



**POLICY AND PROGRAM MEMORANDUM 155  
(PPM 155)  
DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT  
IN SUPPORT OF STUDENT LEARNING  
ADVICE FOR MEMBERS**

**Background of PPM 155**

The government has issued *Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 155: Diagnostic Assessment in Support of Student Learning* which provides direction to teachers, principals and school board personnel about the use of formal diagnostic assessment. PPM 155 articulates the distinct roles that teachers, principals and school boards play in the diagnostic assessment process. PPM 155 signals a fundamental change in the locus of control on the use of diagnostic assessments from school boards and principals to individual teachers. **The central theme of the memorandum is the role of teachers' professional judgement in the selection, use and timing of diagnostic assessments in their classrooms.** The former practice of mandated diagnostic assessments of every student for school or board-wide purposes is no longer permissible nor appropriate as indicated in the PPM where it states:

“The ability to choose the appropriate assessment tool(s) as well as to determine the frequency and timing of its administration allows the teacher to gather data that is relevant, sufficient, and valid in order to make judgements about student learning during the learning cycle.” PPM 155, Page 1.

Section C 10.00 Diagnostic Assessment of the 2015 Central Agreement enshrines teacher professional judgement language specific to diagnostic in the collective agreement.

The key components of the PPM are:

- teachers must use diagnostic assessment during the school year to inform their instruction;
- district school boards shall provide a list of pre-approved diagnostic assessment tools consistent with their board improvement plan for student achievement and PPM 155;
- teachers shall use their professional judgement to determine:
  - which diagnostic tool(s) from the board's pre-approved list they will use;
  - which student(s) they will use the tool with;
  - how often they will use the diagnostic tool; and
  - when they will use the diagnostic tool.

As an educator, when exercising professional judgement members should be prepared to provide rationale for the decisions made.

**Implications for Members**

Teachers are expected to use diagnostic assessment based on their professional judgement to inform teaching and learning in their classrooms. Members will use their professional judgement to determine which tools from the board list, which students and the timing of such diagnostic assessments to best meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Members should be prepared to provide evidence/documentation of their use of diagnostic assessment.

Documentation may be for individual students or for small groups of students and does not need to include data for an entire class. Documentation could take a variety of forms including but not limited to: pre-tests, observations, rubrics, checklists, student self-reflection tools (e.g., exit cards) or running records. As a result of the language in the *2015 Central Agreement*, teachers cannot be requested or directed to administer a specific assessment with all students. Nor can administration ask that teachers submit to them assessment data by a certain date.

**PRS MATTERS**



If the board list of approved assessments includes only literacy and numeracy assessments, non-homeroom teachers should use their own informal diagnostic assessments for their subject area and be prepared to provide evidence if requested by their administrator.

English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and some literacy coaches/teacher may have the administration of diagnostic assessments for the purpose of student placement or at-risk students as part of their role. They should continue to administer assessments that are required for program placement and to determine support levels. If it is considered a core job responsibility, they should continue to administer the assessments to the at-risk students. Classroom teachers of English Language Learner (ELL) students should use their professional judgement to determine what assessments to use to support individual or groups of ELL students in their classroom.

Administrators cannot direct members to perform diagnostic assessment in a manner that is contrary to the member's professional judgement. Should a member be directed by an administrator to conduct an assessment that is contrary to the member's professional judgement, the member should contact their school steward and the ETFO local president immediately. If school boards request teachers to conduct diagnostic testing to gather additional 'diagnostic data' for their Board Improvement Plan, it is ETFO's position that teachers must be provided with release time during the instructional day to conduct the assessment and to complete all aspects of the marking and administration of such diagnostic assessment.

## Exclusions

PPM 155 **does not** apply to the administration of special education assessments which identify students with special needs or to provincially mandated assessments such as the Grade 3 and 6 EQAO. Teachers will continue to administer both of these types of assessments. At times a classroom teacher may be asked to administer a special education screening test such as a test to determine placements for gifted students (e.g., the *Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test – CCAT*) with their entire class. Classroom teachers should administer these types of assessments as long as all they are required only to proctor the assessment and hand them in and are not required to mark the student work.

## PPM 155

PPM 155 is available on the ETFO website under Supporting Members and Local Leaders; Advice for Members as Professionals, Professional Judgement.

## Professional Judgement

ETFO *Professional Judgement Matters* and additional information regarding professional judgement is available on the ETFO website under Supporting Members and Local Leaders; Advice for Members as Professionals, Diagnostic Assessment.

**For further information contact your local ETFO president or Professional Relations Services staff at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836**

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