible feeling of looking at a question on a test and not knowing how to do it” and reinforces the idea that “you might struggle with something, [or] you might not know how to do something but that doesn’t mean that that’s a failure.” Giving students safer opportunities to show their learning makes learners more willing to take risks and try. Caroline also sees her competency chart as a way to assess students in untraditional formats. For example, Caroline is able to have a conversation with a student and use that as the evidence of the student’s learning. Especially for at-risk learners and learners who struggle with traditional paper and pencil tests, this shows them that “it doesn't always just have to be that they've shown their learning in those traditional ways” and prevents them from being penalised despite knowing the material.

Additionally, the participants saw their assessment models as very affirmative and positive, rather than punitive and negative. Graham says that instead of describing and defining his competencies based on deficiencies, “it’s very much “What can you do?”” Teachers also reported that it allowed assessment to be part of an active learning process framed in a positive light that inspired curiosity and future learning. Emily’s goal is for her students “to leave [her] classroom more curious about the assessment matter” rather than feeling drained or stressed by

the role of assessment in their learning. Emily recognizes the negative role of rating and ranking on students' self-esteem and self-worth. Instead, she has lofty goals for how assessment is perceived in her classroom: "I want the feeling of their assessment and their relationship with that assessment to feel like "Oh, I can do these things!" or "I was able to back in high school and I know I could do them again.""

Even just having an assessment model that allows students to see their own progress paints assessment in a more positive light. For example, students being able to see their learning grow as they shade in their competency chart or see that older marks get replaced with more recent marks allows students to feel like they are capable of progress. Three out of the four participants identified that their assessment model helps students understand where they are at with regards to their learning. Graham has found that using the proficiency scale has given students a clearer picture of their progress: "I've had a lot of success, I think, with it in terms of students knowing where they're at in the course and also where they're going […] also it's a place to have what I would call recursive feedback for them to make the next steps." Tim's colour-coded gradebook also gives students a quick and clear snapshot of where they are in the course because, as he says, "we clearly know what their strengths are because they're green; we know what the weaknesses are because they're red or yellow depending on what the student's goals are, and then we clearly know what their next steps are." In both previous examples, students are able to see their weaknesses – either as "Emerging" or as the colours yellow and red – but they are presented positively as a way to provide direction as to where to continue their learning.

Benefits to Teachers

Regardless of challenges and concerns, participants all believed that the new reporting order had benefits to their teaching practice. For example, Tim and Graham both referred to their assessment models as more "authentic" than traditional grading, which they saw as significant

since assessing is such an important aspect of the role of educators. Tim also saw the implementation of the provincial proficiency scale as "a great step forward" and one that is "worth pursuing" further. He believes that proficiency scales allow teachers to do more with their assessment, giving them some flexibility to meet the needs of the unique learners in their classrooms. Additionally, Emily and Caroline see the opportunity for dialogue and collaboration with students as a great way to build relationships with their learners. Caroline gives a lot of power to her students with regards to trusting their self-assessment, and she believes extending this trust benefits her relationships with her students.

Most notably, the participants reported that the assessment laid out in the reporting order calls upon teachers to really think about their own assessment practices. As Emily explains:

> I think it also invites us to think about assessment much more often than when we have. I think typically it's been like, "Back when I started in 2011 it was: short story unit: 30%, Shakespeare: 30%." Right? That's the way it's been. But with this model, it's much more like "What am I responding to?"

This reflective thinking allows teachers to be critical of their own assessment practice in a way that fosters improvement. Emily acknowledges that this positive aspect is not without challenges for teachers: "It's different, it's new, it's scary, but I think it invites creativity in a way that's really good for our professional development." Additionally, it makes teachers question the traditional role of assessment on the future of their students. Emily suggests that "we need to be responsible for so many more lenses of learning, not just the one dimensional "go to university"" and that teachers should not base their understandings of being a "good" teacher on one that simply gets students into post-secondary institutions.

Finally, the teachers who have created gradebooks or competency charts like the fact that they are an all-in-one way to communicate progress with their students. Not only does it allow

students to be able to always monitor their assessed learning since they are live, online documents, Graham and Caroline use their competency charts as a way to communicate with students. Graham calls his competency charts a “portal into their evidence” because he gets his students to hyperlink some of their visual assignments to the chart. He says, “if we think about a spreadsheet it's like X Y axis, very two-dimensional but when you add [...] a direct hyperlink to the portfolio it adds a three-dimensional aspect that, to me, gives us a link to direct evidence of learning.” Caroline also uses it as a place to create dialogue with her students, because both she and the student can comment on the chart. Graham believes that in a school system where teachers have so many students, it creates “a bit of a digital conversation,” which doesn’t replace in-person dialogue, but supplements it.

The Difficulties

Note: In the following section, I have sometimes chosen to describe the findings anonymously, as I don’t want my participants to face any negative effects as a result of being open and honest with their criticisms. While the participants were all strongly in favour of the new assessment framework and moving forward with ideas aligning with the BCMECC documents, not all of their opinions and experiences were positive. This is a result of the participants pioneering change in the field of assessment that has largely been stagnant and unyielding for decades. This section will illuminate some of the difficulties they have faced while implementing changes and some of the criticisms they have after critical reflection on the difficulties they experienced.

Challenges

Two main challenges that hindered their ability to progress their assessment practices were identified by the participants.

Unreasonable Workload.

First, all commented that changing their assessment model and maintaining their methods involved a lot of work. Graham thinks that one of the hardest parts of changing his assessment was sitting down and "conceptualizing the course." Emily echoed this sentiment when talking about a new technology called Jamboard she hoped to use to make portfolios in her classes, saying, "It'll be a lot of set up for me, like it's not as straightforward as I'd like it to be but I've tried things with assessment in the past that have not been so easy anyway." Both Tim and Caroline spoke in detail about the logistics of recording proficiencies in their gradebooks, digital portfolios, and competency charts, referring to it as "a lot of processes." The consensus was that making major changes to assessment practice was not easy, but that all participants had developed their own strategies for managing their systems over the years.

Secondly and similarly, all participants stated that both making the change and maintaining the new system of assessment required a lot of time. Graham says, "You've got to provide written feedback, you have to look at a lot of charts, look at evidence, evaluate, so it's very demanding time-wise." The processes Caroline has developed have only recently started to pay off: "It has not saved me any time up until recently." Tim involves his students in the assessment process, including having students write their own report card comments, but even that requires time: "It is more time for me without question." Emily also talked about how a teacher's good intentions can be thwarted by the number of tasks on their plate, so even if a teacher really wants to make changes in a positive direction, they just have too many other priorities. Two participants mentioned their families when talking about the time requirements of changing their assessment, acknowledging that doing big work with assessment can mean taking time away from them.

The Influence of Others.

Three participants spoke a lot about the resistance of other teachers in their building. While their criticisms will be discussed in a later section, they indicated that others' resistance made it hard for them to do their own work. Regarding the upcoming implementation of the reporting order, one participant said, "I mean I'm not gonna try to twist someone else's arm and say "You should do this," but when they're complaining about the new reporting order, it's kind of insulting, right?" They are referring to the fact that they have been putting in work for years to align with Ministry documentation only for it to be dismissed by colleagues. Another participant also talked about making changes to their assessment model because their colleagues just simply wanted to know if a student was passing or not. Another participant suggested that their colleagues wouldn't like a proposed assessment practice. It became clear that the feelings of the participants' colleagues were noticed by the participants, but in most cases, the participants were able to continue to make changes to their assessment that aligned with their personal assessment philosophies because they believed it was the right thing to do and had the professional autonomy to control the assessment practices in their own classrooms.

Criticisms

While teachers want to find a way forward and implement authentic assessment practices, they do have some negative things to say about what impeded their progress. These criticisms fell into three major categories — constraints of the education system, criticism towards colleagues, and displeasure at how the BCMECC has been rolling out the revised curriculum.

Constraints of System.

One of the main criticisms that emerged was that teachers are constrained by the circumstances, rules, or traditions of our industrial education system. For example, Graham discussed how authentic assessment takes time and should be conversation-based. Due to the

large class sizes and work loads of teachers, having these one-on-one discussions with every student about their progress is nearly impossible, which is why faster, impersonal assessment – such as putting a number on an assignment – has become the norm. Emily, Tim, and Caroline all bring up the difficulty with implementing any kind of authentic assessment when universities still look at high school GPAs when it comes to admissions. As Caroline says, "It would be kind of neat to see [changing assessment practices] driven from universities, actually, where the thought about assessment really ought to be happening." Emily even notes that the physical space in which we get students to learn is uncomfortable. As she gestured around her classroom, in which she has decorated and incorporated softer lighting, she said, "I mean in this room, I've done what I can but it's not inviting! Like, my house doesn't look like this, right?"

Time is also a big constraint. Making changes to assessment requires a big time investment from teachers who already have so much on their plate. Emily says, "I always advocate for more teacher prep time" and personally believes that high school teachers should never have to teach 4/4 classes a semester. Tim works at a school that implements a daily Focus Block during which students can attend any of their classes. Students utilize this time to retest. Tim reflected, "If we didn't have that Focus Block embedded in our timetable that would be really hard for me, because I'd probably be tempted to give up my lunch hours again." Even courses having concrete timelines doesn't support the fact that every student learns at their own pace. Caroline says to her students, "I'll ask them where do you think you're at the end of a unit because we need to, you know, time-wise we need to move on to something else." This need to cover curriculum within a timeframe has perpetuated the idea that assessment is an endpoint to learning, because teachers feel the need to assess and move on in order to "complete the course."

There are also criticisms of the role that traditional grading has had on the psyche of students. Students and their families have been entrenched in percentage-based assessment

systems for so long that it is seen as the norm when in fact, it has had detrimental effects on learners. Tim observes that "our system is based on ranking students" when ranking doesn't help students learn. As Tim frequently echoes, assessment should allow students to answer the following questions: "What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What are your next steps?" Emily sometimes sees her students reverse translating their self-assessments with the proficiency scale from percentages; for example, a student might say, "Usually I get 86 so 86 on the proficiency scale. Oh, that's Proficient, so I'm going to say I'm Proficient" which detracts from the purpose and usefulness of the scale. Emily spends a lot of time talking to her students about her thoughts on authentic assessment practices, but says, "I find it very challenging to get them to understand without them questioning the whole system in a way that would be negative for their other classes." She also notes the problematic power dynamic involved in traditional assessment, where teachers hold all the power and assign percentages to students. Emily recognizes that not all teachers are as far along in their assessment journey and that our school system has reinforced traditional ideas of what assessment should be, so she wants her students to think progressively, but still respect her colleagues – a challenging line to walk.

Criticisms of Colleagues.

One main criticism the participants had of their colleagues was that they were not embracing the new assessment framework. One participant described some of their colleagues as "people who are failingly entrenched their grading practices and aren't budging." Another participant felt that their colleagues will resist change for as long as possible and said, "I do think some people will have to have a kick in the ass, like "No, you have to do this." Another participant phrased it more compassionately: "I imagine some people would definitely be resistant to this stuff being told they have to do something that looks this big when they're used to putting a seven out of ten." One participant went as far as saying that "if you're not able to

give kids second and third chances – certainly second chances – if you're not willing to do that, you may be an obstacle in their learning." Participants also noted a few excuses that they've heard from colleagues. One mentioned that their colleagues have said they just won't teach grade 9 to avoid having to make changes to their assessment and another suggested that difficulties translating proficiency scale to a final mark have prevented colleagues from changing their assessment. Another participant criticized other teachers, saying they were so "bunged up with having to figure out the assessment" that they're not making changes to their classroom environment to provide students opportunities to learn and grow.

The participants also expressed some criticisms of teachers who are beginning to implement the new assessment framework with whom they have differing beliefs. While none of the participants felt that their own assessment was perfect and should be implemented by every teacher, their reflective nature and strong assessment philosophy made them well suited to thoughtfully criticize the practice of others. For example, one participant admired the work put into developing the competency charts but found them to be overwhelming and worried they were too complex to really facilitate dialogue with students. One participant didn't see a difference between a colour and a letter grade, feeling both were a way for teachers to rank students. They commented, "I think that the new reporting order invites so much more conversation and that the practice of learning is ongoing. Like, it doesn't stop at a "yellow." I just think [colour-coded assessment] ticks some boxes for teachers who feel very comfortable from a traditional lens." One participant commented that they have had disagreements with other teachers who use frequency as a way to measure proficiency. The participant felt strongly that quality was more important than quantity; that is, a student who demonstrates a competency many times is not necessarily Proficient, but a student who demonstrates a competency once could possibly be Proficient if they show enough understanding.

Participants also made predictions about some problems that might arise during the new September 2023 assessment implementation. The main concern was that teachers may turn to inauthentic ways of using the proficiency scale. Several participants predicted that their colleagues would develop their own way to convert percentages into a proficiency, by using a form of "backwards translation." One participant hypothesized that colleagues may "even put the number (percentage) in the comment" of the report card, thereby not really changing their assessment at all.

Issues with the Rollout.

Two participants criticized the way in which the BCMECC approached the rollout of the revised curriculum. One participant commented that the rollout hasn't been "a light switch change," as the curriculum began gradual implementation in 2010 and is only thirteen years later mandating a corresponding assessment framework. The lack of guidance was also a source of frustration. One participant called it "outrageous" and suggested imagining if teachers gave students projects in the same way: "It's like, okay, here's a project. I want you to do it. What does it look like? We don't know. What supports do you have? None, okay. And you're going to be graded on this. It makes no sense!" They also criticize the structure of the rollout, suggesting that introducing the assessment framework so far after the new curriculum rollout is doing things in the "wrong order."

These teachers feel that the BCMECC has given almost no supports or exemplars to teachers regarding how assessment might look in their classrooms; these are things that teachers are "desperate" for. A way this could be satisfied is by asking teachers who have been implementing the assessment framework already – such as the participants of this study – to share their methods and experiences. One participant is disappointed by the BCMECC's lack of compensation for teachers sharing the existing strategies. They say that they have been asked to

present at a Professional Development workshop on short notice and have even been told “Well, you don't have to make it really good; you just have to share a couple of things.” This upsets the participant because they are passionate about what they’ve developed and would like to share it in a way that is helpful to the workshop attendees. They say, “It's not reasonable. You need to compensate people that have put the time in to take more time away from their family to share. If you want it to be good you need to give people time to prepare and present.” They explain that there are “too many independent contractors,” too many teachers independently implementing the new assessment framework and not enough support from the BCMECC for them to share their knowledge and collaborate with others.

Outsider Perspectives

Participants were asked if they experienced any pushback from parents, students, or colleagues when they made changes to their classroom assessment. This inquiry was made to identify any potential roadblocks teachers may experience when they go through the same process.

Parent Perspectives

Participants did not report parents as having a lot of feedback. Caroline said she used to invite parents to be collaborators on the competency charts and, in her earlier years of implementation, would have face-to-face meetings with parents who wanted to discuss the competency charts. She said that it was only “three or four” parents, and by the end of their discussion, they would say “something like, “Oh, I wish they had done that when I was in school.”” She also said that parents have become familiar with the new framework of assessment and tend to have less questions or concerns as the years go on. Graham said that he had never gotten an email from a parent questioning his assessment model. Each participant was asked if they received pushback from parents, and the lack of pushback reported is telling.

Student Perspectives

In terms of student perspective, there was a range of student opinions reported by the participants. Graham has not had any complaints from students, something that he attributes to the fact that assessing with the proficiency scale and his competency charts aligns well with his project-heavy, skills-based courses. Emily and Caroline both mentioned having a few students throughout the years who did want percentages. Emily cited university entrance as the motivator for her students, and Caroline said it was external motivators that made her students want percentages – for example, when students received monetary compensation for achieving certain grades. Caroline was quick to note that she had never had an at-risk student say they would prefer numbers. She found that these students appreciated the shading in the competency charts because it allowed them to see their progress and was also motivating, because their learning started from Emerging rather than starting from zero.

Emily talked about the perceived rigor of the proficiency scale. She says, “I do think the proficiency scale, at its base value, asks less of students like, if you’re coming at it from a traditional lens.” She reports that she has had students in her class tell her they thought her class was going to be easy, but after taking her course, have told her that her class wasn’t easy at all. Emily says, “I just think it’s super rigorous when you look at it as a kid,” because the new reporting order wants students to achieve proficiency in every Learning Standard, something that asks for a high degree of excellence from students. The proficiency scale provides a low-floor/high-ceiling environment for students, where even the most struggling students can see themselves as Emerging learners but where there are actually high academic expectations of students as well.

There was also considerable positive feedback from students as reported by the participants. Tim believes his assessment model gives his students a strong understanding of the

big picture of what they're learning. Students "talk about the curricular competencies being the glue that holds together what we're doing" and giving context to the math concepts they are learning. Caroline has a lot of her English students tell her that her assessment has helped to make them better writers due to the feedback she gives them and how she provides them multiple opportunities to show learning. Other of her students have liked the competency charts by the end of the course, even though understanding the chart and how it can be useful is sometimes challenging for students at the beginning.

Nothing New.

One thing that several participants reiterated was that the new assessment model is not a new concept for students, something that may surprise high school teachers. While assessing with the proficiency scale is something that is novel to most high school teachers, some using it for the first time only when they were forced to in September 2023, students have actually been experiencing this assessment framework in elementary and middle school for much of their educational career. Caroline says, "What I'm finding is that there are more and more kids who've had some kind of experience with it through their elementary or their middle school." Emily knows that students' familiarity with the proficiency scale is not something her colleagues understand: "I think this will be quite shocking for the teachers who are in that [traditional] mindset. This isn't going to be new for kids." She reiterates, "A lot of students come from 'proficiency' now. It's not like it's new information for the kid or the family." Participants expressed that since the framework is new for their colleagues, a lot of their colleagues believe it will be a large and challenging shift for their students, which the participants believe is not the case.

Colleague Perspectives

The participants were asked to describe how their colleagues perceived the new Reporting Order and assessment that aligned with it. The participants' criticisms of their colleagues are detailed in a different section, so this section will focus on the colleagues' perceived opinions and feelings. In general, the participants identified a lot of avoidance or resistance from their colleagues. Graham, Emily, and Tim noted ways or excuses their colleagues have made for not making changes to their own assessment methods; Tim said that some colleagues have felt the reporting aspect was too difficult while Emily said her colleagues excused their stagnancy by only teaching grades 10-12 which are less affected by the proficiency scale and the new Reporting Order. Graham mentioned feeling insulted when his colleagues made excuses about why they couldn't make the change, as he had been successfully making changes to his own assessment for years. Emily understands that this is a big change and a lot for teachers to process: "I'm mindful that this will be a drastic shift for many of our co-workers."

Ultimately, the participants recognized that much of the resistance from colleagues came from feelings of fear. Emily identified that the new Reporting Order requires teachers to have far closer relationships with each of their students, something that not all teachers may be prepared to do. She says, "I think the hesitancy that people will have is that it really asks you to have pretty specific relationships with kids – like friendly relationships – and to separate the behaviour from the learning. That is a curve that many of us haven't swerved along yet." Emily also says, "If I was two years away from retirement and I was told, "Look, what you've been doing is not aligned with the new Reporting Order," it would be really hard and I would feel very defensive." Graham believes that "fear of change and maybe the work involved" are two of the reasons for his colleagues' hesitancy.

Additionally, participants believed that some of their colleagues just don't understand the new Reporting Order well enough to get behind the new assessment framework. For example, since the new Reporting Order emphasizes that learning is a process, more recent work often replaces older work when it comes to the consideration for a final mark or proficiency. As a result, a students' mark or proficiency in a class really may only be based on a handful of summative assessments. As Emily puts it, "You're only going to be looking probably at like 4 or 5 pieces of their work closely and be assessing those for most of their mark, which I think if I told [the students] or told other people, it's like, "Oh my god, that's crazy!"" Caroline has experienced school cultures that didn't understand the nuanced information provided by her competency charts. Her colleagues just wanted to know if students were passing. Emily also thinks that her colleagues believe that the proficiency scale is subjective and inexact, something Emily disagrees with considerably. She says, "I think that with proficiency scales, people think it's up in the air and wild."

Finally, Emily identifies feelings of insecurity as a key reason for colleagues to resist changing their assessment models. She explains that there is a difference between feeling uncomfortable and feeling unsafe. She reports, "I think often some of our staff who are more reluctant, they're like, "This is unsafe! This is unsafe!"" because they are unused to being pushed beyond their comfort zones in their careers. But, Emily argues, they are actually uncomfortable with this experience and that it is possible to be "uncomfortable and still safe." Emily believes that shifting teachers' mindsets about trying new and uncomfortable things will help them embrace new assessment practices. Emily also thinks that changing assessment practices takes some power away from teachers and gives it to the students. For example, valuing student self-assessment and allowing students to be involved in the assessment process may make some teachers feel like they are losing part of their roles and responsibilities as a teacher. Teachers

who are strongly entrenched in traditional beliefs in their roles of teachers and students may find making these changes very challenging.

Looking Forward

Keeping in mind that all grade 9 teachers had to make changes to their classroom assessment to align with the 2023 Reporting Order, participants were asked what advice they had for their colleagues. Participants were also asked to identify things that teachers needed to help with these changes.

Advice for Colleagues Around the Province

In terms of advice, participants advocated for teachers to jump right in! Emily emphasized, “Oh my gosh, I say get in there!” And Caroline agreed: “I would say start!” Caroline and Tim agree that doing something imperfectly was better than doing nothing at all; Caroline says, “Just get started. Don't worry about making mistakes.” Caroline noted that teachers are all trained professionals and should be confident when making changes to their practice, “as long as a learner is at the centre of the decisions that you're making and you make your decisions because you think that what you're doing is going to move learning forward.” To help teachers develop this confidence and understanding, Graham encourages teachers to research why “the numeric grading system can be very detrimental to students” and Tim suggests studying the curriculum documents so teachers know what it is they should be assessing.

The participants also provided a number of practical pieces of advice, which I will summarize below:

- Use the resources at your disposal to help you. This includes technology (including AI) and the support and ideas of your colleagues. Exchange your ideas and resources with others. Advocate for good Professional Development. (Caroline, Graham, and Tim)

- Make a poster of the proficiency scale and refer to it regularly to build familiarity with your students. (Emily)
- Get to know the strengths, weaknesses, and interests of your students. This develops a strong relationship with them, upon which you can rely when providing them with assessment feedback. (Tim)
- Use simple formative assessment regularly and actively during class, as this keeps the focus on learning and helps guide your teaching. This can be as simple as thumbs up/thumbs down check-ins, or even communicating through eye contact. (Tim)
- Eliminate numbers from your assessment. Eliminate "bins" from your gradebook; focus instead on assessing individual learning outcomes. (Tim)
- Focus on creating an environment that is rich in opportunities to build skills and practice curricular competencies. If your environment is nurturing, students will grow whether you assess them or not. (Tim)
- Start with one good activity that allows students to develop the curricular competencies. Build from there. Worry about assessment after you change your practice. (Tim)
- Be willing to give some power over to the students and involve them in the assessment process. This is their education, not yours. (Tim and Caroline)

What Teachers Need to Move Forward

Participants identified three main things that could help ease teachers' transition to new assessment methods. Predominantly, participants said teachers need time in order to understand the new Reporting Order, reflect on their existing practices, and make changes to align with the new framework. Emily says, "I always advocate for more teacher prep time" and argues that

having teachers teach 4/4 classes in one semester prevents teachers from being able to tackle big work, like overhauling assessment practices. From the interviews, it was clear that all participants spent a lot of their own time over many years going through a continual spiral of reflecting, changing, and implementing new assessment practices. If the BCMECC wants teachers to do this big work, the participants argued that the Ministry should provide more paid prep time.

Secondly, the participants emphasized the importance of collaboration. All participants originally made changes to their assessment practice with the support and input of other teachers in their school, a process which they believe to be invaluable. Caroline suggests that creating "coaching pairs" could be a useful way of facilitating collaboration within a school. Good professional development opportunities also fall under the umbrella of collaboration, as it is a way for teachers to learn from other teachers. Tim, who has been asked to present professional development workshops, says it's important to compensate presenters well — either with time or money — to ensure the workshop will provide its participants with useful tools, not just inspiration. He also suggests that teachers advocate for good professional development by asking for certain presenters or topics, and not just leaving it up to the district or school Pro D Committee to provide workshops. Similarly, all participants encourage sharing assessment methods and recording tools that have already been developed. As Tim says, teachers are desperate for exemplars of how teachers are using the new Reporting Order framework in their classrooms, and connecting teachers to one another is very important. Caroline is open about being willing to share her competency charts, and Tim has shared his gradebooks at numerous professional development workshops. Caroline says that even if someone doesn't like every aspect of her competency chart, they may be able to take pieces and develop something of their own. As Caroline says, "Starting with something is better than nothing." It should be noted that

while collaboration is an excellent aid for teachers in their development of assessment resources, collaboration also requires considerable time from more than one teacher.

Finally, the participants recognize that all teachers need grace and kindness as they work through some heavy philosophical and practical changes to their assessment. Emily suggests "just saying, "This is really tough. I acknowledge that I don't know. This is new and I don't know what I'm doing." That just takes such confidence and such vulnerability." It's important, she believes, for teachers to have that same "compassion that we have for our students" for ourselves and our colleagues who are also in the process of learning and growing. She also suggests that administration should afford teachers the same patience and kindness. Tim acknowledges that assessment at its core is "imperfect" so believes that there is "space to make mistakes here and be imperfect because it's never going to be perfect." This mindset could be very helpful for teachers who feel afraid to do things incorrectly or take risks.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Personal Connection

I began making changes to my assessment model in my Science classes two years into my own teaching career when the discomfort of the dichotomy of assessment in Science classes vs English classes became unbearable. I started by implementing some more creative, open-ended projects and marking them with rubrics. Then, inspired by a professional development workshop I attended put on by Myron Dueck and Ben Arcuri, I moved to a standards-based grading (SBG) model in my Science classes where I assessed student understanding of content-focused Learning Standards using a pre-established 6-point rubric. This was a massive change in my assessment practices that required me to throw out my existing assessment model and recreate the assessment in my course from scratch. A few years after that, I was introduced to Tim's colour-coded gradebook and implemented this model into my Science and Mathematics courses, although without also adopting Tim's digital portfolios.

Every change I made to my assessment helped me refine my assessment philosophy, but I acknowledge that all iterations of my assessment model, including what I would consider my most current, had major flaws and inconsistencies that don't fully align with what I believe about assessment and what I want assessment to be like for the students in my class. Research for my thesis has highlighted these deficiencies as well. For example, since I adopted SBG as my primary assessment model, I realize that my Learning Standards have only ever included the content of the course. Despite teaching the curricular competencies in my classes, I neglected to assess the curricular competencies, even though the BC curriculum clearly states the curricular competencies are Learning Standards that should be assessed as well. Contributing to this issue, tests remained as my main assessment tool, which significantly limited my ability to assess curricular competencies. Since my focus was largely on content, I found the idea of changing the

assessment in my English classes in the same way to be very challenging, since English assignments are often more wholistic, addressing many curricular competencies at once and practicing skills that may overlap with many other assignments. As a result, most of the work I did on my classroom assessment was in my Science and Mathematics courses. Finally, due to the end of term reporting requirements implemented at the time I was teaching, despite assessing using the proficiency scale, the data from the colour-coded gradebook ultimately needed to be converted into a percentage or letter grade. This somewhat undermined the goals and values of my assessment model, and resulted in students still ultimately being focused on what their grade or percentage was in the class.

However, I also experienced a lot of positive growth from consistently experimenting with and tweaking my assessment model. For example, I have developed a strong belief in the damage of percentage-based grading on students' motivation and mental health, which has increased my interest in various assessment practices and further committed me to my goal of improving my classroom assessment. I also found that students were much more aware of what they were learning when my assessment model tied directly to curricular documents and language, something I found rewarding. I liked that students could clearly see which Learning Standards were their strengths and which Learning Standards were areas of improvement, as I found it gave a much more nuanced picture of the student as a learner and also made it clear where students could continue their learning. By allowing students multiple opportunities to show their learning by writing retests, student learning was an ongoing process, and I loved that it required students to take initiative to see where they could improve, work on those areas independently or by seeking help, and then show evidence of their new learning. Overall, it has made me a far more reflective teacher, as I am constantly thinking about my assessment model and responding with necessary changes to better align my practice with my philosophy.

I generally found that students and parents were very receptive to my assessment model, with students adopting the language quickly and really taking ownership over looking at their gradebook and seeing where they could improve. Their parents appreciated the transparency and the ability to see students' strengths and areas of improvement at all times, since parents were given access to the students' gradebooks online. Support from my colleagues was much harder to come by, with most providing excuses as to why doing this work was too hard. A lot of colleagues agreed with the assessment philosophy in general, but were quick to dwell on perceived problems with the framework rather than attempt to find solutions. For example, they would say they liked the proficiency scale, but questioned how they were meant to record the proficiencies in an efficient way or how they were supposed to convert the proficiency data into a summative mark. These problems were large enough, in their minds, to be a roadblock to attempt adoption of the new assessment framework before the official mandate was implemented.

Indeed, I invested a tremendous amount of personal time into reworking my assessment models. Despite borrowing established models and infrastructure from others, each time I made a major change to my classroom assessment essentially required an overhaul of my course. This required me to not only develop resources and create recording processes, but also spend a lot of time doing mental work to understand, embrace, and align the new ideas with my own beliefs about assessment. I felt that it was important to be able to rationalize every choice I made and answer all questions that I might encounter if a student, parent, or colleague was to question my assessment model. This work was largely unseen by my colleagues and administration, with no one providing encouragement or direction; this was purely a self-driven initiative.

In hindsight, I don't regret the time I put into this work for three reasons. First and foremost, it was something I was passionate about. I was interested in assessment, enjoyed the

deep reflection, and grew a lot as an educator. Secondly, I didn't have a family; this allowed me to prioritize my work and put in the effort when I had more spare time. All of the time that I spent on my assessment in the past has set me up well to be able to make smaller yet still impactful changes that will fit within my new time constraints now that I have a family. Finally, I believe it was the right thing to do. Despite my assessment model being far from perfect, I saw my students benefiting and am confident that moving away from traditional percentage-based grading is an important and necessary change to our education system.

It was validating to see that the experiences of my participants were very similar to my own, and it was inspiring to see the ways that they have dealt with the flaws I have identified in my own assessment model. For example, Tim uses his digital portfolios as a way to assess his students on the curricular competencies, and Caroline and Graham almost exclusively assess the curricular competencies in their competency charts, using the content as a vehicle in which to introduce, teach, and demonstrate the curricular competencies. It was also interesting to see how overlapping all our assessment philosophies were. While some collaboration has occurred between us – such as Caroline and Graham collaborating on the creation of the competency charts and me borrowing the colour-coded gradebook from Tim – there is still remarkable convergence in our philosophies with the curricular documents and with each other.

Philosophical Convergence

As mentioned, the findings of the study show that the participants' philosophy towards teaching and assessment is strongly echoed in the assessment documents put out by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care (BCMECC) in July and August of 2023. For example, the K-12 Student Reporting Order: Communicating Student Learning (2023b) guide frames assessment as "gathering evidence of learning" (p. 9) and emphasizes honouring recent evidence of learning. All participants embrace this idea in their practice. For example, Tim has his

students gather evidence of their progress on the curricular competencies in a digital portfolio and honours most recent learning by encouraging relearning and retests. Graham and Caroline have set up their courses so their students are consistently showing their learning through assignments and projects, with the goal of adding to the shading of their charts. Emily acknowledges that the final mark in her courses generally just reflects a small handful of assignments, because by honouring the most recent learning, older assignments become practice or ways of developing learning. This new way of thinking about learning will certainly require traditionalist teachers to revise their assessment philosophy to accept that the value of certain assessment data can wane over time as new assessment data is collected.

Additionally, the new reporting order mandates that students reflect on the core competencies at regular intervals throughout the school year. This is an area the BCMECC documents describe in detail, with student examples being provided at multiple grade and subject levels. The participants' assessment practices support this initiative by incorporating self-reflection, self-assessment, and goal setting into their classroom, thereby teaching students these skills. For example, the digital portfolios that Tim uses require students to do an initial self-assessment of the curricular competencies, and then use their reflective capacities throughout the year to find evidence of their own growth. Emily has her students self-reflect on their assessments and set attainable and practical goals for the next assessment cycle. By incorporating these skills into their classrooms, the study participants are supporting the required reflection on the core competencies by giving students direction and opportunity to practice these skills.

Finally, participants align with the reporting order regarding beliefs about professional judgement and the proficiency scale. The participants talked about how professional judgement comes into play in many aspects of the assessment process, from deciding what assignments best demonstrate certain competencies to determining final marks or proficiencies at the end of a

term. All participants talked about the role of professional judgement when assessing student progress, something they often did collaboratively with students and only through consultation of the evidence of learning the student has produced. Similarly, the reporting order encourages the use of professional judgement when assigning final marks or proficiencies to determine the growth of the learner in relation to the Learning Standards. In terms of the proficiency scale, according to the reporting order, "Proficient is the goal" (p. 29). As Tim said in his interview: "We built a gradebook around "The goal is proficiency," and the ministry has now come out and explicitly said the goal is proficiency, not extending, which I'm happy to say… is how we took it."

As Tim alludes in his quote, the participants had only the curriculum documents and a few draft reporting order documents to work from when most of them began making changes to their assessment. In addition, the interview data for this study was collected a good six months before the K-12 Student Reporting Order was actually released, so none of the participants had yet consulted this document. It is interesting and impressive that with minimal guidance, all the participants have developed assessment philosophies that so strongly reflect the K-12 Student Reporting Order and have created functional classroom assessment models that embody the resulting values. The fact that the BCMECC and the participants converged on a similar assessment philosophy suggests that the overlap identifies what "good assessment" is based on the current understanding of assessment in the literature. Since the participants also developed their assessment models with students' best interest in mind, this also suggests that the BCMECC's assessment framework bodes well for the support of all students in their learning, though this will depend on the quality of implementation in classrooms.

Notable Themes

Three notable themes emerged when analyzing the data from the four interviews conducted:

1. Learning is a process
2. Students should be involved in their own assessment
3. Students should be at the centre of teacher decision-making

The participants' assessment philosophy all share these themes, but the themes' influence can also be seen in their assessment and teaching practices. I also value these themes highly in my own philosophy, because they are essential in shaping my view of assessment, and therefore impact how I approach and implement my classroom assessment practices. Additionally, all three themes can be seen woven in the new assessment framework.

Learning is a Process

All participants viewed learning as a process, analogous to a continuous journey. Students arrive at their classrooms at different starting points regarding their understanding of the course content. Participants saw their role and goal as being to help all their students achieve a Proficient understanding for all the grade-specific curricular Learning Standards by the end of the course. Most participants talked about how they'd be proud if all their students were Proficient in all competencies, which is a different mentality than in the past when many teachers were looking for their classroom grade distributions to resemble a bell curve. However, while proficiency is the goal, it is not the endpoint to learning, with the category "Extending" of the proficiency scale acknowledging that learning continues beyond the scope of the course.

With this metaphor in mind, the participants recognized that every student could take a slightly different route to reach "Proficient," which means providing students multiple opportunities and formats to show learning and offering varying levels of supports. When

looking summatively at a student's learning, the importance is not on how long the student took on their journey or what route they took, but rather the progress they were able to make between the beginning and end of the course. This means that if Student A attained a 'Proficient' standard within a week but it took Student B the entire semester and multiple reassessments, both students should be honoured equally for their progress and Student B should not be punished with a lower final grade just because they found the journey more challenging or required more time. Indeed, the "reward" for Student A should be encouragement to continue their learning journey and the consequent "Extending" learning they are able to achieve while Student B perseveres to "Proficient".

When learning is viewed in this way, it becomes clear why traditional percentage-based grading is not an adequate assessment model for this type of learning. In traditional grading, student marks are collected throughout the course and averaged at the end of a term or semester. Using the previous example, in this grading model, Student A would end up with a much higher percentage than Student B because Student B has accumulated a handful of poor marks before they reached proficiency. Essentially, Student B is punished in a percentage-based grading system because of their journey, while Student A is rewarded for their journey, despite both students reaching proficiency – the goal – by the end of the course. In order to honour where students end up at the end of the course, a new assessment framework is needed. It's for this reason that the K-12 Student Reporting Order Policy (2023b) emphasizes that "learning demonstrated close to the communication of student learning will be the most reflective of student proficiency and should be used as the strongest evidence of learning" (p. 32). Also, since the BCMECC does see learning as "continuous" (BCMECC, 2023b, p. 32), assessing using a proficiency scale, which is essentially a continuum, rather than a discrete 100-point scale, ensures that "every student has a place on the scale at any given time" (BCMECC, 2023b, p. 28).

Additionally, seeing learning as a process is beneficial for students. First of all, participants noted that it impacts student motivation. Tim, Caroline, and Graham's assessment models all allow students to visualize their learning progress from the start to the end of the course – Tim's students through the red, yellow, and green colour-coding and Caroline and Graham's students through the accumulation of shading on their competency charts. Seeing this progress is both positive and motivating, because it validates what a student has accomplished so far and shows where students can continue learning. Caroline also noted that it helped student self-esteem to see shading on their competency charts even if they were struggling with the competencies. Knowing they had a place on the proficiency scale – Emerging – was far more motivating than students believing they were starting at 0% understanding and working their way up from there. In a time when teenage mental health as a whole is struggling from effects of social media exposure and the COVID-19 pandemic, framing assessment in a way that positively impacts students emotionally is very beneficial with regards to student engagement and retention.

Finally, viewing learning as a process is also helpful for educators who are undertaking the task of changing their classroom assessment to align with the Ministry-mandated provincial assessment framework. In my own experience, my classroom assessment has continuously evolved since I started making changes. My own learning in the area of assessment certainly has been a process, and accepting this fact has allowed me to be gentler on myself and therefore take more risks. If I had felt that I needed to perfect my assessment model before implementing it, I may never have been confident enough to implement anything at all. This hesitation is something I have heard in my colleagues; they have been looking to the BCMECC to provide a fully developed classroom assessment model for them to implement because the idea of implementing an imperfect model of their own evokes too much discomfort to consider. By seeing my

classroom assessment as a series of drafts (that may never result in a "final version," honestly, because best practice in education is ever-evolving), I felt more comfortable implementing my assessment models because I knew they could continue to change as needed.

Caroline and Emily agree that biting the bullet and just getting started is an important first step, with Caroline acknowledging the role that experience and confidence can play when deciding whether to try something new and uncertain. The participants also saw their assessment as in progress, because, when asked, all participants had next steps for their assessment models in mind. This lends evidence that the participants are actively engaging in regular reflection on their practices and are committed to lifelong learning. The interviews corroborate this idea that the development of a classroom assessment model that aligns with personal and Ministry-approved philosophy, works, and is practical is something that develops over time as the teacher progresses in their own learning of their own best practices of assessment. For this reason, having a philosophy that learning is a process not only helps teachers develop an assessment practice that benefits students, it helps them with the development of their assessment practices to begin with.

Students Should Be Involved in Their Own Assessment

A second theme that emerged relates to students playing an active role in their own assessment, something all participants described of their classroom assessment models. For example, Emily has her students self-reflect to set goals and areas to work on when they go to write their next assessment cycle. Caroline and Graham collaborate with their students in the competency charts, encouraging students to self-assess by shading or making comments explaining how much progress they have made on certain competencies. Tim has his students self-reflect on the curricular competencies and create digital portfolios of evidence. He also encourages his students to take control of their own learning by providing them the information

on their strengths and areas of improvement, and he supports them when they decide to relearn and reassess the areas they would like to develop. All participants talked about determining term-end marks in collaboration with their students, and some, like Tim and Emily, talked about having their students help to write their own report card comments as well. From the participants' experiences, we can see that other than the actual act of assessing student projects, tests, and assignments, classroom assessment is something that is done with the students.

Self-reflection, self-assessment, and goal setting are all highly emphasized skills in the province's curricular documents and assessment framework. A key tenet of the assessment framework focuses on students of all grades completing regular self-reflections on the core competencies. The K-12 Student Reporting Order (2023b) states that this practice "meaningfully involves students in the assessment process, which amplifies student voice" (p. 7).

Indeed, student involvement in their own assessment can have many benefits. From my own experiences, I found that students were much more aware of what concepts they were learning, knew which areas they were good at and which they struggled with, and were far more involved in conversations with myself, their peers, and their parents about their progress in the course when I implemented a SBG model. Tim talked about the benefit of student ownership over their learning, as they were able to look at their gradebook and see their "strengths, weaknesses, and next steps;" this was no longer information hidden in a teacher's gradebook, but readily available for the student to act on. Being included in all aspects of their education also engages students; assessment is not something that is done *to* students, but done *with* students, embracing that idea of assessment *for* and *as* learning rather than just assessment *of* learning, ideas that have been circulating in education since the late 1990s (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Ultimately, students will feel confident and engaged when they are given more control over their education. As the Reporting Order echoes, involving students in their assessment "promotes

student responsibility for their learning… helps foster a lifelong learning mindset… [and] leads to an increase in student confidence in their abilities and greater student satisfaction" (BCMECC, 2023b, p. 7).

The involvement of students in the assessment process also has positive effects on teachers. From my own experiences, I wouldn't say that it lessens the amount of assessment work I need to do, but it certainly shares the load. Graham, for example, invites his students to self-assess and shade their competency charts in a different colour than he uses; this allows him to go into the student's competency chart, review their self-assessment, look over their evidence of learning they handed in, and use all these pieces with his professional judgement to make his own assessment. Having the students' self-assessment helps him make his decisions. Having students write their own report card comments is also helpful for teachers, though teachers are still responsible for setting up the process of acquiring the comments from students and then entering them into the reporting software. However, Tim says the quality of the comments students are able to write makes up for this additional workload. He says that "lots of times it's hard to beat what they've written" and acknowledges that even though it is the teacher's job to provide thoughtful and informative report card comments, "that doesn't mean that I have to … come up with the ideas and wrack my brain."

I also found that giving students live access to their gradebooks shifted some of the responsibility of learning onto them. Instead of students asking me what assessments they were missing or what they could do to improve their mark, students had access to this information and could act on it without consultation or prompting from me. As an example, when organizing retests, I had my students fill in a retest request form with a self-reflection on what they struggled with and how they have prepared for the reassessment; rather than keeping track myself of who should retest and when, students would tell me when they were ready to write a specific

reassessment so I could print it out and have it ready for them. This small bit of ownership – having them initiate the reassessment instead of me – made a big difference to me as a busy teacher with so many other tasks and responsibilities on my mind. For this reason, student involvement in the assessment process can be just as beneficial for teachers as it is for students.

For some teachers, the idea of giving power to their students in the assessment process causes discomfort. Traditionally, assessing learning has been exclusively a role of the teacher or educational system. In fact, for those outside the education system, accurately assessing and reporting out what students have learned could be seen as one of the most important roles of a teacher. As a result, I believe that teachers feel strong ownership over this aspect of their teaching and struggle to relinquish control. Especially since teachers in the past have used every marked assignment as assessment data to mathematically contribute to a student's grade, it makes sense why teachers have been conditioned to need to be so tightly in control of the assessment data of every assignment for every student. However, the values of the new Reporting Order no longer support this need for teachers to be the exclusive assessors of student learning, inviting students into the process. This shift in perspective may be challenging for some teachers to embrace, and the process of involving students in the assessment process may require time for implementation.

Even the interviews showed that the participants drew a line somewhere between the role of students and the role of teachers. Graham explains, "I am honouring that they have a role to play [in their assessment] … so that's why I allow them to shade, but in the end it's my call, because I believe that's why we [teachers] are here." Tim also takes on the role of primary assessor when it comes to the content Learning Standards in his course, but gives students the agency to assess their progress on the curricular competencies in their digital portfolios. Caroline has the goal of letting "more of the power go to the students" in future semesters, with plans to

scaffold how to accurately self-assess early in her course so that she doesn't need to "second guess" her students when they self-assess their own work. Currently, Caroline gives her students the ability to comment on, but not edit, their own competency charts, keeping that power to herself. Since the participants have been modifying their assessment models for some time and yet still have different comfort levels with how much students are involved in the assessment process, it's clear that teachers around the province will also require processing time to come to accept and embrace this practice as well.

Students Should Be at the Centre of Teacher Decision-Making

While guiding documents have been provided by the Ministry, teachers have a lot of autonomy over what assessment looks like in their classrooms. This amount of freedom is a key aspect of being an educator in BC, but can also feel overwhelming and daunting. Ultimately, a main takeaway from the interviews is that, while using their professional judgement, teachers should always keep students at the centre of decision-making. Caroline summarizes that "as long as a learner is at the centre of the decisions that you're making and you make your decisions because you think that what you're doing is going to move learning forward," you are moving your practice in the right direction.

Of course, making decisions with students in mind means that teachers need to get to know their students, something that the participants were continually doing as part of their practice. Tim is a strong advocate of teachers getting to know the strengths, weaknesses, and general likes and dislikes of their students, as it builds a strong relationship on which teachers can provide, and students can receive, feedback. As another example, Emily implements emotional check-ins at the beginning of her classes and often modifies her daily lesson based on her students' responses. All participants use elements of dialogue in their classrooms, often conferencing with their students in order to determine end of term report card marks or providing

verbal feedback on assessments. By knowing their students, the participants are able to make decisions that reflect the needs and diversity in their classrooms. Emily notes that the need to get to know their students could be something that some teachers are uncomfortable with, even though this is a fundamental aspect of teaching. She says that the need for teachers to create and maintain “pretty specific relationships with kids, like friendly relationships” is a challenge that some teachers “haven’t swerved along yet,” but is a key aspect of developing learning and assessment practices that benefit and honour the students in their classrooms.

Summary of Themes

In analyzing the data from four interviews, three notable themes emerged, shaping both the participants' assessment philosophies and their practical teaching approaches. The first theme centres around the concept that learning is a continuous process, a perspective that challenges traditional percentage-based grading, supporting the use of a proficiency scale that accommodates different learning paths and timeframes. The second theme underscores the importance of students being actively involved in their own assessment, which enhances students' awareness of their learning. The third theme emphasizes the importance of keeping students at the forefront of decision-making processes, because decisions made with students in mind contribute to moving learning forward. These themes become evident in how the participants speak about their assessment beliefs and practices, but can also be seen reflected in the provincial assessment documents.

Combined, these themes benefit students and teachers alike, though are not without challenges. Recognizing learning as a process and involving students in their own assessment positively impacts student motivation, fosters engagement, and supports educators in viewing assessment as a dynamic, evolving process. Teachers can also find benefits in involving students in their own assessment by sharing assessment responsibilities despite this shifting perspective

posing challenges for some educators who feel uncomfortable relinquishing some control over classroom assessment, necessitating time for implementation and adjustment. Keeping students at the centre of decision-making results in student-centred learning experiences, but also asks educators to get to know their students on a more personal level than all teachers may be used to. This data supports the importance of changing classroom assessment frameworks, while also underlining what teachers around the province have been saying: these changes are accompanied by practical difficulties.

Classroom Assessment Can Take Many Forms

There are undoubtedly many ways that the framework of the K-12 Student Reporting Order can be functionally implemented in a classroom; the data from this study is evidence of just this. In fact, this was likely a goal of the BCMECC when developing the current reporting order, as the revised curriculum is purposefully less prescriptive for teachers, providing them more creativity and personal autonomy, while also allowing districts around the province to meet the needs of their unique student populations. In this study, most of the participants spent considerable time and effort creating elaborate infrastructure to record and track student progress. Indeed, for teachers who are entrenched in the culture of recording marks in traditional gradebooks and wanting to keep track of missing assignments, creating similar recording devices is a natural progression and may seem like a necessity. However, one participant, Emily, has shown that these competency charts or coded gradebooks are not necessary to successfully implement the new assessment framework and proficiency scale. She uses a combination of Google Classroom and portfolios to collect her students' evidence of learning, and then conferences with her students at the end of the term to collaboratively consult their collection of evidence and decide on their final marks. She relies more heavily on descriptive feedback to communicate with her students, rather than a systematic colour-code or shading scheme.

Both options should provide hope for teachers struggling to implement and develop their classroom assessment. On one hand, infrastructure exists. This means there are models of gradebooks, portfolios, and competency charts that exist and have been created by teachers who are willing to share. While these likely need to be modified to different courses and/or teacher preference, the majority of the work has been done. My research found two different models (Tim's colour-coded gradebook and Caroline and Graham's competency charts), but there must be many teachers around the province who have created their own variations that work for them. On the other hand, it is possible to implement the new assessment framework without creating an elaborate recording tool, but instead using tools that many educators have already been using, such as applications in the Google Suite. Regardless, this suggests that teachers do not necessarily need to create their own models from the start. While spending the time developing an assessment model is valuable work that helps teachers shape their own assessment philosophy, less time-intensive options are available.

The Time Inconsistency

That being said, there are a number of inconsistencies in the data and literature that arise around the theme of time when addressing the new assessment framework. While the literature and experiences of the participants make it clear that adoption of the new assessment framework is both important and necessary, the time that this implementation requires of teachers is generally unreasonable and uncompensated. This poses a distinct conundrum around the practicality of implementing this change in assessment, one that warrants discussion.

The Importance and Necessity of Assessment Reform

First and foremost, making the change to the new assessment framework is important because of the role it plays in student success. Of course, a provincial education system must place the education and well-being of its students as its priority. From the participants' data, we

see that they identify a number of positive outcomes of their own assessment models, the majority of which directly benefit the students. The two academic benefits they point out are the ability for students to focus on their learning rather than on a number or letter grade, and the invitation for students to play an active role in their own assessment, encouraging the development of initiative, self-assessment, and self-reflection. The participants noted benefits to their students' emotional well-being, as well. For example, while no less rigorous, the participants' assessment models were seen by the students as "lower stakes" because they were given multiple opportunities to show evidence of their learning and could show evidence in unconventional ways, such as through conversations with the teacher. Additionally, students were able to see their learning grow and progress through their colour-coded gradebooks or shaded competency charts, something students found to be positive and motivating. All participants resoundingly supported the change in assessment as something worth their time and effort, largely due to the positive impact they saw it having on their students.

The importance of the change in assessment is also reflected in the literature. As discussed in the literature review, percentages and letter grades are notoriously inaccurate and unclear measures of student learning. They also make learning, something that is unique and wonderful, about the accumulation and averaging of points, which often leads students to seeing percentages and letter grades as extrinsic motivators. SBG, which shares all the same the principles that underlie the new assessment framework, allows the focus to be on the Learning Standards and every student's individual relationship to those Learning Standards. Keeping the focus on the learning allows the process to be intrinsically motivated, with the student trying to improve for the accomplishment of the learning itself. As was also discussed in the literature review, SBG has been found to more accurately reflect a students' actual understanding in a course, especially for struggling learners (Pollio & Hochbein, 2015), and has proven helpful on

the mental health of certain demographics of students, such as students who suffer from test anxiety (Lee et al., 2018; Lewis, 2020). With studies showing no ill effects on students experiencing SBG in high school on their transition to post-secondary, it seems obvious that moving away from traditional percentage-based grading to the new assessment framework is something that will only benefit students – academically and emotionally.

Of course, one of the main reasons making this transition in assessment framework necessary is because it is provincially mandated. However, it is also an essential step needed to align with and support BC's revised curriculum. BC's curriculum considers itself a content-based, competency-driven curriculum that focuses on "literacy, numeracy, and the First Peoples Principles of Learning" (BCMECC, 2023b, p. 6). The curriculum overview states that by embedding "Indigenous perspectives and knowledge … in the curriculum, they will naturally influence the ways in which students will be assessed" (BCME, n.d.-b). Percentages and letter grades are not an effective way to assess competency; using a proficiency scale and descriptive feedback are far more effective ways of communicating where a student is at in their learning and how they can improve in a particular skill. This assessment model also better aligns with the First Peoples Principles of Learning in that learning takes patience and time, is reflexive and reflective, and supports the well-being of the self and community (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2006), therefore reflecting the values of the Professional Standards for BC Educators, which guide all teachers in the province (BC Teachers' Council, 2019).

Required Time Investment

However, despite the importance and necessity of the work, requiring all kindergarten to grade 9 teachers to change their classroom assessment models to embrace the new assessment framework asks teachers to invest a significant amount of time into the initiative. As the BCMECC has not provided any paid release time for teachers to make this change as of

September 2023, teachers are being forced to use their existing preparation or personal time. This demand on teachers is on top of the regular professional responsibilities – for example, prepping and planning their lessons, assessing and providing feedback on student work, reporting on student progress, and communicating with parents and guardians. All participants in this study identified time as being a major challenge in implementing their assessment practices, with all of them advocating for paid release time for teachers to do this work.

Changing a classroom assessment model requires rethinking and reworking many aspects of a teacher's practice. In terms of creating resources, three quarters of the participants developed elaborate infrastructure – colour-coded gradebooks, digital portfolios, and competency charts – from scratch, as a way to record and track student progress. While Emily demonstrates that such a complex recording tool is not a necessity, a more structured method will likely appeal to many teachers who are used to using a traditional gradebook, because it serves the same overall purpose – to track the completion and record the progress of students' evidence of learning. For teachers less familiar with technology, creating something like Tim, Caroline, and Graham have made may be an impossibility or, at the very least, require them to undergo some significant additional learning in the area of technology, which takes time. Additionally, teachers will likely have to make changes to existing assignments, tests, and marking rubrics – if not create some new ones – to make them align with the language of the proficiency scale and Learning Standards. Teachers may also have to rethink how they report progress at the end of a term, perhaps creating a template that allows them to provide students descriptive strengths-based feedback and report their summative proficiency. The process of adapting or creating resources can be a very time-consuming part of revamping a classroom assessment model.

Indeed, even if teachers were to borrow an existing infrastructure, such as I did with Tim's colour-coded gradebook, a lot of work still needs to be done. In her interview, Caroline

brought up an example that I have heard from many teachers about borrowing a lesson plan from another teacher. She said:

> Even with a lesson plan that you get from somewhere, I'm like, “Oh, that's a good idea!” But I never do it exactly. You use it as the seed, right? What you're going to do is always more successful if you take that seed and then it becomes your own thing.

She is talking about the fact that all teachers have their own teaching style. Very few teachers will exactly replicate a lesson plan they get from another teacher; most will take the lesson plan, use the aspects they like, and make changes so it fits their style. The same can be said with borrowing existing infrastructure, though instead of just modifying a single lesson plan, teachers need to modify an assessment model that spans their entire course. Even though someone has done the majority of the work in making a gradebook or competency chart, most teachers who borrow it will feel the need to make changes so it fits their course, their style, and their students.

For example, implementing Tim’s gradebooks into my math classes required me to make some changes. First, I needed to edit the gradebook so the Learning Standards aligned with the course I was teaching, made sense with how I planned to teach and assess the content, and were organized in the order that I planned to teach the Learning Standards. In order to do this, I needed a clear understanding of the content of the course and a comprehensive overview of how I intended to teach the entire course. For teachers who had never taught and weren’t familiar with the curriculum for that particular course, this could require hours of work before they even began working on the gradebook itself. Next, I needed to input my students into the gradebook and work out how to share the data in the gradebook with students and parents in a way that kept students anonymous. Finally, I needed to develop processes and systems that best allowed me to record student proficiencies, since this was a novel practice for me. I also needed to explain how the colour-coded gradebook worked to my students, as they had never encountered one before,

which I chose to do with the aid of a Google Slides presentation and example gradebooks that I created. While every teacher will approach this situation differently, it is likely that even borrowing existing infrastructure will not eliminate the need to invest time into changing a classroom assessment model.

On top of the practical aspects of implementing a new assessment model, there is considerable mental load involved. In his interview, Graham referred to this as "going to the woodshed," describing the big picture thinking and reflecting required to really overhaul the assessment of a course. A notable finding from this study is that teachers who have been implementing the new assessment framework for some time all have a strong philosophy that drives them. For myself and the participants, this philosophy developed over time, through trial and error, through gradual change, through the influence of the ideas of others, through reading the literature. It is hard to ask teachers to align their classroom assessment practices with a prescribed framework without teachers having done the reflective work to align their own beliefs with the framework first. Asking teachers to adopt something they don't fully understand and embrace will result in inauthentic implementation, something that worried some of the participants in this study. Authentically changing an assessment practice is more than just switching from letter grades and percentages to a proficiency scale, and an authentic transition from one to the other involves considerable growth and development of a teacher's philosophy.

Participants were in agreement that collaboration with others, including attending professional development workshops, was a key way for teachers to make progress with their classroom assessment models. Interestingly, this poses a conundrum. While collaboration can be helpful because it allows more than one person to share the work, collaboration also requires a time commitment from more than one person. Due to the demands on teachers already, it's possible that the only time multiple teachers could find overlapping time to collaborate may be

their personal time. All participants did collaborate when it came to developing their own assessment models, but it's not clear if they spoke highly about the collaboration because they found the sharing of ideas with others to be helpful in the development of their assessment philosophy, or if having more than one teacher working together actually did reduce the amount of time needed to develop their resources and infrastructure.

From personal experience and from the interview data of the four participants, it is irrefutable that the act of adopting the new assessment framework requires a significant amount of teachers' time. Arguments can be made that the Ministry has given teachers ample warning about the assessment change and opportunities for teachers to change their assessment models before September 2023. For example, there was a pilot of the K-9 Draft Reporting Policy from 2017-2020 that some schools participated in which may have given participating teachers an opportunity and reason to begin making changes. Additionally, depending on the district, there were some professional development opportunities prior to September 2023. For example, the Greater Victoria School District put on a "Secondary Assessment Series" – a series of online workshops in 2021 for high school teachers that explored the new assessment framework – and provided interested teachers some paid release time to attend. Regardless, these opportunities were both voluntary and still required the investment of teacher time. Even the opportunities to get ahead of the mandate may not have been applicable for all high school teachers, as the assignments of high school teachers change on a yearly basis; teachers who generally taught grades 10-12 may have been assigned a grade 9 class unexpectedly for September 2023, being forced to adopt the assessment framework without much notice. However a situation is viewed, requiring kindergarten to grade 9 teachers to change their classroom assessment models to align with a new assessment framework when finalized resources from the Ministry were released only two months before the official mandate placed an undue demand on teachers' time.

Whose Responsibility is Implementation?

While the practical implementation of the new assessment framework will ultimately take place at a classroom level, it is important to note teachers are not the only party that plays a role in making shifts in the educational paradigm. The BCMECC satisfied their responsibility of releasing guiding provincial documents, such as the K-12 Student Reporting Order Policy and related supplementary material and supporting documents. While the release of many of these documents was very close to the mandate, something that did not help teachers as they prepared to change their classroom assessment, the resources that are now publicly available to educators and parents are quite comprehensive. The BCMECC is also responsible for providing funding to school districts; however, due to district autonomy, how the funding is allocated through the district is the role of the school district itself. School districts can support their teachers by using the funding to promote professional learning opportunities and communities of practice centred around the sharing of ideas and resources related to the implementation of the new assessment framework. School leaders can help in this process in two ways: first, by listening to and advocating for their teachers to get resources and supports that the teachers identify as needs, and secondly, by showing patience and kindness to their teachers who are doing new and challenging things in their classrooms that may cause their teachers a range of discomfort.

There are also educational partners that share some responsibility for the implementation of the new assessment framework. For example, the mission statement of British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) is to advocate for a "quality public education system where the learning needs of all students can be met" (BC Teachers' Federation, 2023) and the First Nations Education Steering Committee describes itself as "a First Nations-controlled collective organization focused on advancing quality education for all First Nations learners" (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2023). The successful implementation of the new assessment

framework, one that benefits students emotionally and academically, is therefore something both organizations have stakes in. In addition to supporting teachers' professional development by connecting teachers with workshops and providing indigenous educational support to educators, the BCTF website specifically also has a resource sharing portal where teachers can upload and download teaching resources of all levels and subject-areas. This established and openly available portal could be a way for teachers like the participants of this student to share their infrastructure and resources to their colleagues, and a place for teachers struggling to make the change to get inspiration or find established infrastructure that works for them.

Finally, teacher education programs around the province have an incredible opportunity to help in the implementation of the new assessment framework by releasing new graduates into the education system who have strong understandings of assessment and the assessment philosophy of the K-12 Student Reporting Order Policy. From my own experience as a 2016 graduate of the Simon Fraser University teaching program, my classmates and I were taught to see the "new" curriculum as simply *the* provincial curriculum since our education took place during the rollout of the revised provincial curriculum at a high school level. When we graduated, my class entered the workforce prepared to teach the revised curriculum, while other teachers in the province were in the process of grappling with their practice as they shifted from the old curriculum to the new. It would be beneficial for teacher education programs to expose teacher candidates to literature on the harm of percentage-based grading and the research around SBG, to help them develop student-centred assessment philosophies of their own. By exploring the new assessment framework during their practicums and teacher education program, teacher candidates graduating and entering the education system over the next few years could significantly help by implementing these practices and being resources for teachers who are in the process of refining their assessment practices as well.

Ultimately, though, much of the practical work will need to be shouldered by classroom teachers around the province. Teaching is a career with a professional responsibility toward lifelong learning, something that teachers come to understand very quickly once entering the profession. Just as all past curricular changes fall to teachers to make in their classrooms, so does the responsibility of implementing the new assessment framework. Teachers should, however, look to educational partners, school districts, and school leaders for support and resources, and advocate for these accordingly.

Summary of Main Ideas

My personal experiences with making changes to my own assessment practices over the years have given me a relevant perspective on my data, as my successes, challenges, and beliefs are largely mirrored by those of my participants. It was both encouraging and interesting to see that the assessment philosophies of the participants shared so many values with the K-12 Student Reporting Order and other related provincial documents, despite minimal collaboration and guidance. This suggests that the new assessment framework put out by the BCMECC may have a potential positive impact on the education and well-being of students, contingent, of course, upon the quality of implementation of teachers around the province.

The data also made it clear that the implementation of new assessment practices is important and necessary in order to support the competency-focused nature of BC's revised curriculum, to benefit the students emotionally and academically, and, on the most fundamental level, to align with the provincial mandate. However, these changes raise concerns about the practicality of the implementation and the undue time demands on teachers. In addition to the obstacle of time when it comes to making these changes, teachers also face several other challenges. Teachers may struggle with the shift in their own role within the classroom. Indeed, the new assessment framework does ask teachers to reevaluate and restructure the teacher-

student dynamic, requiring teachers to have specific and personal relationships with their students and invite students to be active participants in their own assessment.

While the new assessment framework can be implemented in classrooms in many ways, with and without the use of elaborate recording infrastructure, it seems that the process of creating an assessment framework allows for teachers to congruently develop their assessment philosophy, resulting in better understanding of the objectives of the provincial assessment framework. This mental load required of teachers is significant, but the ongoing teacher reflection is well worth it, both for the professional evolution of the teacher and for the success of their students. With this ongoing reflection, classroom assessment will align with teacher philosophy, which will align with the values of the provincial curriculum and assessment framework.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As of September 2023, all kindergarten to grade 9 teachers in British Columbia were mandated to implement significant changes to their classroom assessment in order to align with the new framework outlined in the K-12 Student Reporting Order (2023b). Of note, the framework rids kindergarten to grade 9 courses of letter grades or percentages and implements a provincial proficiency scale to use for classroom and final reporting. The new reporting order also describes how evidence of learning of the Learning Standards – content and curricular competencies outlined in the provincial curriculum – should be assessed with the proficiency scale, how more recent work should be honoured over older work, how teachers' professional judgement should be used when determining final proficiencies, and how students should be involved in self-reflection and goal setting surrounding the core competencies.

Since these changes to classroom assessment are significant, my research sought to explore how some high school teachers in Victoria, BC have already begun to implement the new assessment framework into their classrooms. Their experiences, successes, and challenges could be of importance to other teachers in the province who are required to make these changes themselves. Using a multiple case study methodology to collect narrative data, I interviewed four high school teachers from four different schools with teaching experience ranging from 11 to 27 years who taught a range of subjects – English, Chemistry, Mathematics, French, and Applied Design, Skills and Technology. From thematic analysis of the data, I was able to discern several themes and takeaway messages.

Takeaway Messages

First of all, it is clear from the participants' experiences that changing classroom assessment in an authentic way so that it aligns with the new assessment framework is a big endeavour that requires a lot of time and effort on behalf of classroom teachers. There are

certainly challenges that accompany a venture of this size; for example, when are teachers supposed to tackle this work with so much on their plate and no additional time or compensation offered? Undoubtedly, the amount of work being asked of teachers is excessive, especially due to the tight timeline of the implementation since the BCMECC only released the finalized reporting order and supplementary materials 1-3 months before the mandated implementation. However, while this workload asks a lot of teachers, the unfortunate conclusion is that changing classroom assessment cannot be avoided, but must be tackled, despite the additional workload to teachers. Not only is the implementation provincially mandated, but changing classroom assessment to agree with the new reporting order is necessary to align with the provincial curriculum and important for the well-being and success of students. The fact that the new assessment framework may ignite positive overall changes to the education system and student success hopefully forgives the inordinate workload and short timelines for classroom teachers.

One positive outcome of the study is the revelation that while the new assessment framework and the provincial proficiency scale may be new and challenging for teachers to understand and implement, these feelings are not necessarily echoed by students or their parents. Since elementary schools have used a form of standards-based grading (SBG) for decades and since all elementary and middle school teachers knew they would have to implement the provincial proficiency scale eventually once the draft documents were announced, students have been experiencing iterations of the new assessment framework in their classrooms for quite some time. As a result, students and their parents will not find these practices as unusual and foreign as a lot of high school teachers may. This should be reassuring for high school teachers worried about the student and parent pushback or criticism of their new assessment practices.

Also encouraging are the many ways in which the new assessment framework can look in classrooms around the province. They can incorporate elaborate infrastructure, such as Google

Sheets competency charts or coded gradebooks, or utilize commonly implemented classroom applications, such as Google Classroom or Google Slides, as tools for collecting evidence of student learning in a portfolio. In even more positive news, there are teachers in the province, such as the participants of this study, who have been working on their assessment models for years. While this study looked at four teachers from the Greater Victoria School District, there are undoubtedly many teachers in many districts around the province who have been tackling this change and have experiences and assessment models that they could share with their colleagues as well. While starting from scratch is an option for all teachers, there should also be a lot of exemplars around the province to borrow (with permission), modify, or use as inspiration.

Recommendations

However, from the participants' experiences, it becomes obvious that the process of building their own classroom assessment over time directly benefited them. All four participants shared a number of commonalities when it came to their philosophies and practice. For example, all the participants had a very strong understanding of the curricular documents, knew what the Learning Standards were for their courses, and had developed thoughtful assessments that allowed them to best evaluate their students' learning. Additionally, their philosophies all value certain aspects of assessment, such as the ideas that learning is a process, that students should be involved in the assessment process, and that teachers should keep students at the centre of their decision-making for best practice. The fact that the participants so strongly shared so many of the same values, beliefs, and practices without necessarily consulting each other and without consulting the formalized reporting order speaks volumes to the importance of teachers having a similar and strong philosophy to authentically implement the assessment framework outlined in the K-12 Student Reporting Order. As a result, despite the time and effort it requires of already

busy teachers, this study suggests that building a classroom assessment model over time results in the most authentic development of both the assessment model and the teacher's philosophy on assessment and is therefore recommended.

Teachers need support with making these changes, and should look to educational partners, school districts and leaders, and colleagues for assistance. The participants suggest collaborating with others as much as possible. Collaboration allows teachers to share the workload and make the process more engaging by having someone to motivate them and help them troubleshoot problems when they arise. Collaboration will also invite more teachers into the mental work around developing their assessment philosophies and start conversations in the workplace that may lead to schools having deeper and more congruent beliefs regarding assessment. Working with mentors could also be advantageous, especially if there are teachers in the school who, like this study's participants, have been implementing the new assessment framework into their classrooms for some time. Good mentors should have experience to share with newer implementers but should also be open to feedback on their assessment model so that the flow of learning is cyclical, not only flowing from mentor to mentee. Finally, the participants talked about teachers needing kindness as they go through this period of change – kindness both from administration and their peers, but also from themselves. As discussed, learning is best viewed as a process, and teachers are all somewhere in the process of learning about and developing an assessment philosophy and working classroom model. Teachers need to be kind to themselves as they stretch and grow, as many of them are trying something new in their classrooms for the first time.

Time and support go hand in hand when it comes to helping teachers navigate the new reporting order. The participants suggest advocating for release time from the district and petitioning their Pro D Committees to bring in speakers and workshops that will directly support

teachers in the area of assessment. I also believe that efforts do need to be made to share specific classroom assessment models – whether those be overarching ways to think about and structure a year's assessment or actual assignment and assessment instruments like rubrics or self-assessment worksheets – amongst and beyond individual districts. I recommend that after the 2023/2024 school year, after one year of teachers having implemented the K-12 Student Report Order, professional development workshops or conferences are held where the focus is on sharing ideas around assessment. Teachers could attend with their own assessment models to share or attend to gather ideas and resources they could implement in their own classes. This would also allow for teachers to gain the contact information of other like-minded individuals to create interschool communities of practice that could work together and support each other. Ideally, these conferences could include multiple districts from around the province, but even district-wide sharing could be of great benefit to teachers since every school district in British Columbia has unique student needs and challenges.

The enthusiasm and commitment around changing assessment practices from the study participants was obvious. The main recommendation they had for their colleagues was to jump in and not be afraid of making mistakes. The new assessment framework emphasizes that learning is a process, a notion that does not apply just to students, but also extends to educators. By taking this perspective, teachers should be placated that the development of their classroom assessment models will be a multiyear process and need not be perfect yet. Teachers can also support their own growth in a number of ways. First of all, they can familiarize themselves with curricular documents and read the literature around the damages of percentage-based grading. Secondly, they can begin to relinquish some control over classroom assessment to their students and allow students to have a role in their own assessment. Finally, they can self-reflect regularly on their classroom assessment practices and use their professional judgement to make changes where

needed. A lifelong learning mindset is crucial for teachers to adapt and refine their assessment practices and develop their assessment philosophies.

Study Significance and Final Thoughts

Of assessment, Caroline rhetorically muses, “It’s a big part of what we do, isn’t it?” Graham refers to the development of classroom assessment as “heavy work,” echoed by Emily who considers it teachers’ “biggest work.” In September 2023, the K-12 Student Reporting Order (2023b) took effect, and teachers across the province are currently in the throes of implementing SBG practices supported by the provincial proficiency scale in order to align with the new assessment framework. None of the study’s participants take their role in this lightly, as all of them believe in the importance of their classroom assessment practices benefiting, supporting, and nurturing students academically and emotionally. Tim asks himself, “Whose education, is it?” when making decisions about how he runs his class and structures his assessment.

Assessment is an important aspect of education. British Columbia’s revised curriculum shifted to one that is more competency-based rather than continuing to focus on content, requiring assessment to make similarly large changes. Making these changes is no easy task, as they are most authentically implemented when teachers’ assessment philosophies align with the new assessment framework. Changing teachers’ assessment philosophies is something that requires time, effort, reflection, and re-education on behalf of the teacher. This mental work, in addition to the practical work of altering and creating resources, places an undue and largely uncompensated workload on teachers who already face the daily responsibilities of teaching, but are also dealing with supporting themselves, their families, and their students through the emotional and psychological aftereffects of living through a global pandemic. Indeed, the findings of this study are seemingly at odds with each other. Implementing the new provincially

mandated assessment framework places an incredible amount of work on teachers, which suggests that it would be helpful to find easier ways for teachers to do this work. While there are successful frameworks and resources already made and available that exist in the province, simply borrowing one may not actually be beneficial or authentic, because the creation of a classroom assessment framework over time results in teachers developing a strong and student-centred assessment philosophy. In summary: while there are easier ways of implementing the new assessment framework in classrooms, putting in the work and time is most beneficial and authentic in the long run both for teachers and students.

My research asked how teachers in Victoria have been implementing the new reporting policy in their classrooms in order to collect their personal experiences, successes, and challenges as narratives that may help other teachers around the province make these changes as well. By looking at the classroom assessment practices of four high school teachers in Victoria, it is clear that there are many ways to implement the new assessment framework, meaning that each teacher in the province will be able to find or create a classroom assessment model that fits their unique teaching style, student, and contextual needs. Additionally, teachers need not feel alone in this process, as educational partners and school districts should strive to create opportunities for educators to collaborate with others and share classroom assessment frameworks, since this study shows that these exemplars exist around the province. This important work is essential to the success of our province's education system, which supports development of the province's future citizens of a democratic and nurturing society that they will learn to sustain and develop.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Guide - Version 1: October 2022

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my study. As I have mentioned to you in my emails, the purpose of my study is to hear about the experiences of high school teachers who have begun implementing assessment in their classrooms that moves away from traditional percentage-based grading and aligns more with the new provincial assessment framework. Assessment in BC is changing, and I believe that hearing the experiences, challenges, and successes of teachers who have already begun to make these changes will provide valuable information to our colleagues who will soon have to make similar shifts in their assessment practices.

My goal is to complete our interview in less than one hour. During the interview, I'll be asking you about what assessment looks like in your classroom, what influenced and continues to influence your views on assessment, and how, in your opinion, teachers can best make changes to their own assessment models.

[Review consent form - proceed once consent form is signed.]

You have just consented to this interview being recorded, so I'm going to start the recording process now.

I'm going to start the interview now with some background information about you. If at any point you have any questions or concerns throughout the interview, please raise them.

1. What grade levels and subjects do you teach?

2. How many years have you been teaching?
    a. In BC/elsewhere?
    b. Did you have other careers before becoming a teacher?

From 2017-2020, some teachers and schools formally participated in a pilot of the K-9 Draft Reporting Policy Pilot.

3. Did you have any personal experience participating in or hearing about this pilot?

*I'd like to start by getting an understanding of how **you** conduct assessment.*

4. Could you start by telling me what assessment looks like in your classroom?

[Ask questions 5-7 if NOT adequately covered in participant's answer to question 4.]

The Ministry of Education has published this Provincial Proficiency Scale as a tool to assess student proficiency. [Show participant the Provincial Proficiency Scale.]

5. Do you use this scale, this language, or anything similar in your classroom assessment?
    a. If yes, how so?

Let me ask you about the reporting aspect of your assessment model.

6. At the end of your course, how do you report a student's final progress? In other words, how do you report to students and parents how they did in your course? (i.e., letter grade? percentage? proficiency? comment? anything supplementary to report card?)
    a. If letter grade, percentage or proficiency:
        i. How do you determine it?

7. Do you use the classroom assessment model that you just described in all classes you teach, or do you modify your assessment based on grade or subject?
    a. If it depends on grade or subject:
        i. How does your assessment model depend on grade and/or subject?
        ii. What influenced your decision to do things differently based on grade and/or subject?

Thank you for sharing what your assessment model looks like in your classroom. I'd like to ask you a bit about the rationale or the "why" behind your classroom assessment.

8. Is this how you've done assessment in your classroom since you started teaching?
    a. If yes: Your assessment model isn't exactly traditional percentage-based grading typically seen in high schools. Were you taught this assessment model in school or by a colleague?
    b. If no, what prompted you to change the way you do assessment to your current model?

9. In your opinion, what are the benefits of your classroom assessment model?

10. Are there any areas where you would like to improve or make changes to your assessment model?

Finally, I'd like to ask you a bit about implementing new assessment models. Starting September 2023, a new K-12 Reporting Order comes into effect which will require kindergarten to grade 9 teachers to change how many have previously been conducting their assessment and reporting. A notable change that I'm most interested in in my research is that kindergarten to grade 9 teachers will have to report a summative proficiency based on the Provincial Proficiency Scale and will no longer be reporting a percentage or letter grade. In general, the new reporting order moves away from traditional percentage-based grading and moves towards standards-based grading, which is where a course is broken down into learning standards and students are assessed on these learning standards using a series of ordered categories, or a proficiency scale. Another change in the provincial documents prevents work habits and behaviour from influencing a student's academic proficiency (so no more basing marks on participation or homework completion, for example). The new documents also emphasise learning as an ongoing process and suggest a student's final proficiency be more heavily determined by work done later in the course to better reflect the student's final understanding rather than averaging their understanding throughout their learning, which often doesn't give an accurate snapshot of what students know.

While a lot of these ideas will align with how you and I do assessment in our classrooms, for some teachers in the province, it's going to be quite a change regarding how they think about and conduct assessment in their classrooms, especially, in my opinion, for high school teachers

who are affected by this. I have a few questions about how you think this new assessment framework can be implemented in the classrooms of other teachers.

Switching up the norm can be challenging.

11. How has your experience with student, parent, and colleague buy-in been?
    a. Is there anything you do to promote buy-in from students/parents/colleagues?

12. Did you face challenges as you were changing your classroom assessment model?

13. What advice do you have for teachers who will be changing their assessment models to align with the new provincial assessment framework?

14. What do you think is the best way for teachers to be supported during this change?

Finally, a hypothetical. A lot of teachers struggle with the idea of summatively reporting using a provincial proficiency scale. With a whole course's worth of data, teachers from kindergarten to grade 9 will have to boil a student's understanding of the course material down into a summative proficiency.

15. How would you go about doing this in your classroom?

Before we conclude this interview:

- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your experiences implementing your classroom assessment model that you think might relate to my research that we haven't covered?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your participation in my research.