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Assessment and Reporting

Policy

Living School believes assessment and 'testing' plays an important role in the learning and teaching cycle. It can also do a lot of damage. In all things educational, there must be purposeful and regular deliberation during the planning stage before any implementation of evaluation tools (such as tests).

There must be ongoing review, to ensure the actual outcomes are meeting the intentions: to support and enhance the learning and teaching process for every individual.

To this end, Living School believes:

- Assessment plays a pivotal role in the learning and teaching cycle.
- Students can hit a target if they know what that target is.
- Assessment can be affirmative, evidencing all that is going well for a learner.
- Assessment can be multi-modal, offering 'activities' to engage, challenge and direct choice.
- Assessment can promote collaboration opportunities and awareness of strengths and weaknesses.

Living School also believes:

- Assessment can deter learning, causing a student to dislike schooling.
- Testing can damage teaching, resulting in an artificial environment, and a narrow scope of content and resources.
- Assessment can become an end in itself – with data review focused more on numbers than strategic planning to improve individual's teaching and learning.
- Assessment can be time-consuming – and take away from teaching time.
- Testing recall is not the same as assessing learning development.
- There is a difference between a performer and a learner; just as there is a difference between a teacher and a coach.

From the outset, Living School believes in balance. We are focused on holistic progressive education. We define whole learning – holistic learning – as an interlinked network of domains of intelligence which improve performance:

Emotional, Intellectual, Physical, Expressive, Social, Spiritual, Decisional and Behavioural.

Holistic assessment is therefore a broad review of performance based on a network of domains. It is much more than recall and broader than thinking.

The following outlines a carefully considered position. All teachers employed at Living School must read this document to consider the merits of assessment and ensure it meets one ideal purpose:

To engage in all our learners a compelling desire to improve wholly.

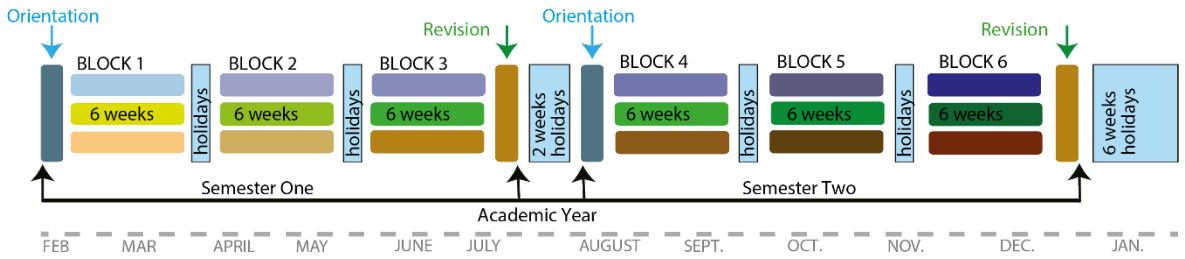
Procedure

Living School believes assessment is a key element in quality teaching and learning. The nature of the school year is uniquely designed intentionally to focus on improving learning and teaching. Living School has two semesters consisting of three terms each. At the conclusion of every six-week block is a break. During the semester, these breaks are one-week long. Teachers are expected to see these as collaboration weeks – not holidays. These are specifically designed to assist teachers to plan, moderate and collaborate. Living School's focus is to ensure all teaching is purposeful, well-organised and individualised. To do this the greatest asset is providing teachers with sufficient time.

At the end of the first semester, there is a two-week holiday period. This period is for rest and relaxation – but also there are expectations for teachers to individually prepare their programmes for the following semester.

At the end of Semester Two, there is a six week break.

Living School promotes evaluation via assessment by scheduling orientation and revision weeks into the yearly calendar, e.g.



Pre-Assessment of all students

Any student enrolling in Living School will sit a range of assessments to diagnose capacities in key areas of literacy (PAT R), numeracy (PAT M), Science (PAT S), general knowledge, creativity (Torrance Test of Creative Thinking), Social-Emotional Wellbeing (SEW), and working memory. As well, Living School will conduct assessments to evaluate auditory processing and visual processing – as these are the two major sensory means for knowledge acquisition in schooling environments.

There will also be a self-assessment, whereby the student will be interviewed and complete their own assessment of their strengths, interests and areas of need. This information will form their Individual Learning Program (ILP).

ILP – Individual Learning Program

Every student in Living School will have their own Individual Learning Program. This will be a journal format and outline goals every term, with personalised reviews of their goals at the conclusion of every term.

The ILP will develop into a portfolio of learning with key learning moments captured and celebrated. As part of the reporting process, the portfolio will be a key resource for three-way interviews at the end of every semester.

ITP – Individual Teaching Program

Every teacher in Living School will have their own Individual Teaching Program. This will be a journal that outlines goals, professional development, teaching programs, reviews and be aligned with The Australian Professional Standards for Teaching. The ITP will form a key piece of teacher evaluation with meetings arranged between staff every semester to ensure professional development remains a key focus of Living School's commitment to teacher quality.

Assessment Scheduling

Careful consideration is given to scheduling assessments. We do not wish to over-schedule (ie have too many assessments falling on one day) or teachers unaware of demands placed on students. Such issues are minimised via the Challenge Week structure. However, any pre/post test scheduled in a discipline outside of Challenge Week, must be calendarised and approved.

Assessment as part of the Learning Cycle

Challenge Week

The beginning of every semester includes an orientation program called 'Challenge Week'. This is a week focused on holistic assessment: Assessment that reviews a learner's EQ (emotional qualities), IQ (intellectual qualities), PQ (physical qualities), and XQ (expressive qualities).

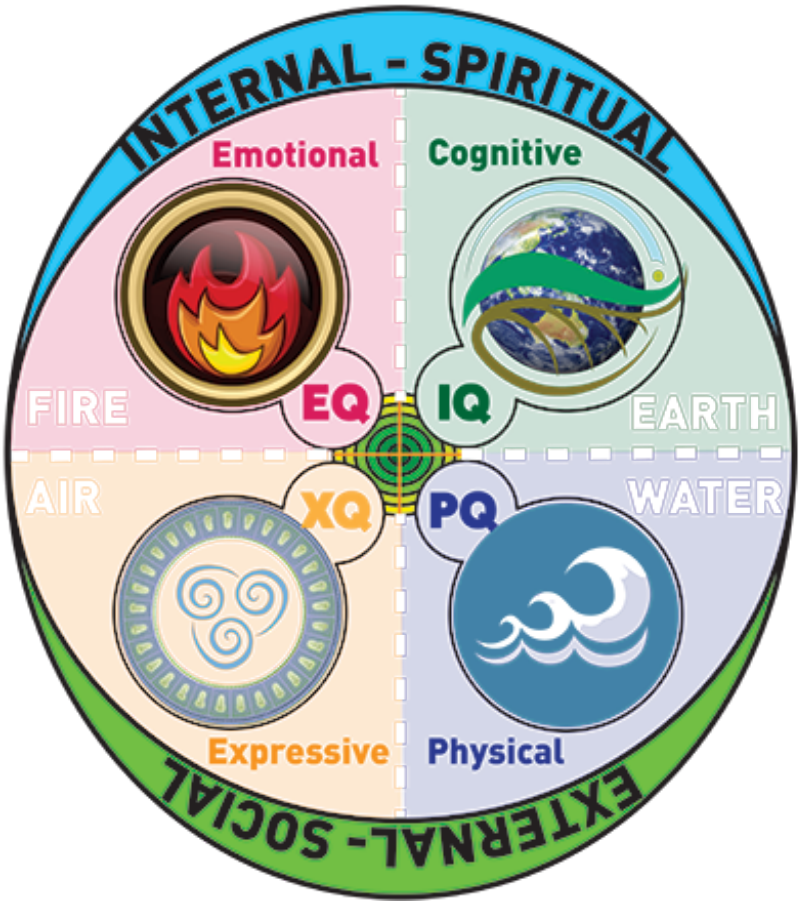
A framework for the logic underpinning the Living School's unique holistic assessment focus is outlined below:

LS Assessment and Reporting policy
Policy 3.F.1
Effective August 2019
Review date December 2019

EQ – Emotional Qualities

These are challenges shaped around key attitudes from the VAST model: Confidence, Openness, Resilience, Excellence, Passion, Patience, Positivity and Perseverance.

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Leadership-style challenges and games allow for teachers to assess a student's capacity in these areas via interactions and reactions during planned activities (e.g. Minefield strategy game).

A rubric on each of these areas is graded and mapped via a spider chart. This graphing is updated by overlaying the new results each semester to reveal growth in capacity. Our focus on EQ is not to meet an outcome – but, rather, to develop the capacity in the individual. This format is intended to promote discussion and reflection – as well as respecting the personalities of individual students.

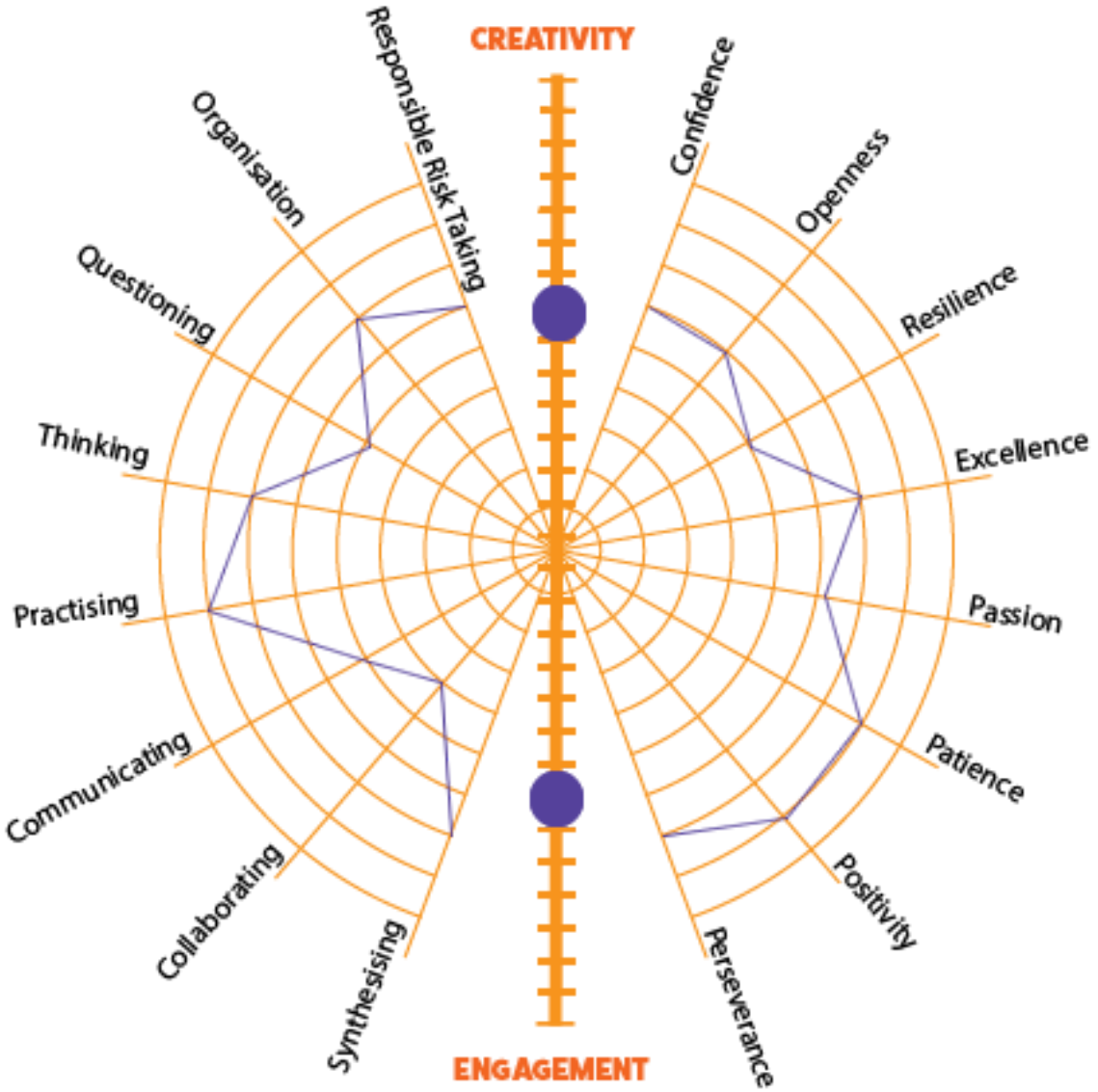
Students also assess themselves based on their attainments – which gives another dimension and greater ownership.

e.g.



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ATTITUDES



IQ – Intellectual Qualities

Living School sets 'tests' purposefully designed by teachers based on key concepts and skills. These are scaled on rubrics that are focused on developmental growth (progression maps). Living School

believes in tracking data to initiate support and celebrate success. This is based on a student's personal development – which is referred to as Personal Best (PB).

As a key feature of the Challenge Week, tests on knowledge are instrumental in shaping a personalised program for each student. This involves assessments that determine each student's knowledge of areas that are to be taught (Pre-Test). In the Thematic Frame, this involves assessing students based on their conceptual understanding of content, skills and processes involved in the Keystones of Nature, Phenomenon, Life and Living, Identity and Civilisation.

As well, there are 'tests' developed to assess each student's core understanding of key subject concepts (Maths, Science, English) taught in the Proficiency Frame (also referred to as the Grit frame).

The Proficiency Frame focus is to develop assessments around key concepts that will be taught during the six-week learning block. This allows for agility grouping.

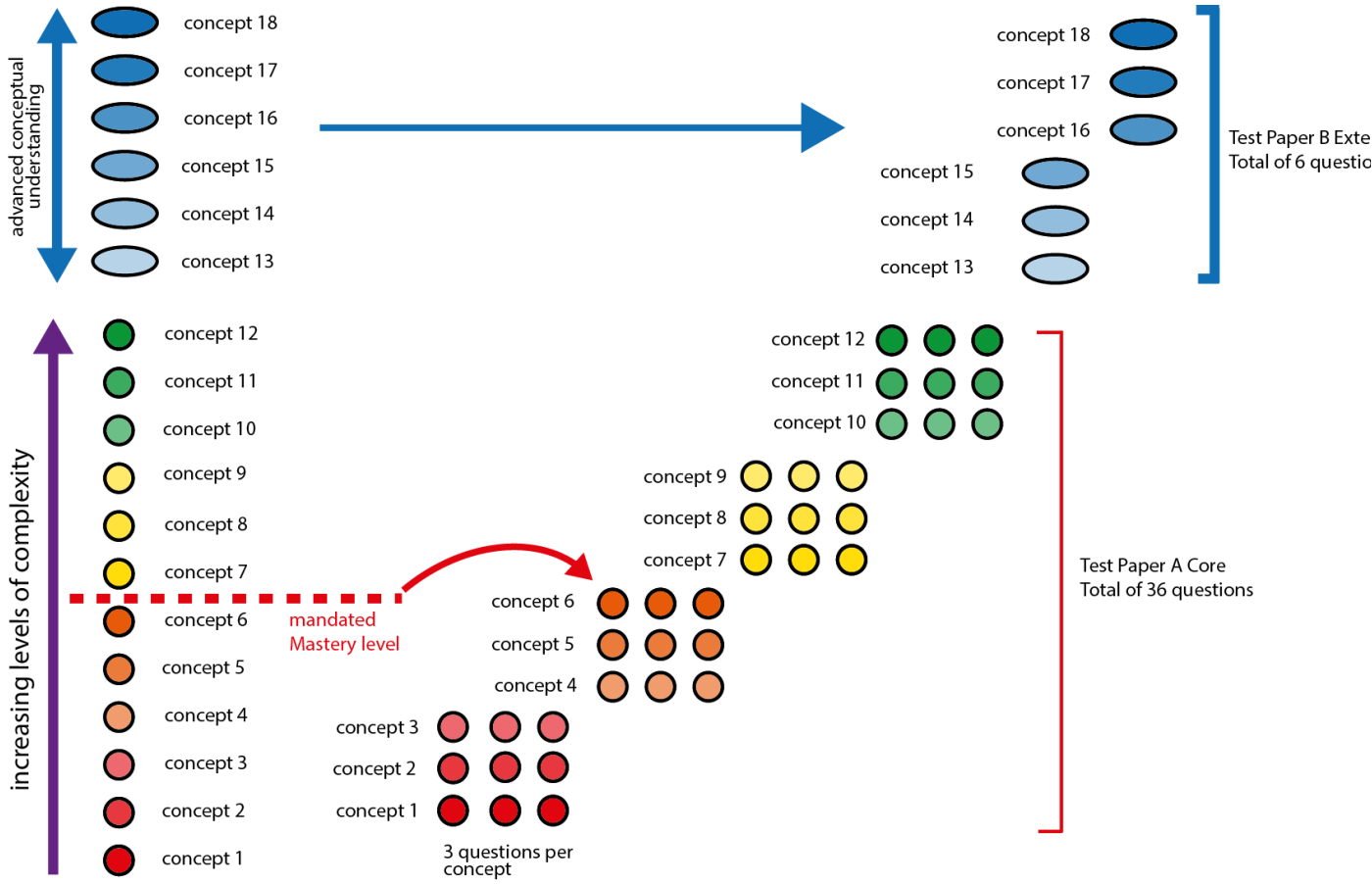
Agility grouping is different to ability grouping because it deals with more closely monitored skill mastery over a six-week period, and then affords grouping changes based on the concept knowledge of the learner.

The structure is based tightly around concept acquisition, i.e. what is intentionally going to be taught over the upcoming six-week block.

Designing the Proficiency Frame Agility Group Program and Assessment

Step One: Designing the scope and assessment.

1. Teachers collaborate on intentionally developing a scope of key concepts that will outline a six week block in Maths, English and Science topic areas.
2. These concepts are grouped to ensure there is a mandated Mastery level – which is the expectation of all students to attain sound proficiency.
3. Teachers design test (Paper A) based on different levels of skill complexity, preparing a test with three questions on each concept, allowing for opportunity to succeed over careless or test-situ mistakes.
4. Teachers create a second test paper (Paper B) based on six questions that test advanced concepts. The intention for a second paper is to ensure specific students are not overwhelmed by the level and number of questions.



Step Two – Organising the teaching sequence

The focus on purposeful teaching involves a progressive means for delivering, assessing and agility grouping around each student's capacity in the key concepts of the proficiency frame. There is a specific format to be followed, which requires **collaboration**, **careful planning**, **presentation**, **testing**, **group moderation**, **grouping**, **assessment**, **review** and **mentoring**.

Collaboration: Teachers are afforded time to prepare a progression map (which could be developed by reviewing the learning progressions) to scope out the concepts that are being targeted over a six week block in the Proficiency Frame. Teachers determine what must be mandated as Mastery level – which means outlining the key concepts that all students must master/understand soundly by the conclusion of the six-week block.

It is important to understand that the number of concepts being tackled and the number of concepts mandated at Mastery level will vary.

Careful Planning: The focus is to gather understanding of p individual's strengths and challenges via more than just a test. This does not mean we abandon the need for 'tests' – we believe these are

important to understand the level of mastery in concepts that are taught during the Proficiency Frame (i.e. specifically targeting Maths, Science and English).

Presentation: This is where a lecture format is presented that provides a snapshot overview of all the concepts. This is an engaging, edutaining and rich overview of each concept – giving a quick fire overview of each concept. All students and fellow teachers are present and listen to the presentation – which includes multimedia presentation, active involvement and note-taking. The intention here is to give a big-picture map of what will be learnt/taught in the next six-week block.

Testing: At the conclusion of the lecture overview (in each discipline – Maths, English, Science), there is a 'test'. This could be via online clickers but will be mostly a multiple choice computer administered and marked. As a result, there will be immediate feedback on each student's attainment. This is a pre-test and will be used as part of a value-added evaluation at the conclusion of the learning block based on John Hattie's effect size formula (post-test minus pre-test divided by standard deviation). As well, there will be pre-determined questions that will require pen-and-paper formulation (mostly the advanced questions) which will require teacher marking and administration.

Moderation: At the conclusion of the 'tests' (Maths, English, Science), teachers will moderate and evaluate collaboratively the results. This moderation will be used to group students but also to professionally evaluate the questions and refine test design (which will be important for the post-test design).

Grouping: As revealed by data gathered from the 'tests', students' proficiency in every concept area will be evaluated. This will allow teachers to group students in agility groups: competency groups based on the concepts needing to be known. The difference between an ability and an agility group is that agility groups are based on data and specifically focused for a short-time period. In so doing, this reduces concerns about 'being dumb' and ensures there is scope for movement over the different blocks as the proficiency capacity is indicated. As well, students who 'know' concepts will be moved into areas they do not know – so time for learning will be maximised and expectations heightened without onerous repetition. Students who need to master concepts will be focused on fewer concept areas and slower, more repetitious learning to consolidate understanding in order to master the mandated Mastery levels.

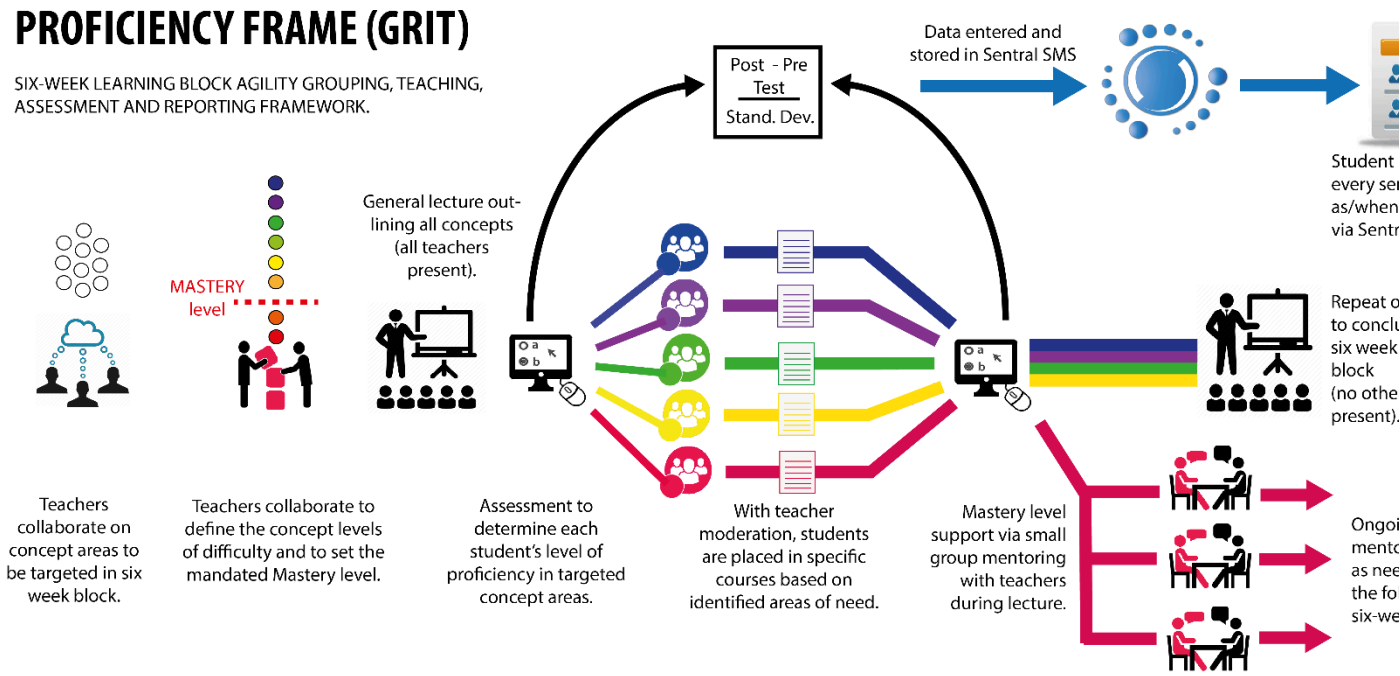
Assessment: At the conclusion of the six-week block, there is another test (assessment) that follows the same structure as the pre-test. Again, this will be marked by computer – and some pre-defined questions marked by teachers. Again, moderation will follow to evaluate achievement – with all teachers collaborating and reflecting on results. The results will be post-test data – and used in the value-added formula to define level of teacher intervention.

Any student/s who did not achieve the mandated Mastery level will be identified and supported. This support will mean these identified students will be assigned mentors. As well, they will be provided a specific remediation session while other students are in the review lecture.

Review Lecture: to conclude each learning block, there will be a repeat of the lecture format. This lecture will allow all students to go back over all the concepts in an engaging and active method. At this lecture – there will only be students as all teachers will be assigned to specific students identified as those who have not gained proficiency at the mandated Mastery level.

Mentoring: All teachers will be assigned specific students who have not achieved the mandated Mastery level. The intention will be for these teachers to connect over the following learning block at non-specified times to engage, chat and encourage further effort to ensure these students have mastered the minimum expectation.

The format looks like this:



The focus with this framework is to personalise differentiation to maximise the learning capacity and improve the mastery of specific concepts. It is important that students are not consistently grouped in low support groups. By focusing this framework around three specific disciplines (Maths, Science and English) and by offering six-week blocks that change every term, students will not be stereotyped nor feel as if they are always in the "low" groups (named Mastery Group). Agility groups are not ability groups because they offer far greater movement across more diverse subject offerings at shorter intervals of time.

PQ – Physical Qualities

Assessment of physical qualities comes via the Challenge Week and ongoing formative assessments during physical lessons (such as sport, PDHPE, yoga and meditation sessions).

Challenge by Choice

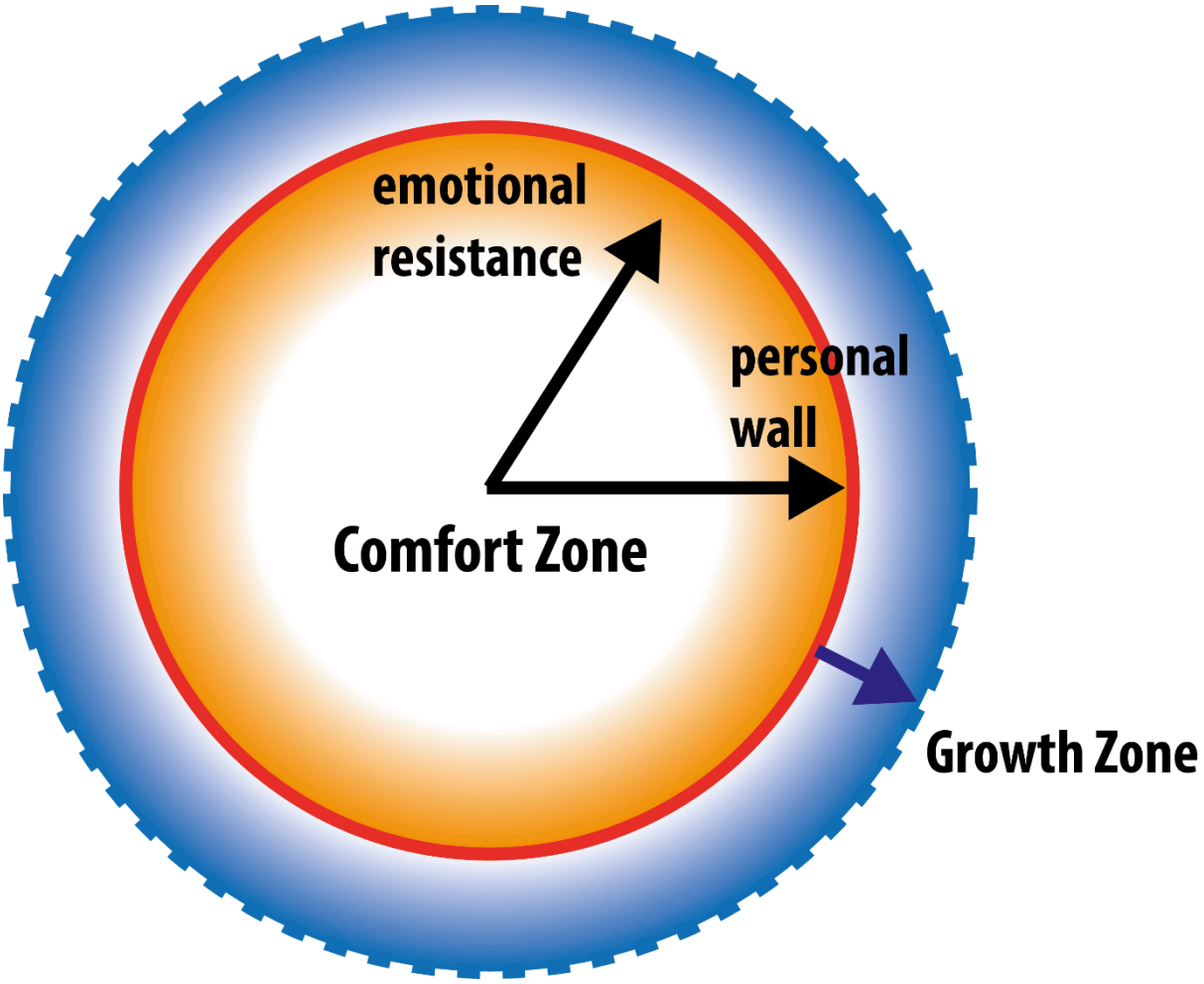
During Challenge Week, students are presented with physical challenges that are intentionally focused on developing character traits, leadership skills and collaboration. All activities are focused on challenge by choice – allowing the student to determine their level of comfort (with encouragement and support via the teacher to stretch their 'comfort zone'). Such experiences are hikes, giant swings and zip lines, etc.. All are undertaken with certified quality instructors and all must have a risk assessment completed.

We look to grow a student's awareness of how they have developed boundaries. As people we sit in our comfort zone. The closer we get pushed to the boundary creates an emotional reaction, moving from comfort to anxiety to sadness to anger and volatility. These emotions are a response to counter fear. This is our reaction (fight, flight or freeze) to avoid breaking through our personal wall. But if we can safely navigate through the boundary we enter a growth zone, and with success we feel elation.

Physical challenges grow emotional awareness and develop character – IF properly managed. No child should be pushed beyond their own tolerance levels. We always focus on 'challenge by choice'. Put simply, this means a mentor or group encourages and motivates deftly – in line with the student's own capacity. We never push beyond what the student is prepared to attempt.

Our focus is to increase confidence by challenging students to take responsible risks in safe and risk-assessed (and managed) experiences.

Having teachers aware of how students perform under such experiences offers more insight into the personality of the learner, and this is reported on via the general comment in the academic reports.



Physical Skill Analysis and Development

Living School focuses on developing physical skills (e.g. catching, throwing, sprinting, dodging, swimming, etc.) via a focused PE program. All students are assessed in their cardio-vascular capacity via regular shuttle run tests. We also measure and record skills in terms of distance and time (summative outcomes).

All attainments are recorded and stored on a database (using Sentral), which is updated throughout the student's enrolment at Living School after results are recorded.

Using video recording of skills is employed at Living School. This technology allows for individual actions to be reviewed and played back to students in a supportive and constructive manner. The video analysis reveals the student's style – which offers a formative assessment focus. Analysis of these skills is more important than purely recording distance or time. Coaching allows personalised targeting of actions required to improve.

These video recordings are also available to parents upon request – but are shared with the teacher present, so the information can be communicated in relation to the skills being developed.

Video recordings are saved securely on the Living School server.

XQ - Expressive Qualities

Living School emphasises the importance of expression. Expression is closely aligned with creativity. As mentioned earlier, all students entering Living School (as part of their induction program) will sit the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT). This information is used as part of our VAST framework's focus on Creativity (at the centre of the flower).

Expression Sessions

During each semester there will be opportunities for performing in Expression Sessions during Assemblies. Expression Sessions are open to the students to define what and how they will express – but supported by a teacher/mentor. Every student is guided in developing a concept and presenting it. With a small school this is a great advantage, as all students are able to develop their XQ in a community of support.

The Expression Sessions offer a broad, holistic scope, e.g. speech, debate, painting, dance, drama/skit, singing, music, poem, sculpture, etc..

Inquiry/Problem/Project Based Learning

Living School has at its core a focus on project based learning – purposefully planned to develop

Events

During each year, there are designated events gauging skill and commitment in attitude areas of confidence, open-mindedness, dependence, excellence, passion, patience, positivity and perseverance. The key areas to be scheduled are: Battle of the Bands, Art Shows, Kite Flying Day, Billy Cart Derby, Debating, Poetry Recital, Pi Day, General Knowledge, Spelling Bee, Maths Master,

and the Einstein Factor. These events are competitive but more for the student to learn about Personal Best – an opportunity to nurture a growth mindset focus on self-improvement and grit.

All participation and achievement is recorded and celebrated at the end of the academic year.

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The Purpose of Assessment

Living school is a caring school that provides a support network for each student to ensure that the emotional, intellectual, physical and expressive capacity of the whole child is improved, and to deal with personal and behavioural challenges as they arise in a safe environment. Academic progress, effort, attitudes to learning, the promotion of successful learning habits and strategic thinking, and attainment are monitored carefully in order to provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment for each individual student.

Living School strives to cater for individual differences in learners' interests and rates of cognitive development through individual small group and larger group learning experiences, as best suits individual learner's needs. The focus on 'intelligence' is broad with a specific focus on emotional, intellectual, physical and expressive domains of capacity. Learners' needs are determined by the implementation of a process that involves assessment, reflection, evaluation, decision-making and implementation. Each one of the steps in this developmental process is vital if we are to meet the needs of individual students in our care.

It is the responsibility of all teaching staff to ensure that the teaching programs in each of the key learning areas meet the needs and interests of the students, the school, the parents, the community and the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). In addition to the formal and informal means of student assessment, teaching programs and registers are evaluated formally at the beginning of each semester. Also, teachers are constantly evaluating teaching content, processes and resources, utilising annotations to make commentary on programmes and units of work. Student assessment, and teaching and program evaluation are not events, but rather, they are ongoing processes at Living School.

Understanding where a student is on a learning spectrum (Literacy/Numeracy Continuums and/or Progressions) underpins a child-centred learning environment. Integral to our moves to promote a child-centred learning environment and to raise standards is the need to assess where a child is on the learning continuum, and how a child is progressing. This 'positioning' will be defined by skills and capacity, using objective and subjective procedures.

By far the most significant aim of assessment is to give our learners, our teachers and our parents access to diagnostic and formative information that will improve the quality of the children's learning. Without meeting such an end, assessment is of little value and, as such, it cannot truly be seen in isolation from programs of study that are planned on the basis of assessment information as it comes to light.

Overall, assessment is not just the means by which we can tell how well the learners are doing, it is also, and importantly, the means by which we can tell how we are doing as teachers and what it is that we might need to adjust. Always, the adjustment is not just on scaling up results – but more focused on initiating richer understanding, more focused engagement/interest, and involving the learner in identifying then acting on areas of need.

Living School will always be focused on assessing learning to enrich and engage personally and inspirationally.

Where there is a need for an end of semester assessment to increase understanding of a child's development for reporting purposes, Living School will ensure there are 'challenges' that address the Super Six frame, focusing on Emotional, Intellectual, Physical, Expressive domains.

The Purpose of Assessment

Assessment serves several purposes throughout a learner's time at Living School. These overall purposes are:

Summative: to provide a picture of a child's development through time

This can best be summed up as

Assessment AS learning; Assessment FOR learning; Assessment OF learning.

Three tiers of Assessment

Standardised externally developed assessment tasks – such information can provide valuable confirmation of teacher perception or can raise queries that need to be pursued, or can provide more general information about a child's potential and progress.

These tests indicate National levels (norms or stanines) against which we base our 'gut feeling'. A teacher's 'gut feeling' is based on information gained from more internally created assessment tasks.

Subjective, internal, teacher-driven assessment tasks – such information provides data on which a professional judgment can be supported or developed. This assessment focus is on developing teacher awareness – in a learning group or cross-stage scenario. This data can be used to indicate pupil positions in a particular skill or concept.

The worthiness of collecting such information at the teacher level relies heavily on a period of reflection, in the hope of changing teacher practice to suit the individual needs of the pupils. It is extremely useful data. For teachers, it's a means of quantifying a hunch. It is closely linked to informal assessment.

Careful consideration of the skills, or outcomes, that are to be assessed over the course of the semester can lead to an improvement in the Reporting cycle. If Learning Stages can develop cross-stage assessment tasks that examine progress based on outcomes, then by using the five different levels of Elementary, Basic, Sound, Thorough, Extensive to define progress can assist in the end of semester reporting process.

Creating spreadsheets on the network and utilising our Sentral software programme to store information can incorporate the benefits of quickly sorting and manipulating data using technology.

Informal assessment and adjustment takes place routinely as part of any good lesson. Conversations with children as they are in the process of working, and observations of how children approach a task are important features of most lessons, and will often result in proper and positive divergence form lesson plans or adjustments to future plans in order to support the learner's development. The

teacher's ability to notice, to adjust to, and to give feedback to children as a lesson proceeds is the most important form of assessment. Such assessment is part of good learning and teaching practice.

Involving the student in assessment at an appropriate age develops ownership and awareness. This format can be part of the writing process, prior review of assessment criteria, peer feedback as part of jigsaw lessons, post review and reflection, or journal completion. All forms are important in developing independence and self-regulation.

Classes of Assessment

There are at least seven types of assessment tasks to be managed.

National Assessment Programs – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Externally developed standardised assessment material (NEALE analysis, Ravens Matrices, PAT tests, etc.). This information is more for analysis by cross-refencing/triangulating results with internal attainment. As such, it will be used to indicate discrepancies and flag students with needs. The information will be scrutinised as part of a teacher moderation to ensure there is healthy discussion framing the flags flown by such results.

Externally developed non-standardised assessments – competitions and challenges (ICAS English, Mathematics, Science, Writing and Spelling). These are multiple choice online assessments. The 'competitions' incorporate comprehensive diagnostic information based on skills and distractors (analysis on the question attempts that were wrong). This information offers tracking over time. Schools should be sensitive to the results as the information may not have been 'taught', and the inherent issues associated with multiple choice tests (review Professor Kelly and the history of multiple choice tests).

Cohort Examinations – summative assessment information based on the content of the teaching programs over a semester. Evaluation of data from these programs assists in planning for course content and designing support programs to assist students to find mastery in intellectual domains.

Learning Group Assessments (living school refers to 'class' as a Learning Group) – subjective, teacher developed assessments. This information is based around a broader range than intellectual assessments, and draws on the teacher's judgment around behaviour (engagement), decision making, social interactions, attitudes, skills and habits, and development milestones. This information gives a rounded review of the student as an individual.

Individual Needs – this level of assessment forms the backbone of our personalised support plans. All students will have Personalised Support Plans as part of our care commitment

External Psychometric Assessment – where a learner is identified as having specialised learning needs, a meeting with parents will discuss the benefits of a professional psychometric assessment. The school will not direct a family to any specific clinical psychologist. The decision is ultimately for the parents to pursue this direction. Parents would be encouraged but not obligated to share this information with the school. Any information received from such reports will then be used to formulate strategies for the school/parent/student as part of the Personalised Support Plan.

Rubrics – Living School believes good planning for learning is linked to good assessment preparation. To this end, rubrics play an important role in our assessment program. Rubrics allow students to see

the levels of expected progression. These levels correlate with academic reports. In this way, the academic and subject specific sections of our Living School reports align directly to the assessment program and the rubric attainments. The rubrics are shared via a portfolio with the sample of work and the teacher annotations.

Assessment Calendar – Living School carefully plans assessments at the start of the semester to ensure expectations on students are balanced and spaced effectively throughout the semester.

Assessment Portfolio – Living School uses portfolios to record and celebrate every student's achievements and progress. A key feature of the portfolio is the Personal Support Plan. Students use these portfolios to communicate progress to parents/carers via three-way interviews each semester.

Where formative or diagnostic assessment reveals a need for action, the value of the assessment relates directly to the degree to which there is an answer to the question "What has happened as a result?" Without adjustment to provision for learners as a result of assessment, then it is unlikely to have been of a significant value.